As we mark our fifth year as co-chairs of the Council on Foreign Relations, we are pleased the institution has evolved and grown. CFR has extended its outreach to new audiences, tripled its number of publications, launched fifteen expert blogs, and developed a strong and growing following on social media platforms. Its flagship publication, Foreign Affairs, has remained the most influential journal dedicated to international affairs in an ever-changing media landscape. At the same time, CFR has stayed true to its ninety-one-year-old mission as a nonpartisan and independent think tank, publisher, and membership organization.

A U.S. presidential election inevitably heightens partisanship on both sides of the aisle, across the country, and in the press. In this rancorous environment, CFR is a truly nonpartisan and authoritative source representing a broad range of views that inform the policy debate. The analysis and opinions of more than seventy-five CFR scholars cover the policy spectrum, reflected in the intellectual content they generate in books, blogs, op-eds, television and radio appearances, and interviews and articles in leading outlets.

CFR is committed to being a resource for citizens in the United States and beyond. Ahead of the November election, CFR launched Campaign 2012, an initiative that examines the foreign policy dimensions of the presidential race via backgrounder, video briefs, and reports. The Candidates and the World blog tracks presidential contenders’ positions, offers insight on subjects salient to the campaigns, and gauges international attitudes in advance of the vote.

CFR also continues to look at the domestic underpinnings of American power: Renewing America, an institution-wide initiative to generate policy recommendations for revitalizing economic strength at home and bolstering U.S. competitiveness abroad, along with the Renewing America Channel, a new online platform, showcases original research and reports, infographic scorecards, and the best coverage of these topics.

The institution’s nonpartisan convening power is demonstrated by the number of Democrats and Republicans who chose CFR as a venue. This year alone CFR members met with Senators Carl M. Levin (D-MI), Lindsey O. Graham (R-SC), Robert J. Portman (R-OH), and Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Representatives Barney Frank (D-MA), Walter B. Jones (R-NC), and Kay Granger (R-TX).

The Congress and U.S. Foreign Policy program connects senators and representatives with CFR fellows and the intellectual content they generate. Over the past year, CFR programming for congressional policymakers included dozens of roundtables with experts, some seventy briefings with scholars for members of Congress and their staffs, and well over one hundred meetings with congressional offices. As one House staffer remarked, “CFR’s efforts help inform Congress and help us to make good policy decisions.”

Since the start of the 112th Congress, scholars have been called to testify before congressional committees twenty-six times. Bernard L. Schwartz Senior Fellow Edward Alden spoke before the House Judiciary
subcommittee on immigration policy and enforcement on travel and tourism visa issues, Whitney H. Shepardson Senior Fellow Charles A. Kupchan addressed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the future of NATO, and Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies Ray Takeyh and Senior Fellow for Korea Studies and Director of the Program on U.S.-Korea Policy Scott A. Snyder testified before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on the conflicting priorities of the Iranian regime and North Korea’s strategic environment, respectively.

Beyond CFR’s work on Capitol Hill, the diplomatic program hosts sessions with senior foreign diplomats, while the executive branch program arranges briefings for senior officials. CFR also serves as a conduit for the administration to interact with the organization’s influential membership. Throughout the programming year a number of senior officials addressed members, including Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, Undersecretary of Defense Michèle A. Flournoy, Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, U.S. Agency for International Development administrator Rajiv Shah, and Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper Jr.

CFR-sponsored Independent Task Forces are perhaps the best reflection of the institution’s nonpartisanship. Former national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley, who chaired the first Task Force in 1995 on nuclear nonproliferation and also co-chaired the recent Task Force on Turkey, said of the program, “It is important that there are organizations like CFR that run these bipartisan efforts to show a responsible center.” Task Forces—groups diverse in backgrounds and perspectives—are convened to reach a meaningful consensus on matters critical to U.S. foreign policy. Recent Task Forces have looked at often substandard K-12 education and its consequences for American national security, U.S.-Brazil relations, trade and investment policy, and U.S. policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As co-chairs, we, too, represent opposite sides of the political spectrum, another confirmation of CFR’s commitment to a bipartisan balance. In or out of an election year, the Council on Foreign Relations continues to do what it does best: inform the debate. We believe in Thomas Jefferson’s famous assertion that the cornerstone of democracy rests on the foundation of an informed electorate, and we are proud that CFR furthers that conviction by continuing to be an authoritative resource on international affairs for its members, educators and students, the media, business leaders, state and local officials, religious leaders, and the public.

We continue to be impressed by CFR’s achievements and impact and we are honored to continue to serve as co-chairs. We are grateful to CFR Vice Chairman Richard E. Salomon for all his work, and we welcome new vice chairman David M. Rubenstein. We thank the members of the Board of Directors for their many contributions throughout the year. We would also like to acknowledge and thank CFR President Richard N. Haass for his innovative yet pragmatic leadership throughout his nine years of leading the institution.

Carla A. Hills
Robert E. Rubin
Co-Chairs of the Board