President’s Message: 
Continuity and Change

I am fortunate to have been president of the Council on Foreign Relations for a decade now. I am proud of our progress and excited about our future. Though the past ten years have been marked by change and modernization, the traditional mission of CFR endures: to be a resource to help our membership and others better understand the world and the foreign policy challenges facing the United States.

We are at our core a membership organization. Since 2003, CFR membership has grown by 15 percent—from 4,100 to just under 4,800—and has become more diversified in gender, ethnicity, professional background, location, and expertise. Term members (individuals elected between the ages of thirty and thirty-six to serve five years) are an even more diverse group, which suggests a positive trajectory for the future of the organization.

Economic challenges since 2008 have tested all nonprofits, and CFR is no exception. We have maintained a strong financial position by exercising smart financial management, all the while continuing to grow. The caretakers of CFR’s finances—the Board of Directors’ Investment Subcommittee, and both the Finance and Budget and the Audit committees—have been extraordinary custodians. Over the past ten years, both our budget and our endowment have doubled, and we have developed existing revenue streams and added new ones to keep pace. It takes resources to be a resource, and I and we are grateful to the community of members, corporations, foundations, and others that supports CFR.

Foreign Affairs, the preeminent magazine of international affairs and U.S. foreign policy, has evolved both in its look and in the range of authors it publishes and topics it covers. Under the able leadership of Editor Gideon Rose, Publisher Lynda Hammes, and their predecessors, James F. Hoge Jr. and David Kellogg, the magazine is reaching new audiences through a steady stream of digital products available on mobile devices, ereaders, and other platforms. ForeignAffairs.com is a robust, timely source that now publishes more original content than the print edition.

The David Rockefeller Studies Program has added more scholar-practitioners with relevant work experience in government, business, nongovernmental organizations, media, and academia. Notable recent additions to the think tank include former U.S. treasury secretary Timothy F. Geithner, former national security adviser Thomas E. Donilon, international economics expert Robert Kahn, and Nobel Prize–winning economist A. Michael Spence.

For nearly a century, CFR scholarship has covered traditional foreign policy topics, such as national security, trade, and diplomatic relations, along with the most important and, in many cases, most volatile regions and countries. We continue to study these issues, but we have also expanded our intellectual agenda to address matters such as child marriage; girls’ education; cybersecurity; the domestic underpinnings of U.S. power, including debt and deficits, immigration, infrastructure,
and education; global health, including noncommunicable diseases; and much more.

As our Board co-chairs address in their accompanying essay, the intellectual output of the David Rockefeller Studies Program is exceptional. Over the past ten years, the think tank and its fellows have published more than one hundred books, three hundred reports, and more than four thousand op-eds and articles. And in recent years, they have embraced the full range of new media. Fellows provide real-time analysis on CFR.org’s topical blogs and through their Twitter feeds, offer expert commentary to award-winning interactive Crisis Guides, and participate in the Ask CFR Experts question-and-answer series.

The CFR-sponsored Independent Task Force Program has overseen the release of twenty reports in the past decade, on matters ranging from terrorism and climate change to immigration policy and trade. The most recent, Defending an Open, Global, Secure, and Resilient Internet, focused on Internet governance, cybersecurity, and the free flow of information.

We strive to be creative and innovative in what we do. Two years ago, we launched the Council of Councils, a unique international network connecting leading foreign policy institutes from around the world in a discussion of issues concerning global governance and multilateral cooperation. Roughly tracking the membership of the G20, the Council of Councils is intended to foster high-level, candid dialogue among policy experts from established and emerging nations through regional conferences, augmented by year-round videoconferencing and online exchanges.

We also created the Global Board of Advisers (GBA), a select group of prominent individuals, including business leaders, noted academics, and former government officials from developed and emerging-market countries. Led by CFR Board Vice Chairman David M. Rubenstein, the

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The aim of the GBA is to strengthen our understanding of international perspectives while also enhancing the dialogue between U.S. leaders and their counterparts in other countries.

The Council’s website, CFR.org, has evolved to be the preeminent resource for analysis of and information on U.S. foreign policy and America’s role in the world. The site publishes large amounts of original content, but also includes curated material from authoritative sources and voices from around the United States and the world. We have explored new mediums, including interactive maps, infographics, videos, and award-winning multimedia guides.

To connect with interested citizens whose voices are increasingly important to the foreign policy debate, we have actively engaged students, teachers, religious and congregational leaders, and state and local officials with programming and material tailored to their interests and concerns. In the coming years, we will be ramping up our work in education with an enhanced online destination for students, teachers, and professors.

As important as it is to broaden CFR’s reach, it is also essential that we focus on our impact on U.S. foreign policy decision-making. We are shaping not only the debate, but also the country’s future leadership and

Above: The Global Board of Advisers, a select group of prominent individuals, includes business leaders, noted academics, and former government officials from developed and emerging-market countries.
policy agenda. To that end, CFR is a training ground for the next generation of foreign policy leaders through its international affairs fellowships, military fellowships, and programs for other visiting fellows. These fellowships offer professional development that individuals would not have access to otherwise, and participants find their experiences highly formative. Former U.S. ambassador to NATO Ivo H. Daalder has described his time at CFR as “a career-changing experience.” Fellows have had invaluable experiences in government and academia in the United States, Japan, South Korea, and India, while roughly one-third of CFR’s visiting military fellows go on to be admirals or generals.

As an organization, we also strive to be environmentally and socially conscious. Completed five years ago, our LEED Gold–certified office building in Washington, DC, is just steps from the White House and has transformed the organization’s presence in our nation’s capital. In addition to investments in our infrastructure, we are also investing in the well-being of CFR employees, our human capital. We have promoted an active lifestyle for our staff by establishing a health and wellness program that has lowered health-care costs, reduced absenteeism, and fostered a healthier workforce.

Although these accomplishments are considerable, we cannot rest on our laurels. The marketplace of ideas is increasingly competitive. In today’s era of narrowcasting and partisanship, CFR’s role as a truly nonpartisan, independent think tank with a broad intellectual agenda is more valuable than ever.

We have many reasons to be confident in the Council’s future. CFR’s reputation as a trusted, authoritative resource on U.S. foreign policy endures. I am proud of what this institution has achieved over the past ten years, and I look forward to helping to lead the Council on Foreign Relations in the years ahead.

I want to thank Co-Chairs Carla A. Hills and Robert E. Rubin, as well as their predecessor Peter G. Peterson, and mine, Leslie H. Gelb, for their many contributions. I also thank Vice Chairs David M. Rubenstein and Richard E. Salomon, and all of the members of the Board of Directors, for their service and dedication to this institution year in and year out. Moreover, all that we have accomplished over the past decade would not be possible without the extraordinary hard work of CFR staff in New York and Washington, DC, for which I am most grateful.

Richard N. Haass
President