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Those of us who have been to these institutes a time or two have come to expect that we're going to come away with something new – a fact we hadn't known, an insight, a different way of looking at the world and how best to engage its many challenges. This weekend was no exception, beginning not five minutes into Friday night's remarks by North Carolina Secretary of State Elaine Marshall.

I had scratched my head a bit when I saw the program, with Secretary Marshall leading off, thinking that in my experience secretaries of state, at least at the state level, have more to do with state flowers and state dogs and keeping watch on local elections than with affairs of state in the world at large. And when she began by talking about the thousands of official signatures required for foreign adoptions and business transactions I thought – well, important, yes, but not exactly earth shattering. And then suddenly we were off and rolling on her description of this state's engagement with the tiny post-Soviet republic of Moldova – an engagement that started with a few North Carolina National Guardsmen journeying there to help with police and army training and preparations for civil defense and that then snowballed as those Guardsmen came back home and got more and more North Carolinians to get engaged as well.

Secretary Marshall wasn't talking about Madison Avenue style sell-America efforts. She was describing one-on-one, people-to-people programs – from the collection of discarded but unused surgical equipment for use in Moldova's hospitals to student exchanges and working with orphanages to teaching Moldovan businesspeople the basics of marketing. The program got started almost by chance – a Defense Department initiative in 1991 following the Soviet Union's breakup that matched Guard units from various states with former republics. The difference here is that under the impetus of those first Guardsmen North Carolina turned the program into something much more, beginning with a formal state-to-state agreement that was signed in 1997. After President Bush took office our own U.S. State Department blanched at the agreement. "Someone said you can't sign that," Elaine said – "a state can't enter into an agreement with a foreign government. That's probably true, but we did it anyway."

They've been at it ever since, with very little money but a lot of hands-on engagement. Secretary Marshall has traveled to Moldova four times. Her deputy has adopted three Moldovans – three Moldovan teenagers! The relationship has weathered a drumbeat of pressure, first from Ukraine and still from Russia, and the replacement of a reform-minded president by an old-school Communist. Moldova was the poorest of the ex-Soviet republics; it still is. Secretary Marshall wouldn't claim that this state's efforts have transformed Moldova – but it has made a difference, for many people, and in the process it has transformed so many North Carolinians blessed with the opportunity to participate. Elaine described what it was like to visit one of the orphanages in Moldova, a place she said where children abandoned by their families had no affect whatsoever. “There was no emotion, no passion for life,” she said. “It was kind of like the pictures I've seen of Auschwitz. Once you have seen and experienced that, if it isn't a life-changing experience you're never going to have a life-changing experience.”

Moldova is a place where the faith of most people is Eastern Orthodox. It is far removed from the Muslim-Christian divide that has so occupied our policy-makers in the years since the 9/11 attacks. Yet I found myself wishing that those policy-makers – our State Department and Pentagon and White House officials who talk so much of “engaging” with the Muslim world and communicating our ideals -- could spend time with people like Elaine Marshall and the North Carolinians involved in this Moldova project. As she put it, “our president talks about nation-building. What North Carolina people are doing in the republic of Moldova is nation-building – and I'm incredibly proud to be associated with it.”

This morning we heard about a different form of people-to-people program, the HIV-AIDS prevention and treatment of William Fleming with Africare. This is an area, surprisingly, where groups like Africare give the Bush administration high marks – for announcing an ambitious \$15 billion program in HIV/AIDS work worldwide and then, after a fitful start, getting money and people on the ground in significant amounts.

And none too soon, given the sorts of challenges that William presented:

Of the 39.4 million persons infected with HIV/AIDS worldwide 25.4 million live in Africa, he told us. The annual death rate is now 2.3 million and will increase, thanks in part to 4.9 million new infections per year. The life expectancy in a country like Zambia, which was headed toward 60 just a few years ago, is now 30; in Zimbabwe, once among the most developed countries in Africa, it is 35.

As to the factors driving that explosion in disease, William cited everything from poverty to lack of education, inadequate health care and limited political will. Women have to survive and care for their families, he noted, and transactional sex is one way to survive. Politicians too often have lacked the will, or the understanding, to make education on prevention a priority.

But that situation is changing, he said, citing as an example the work Africare is doing in the west African country of Benin and in Zambia in southern Africa. Benin is a country

with a relatively low prevalence of HIV/AIDS now but it is vulnerable because of higher rates in neighboring countries and its role as a transit center. Zambia's rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence is among the highest on the continent, but it is also a place where the government has signed on to a major education and treatment program. In both countries Africare, partnered with U.S. AID and other non-government groups, is working with churches, local non-profits and schools to develop livelihood training, make micro-credit available and reach out to individuals infected with sexually transmitted diseases.

They're also working for the most part with local staff. Of Africare's workforce in Africa, William said, 96 percent are African.

Is there still too much politics in our approach? Absolutely, William said, with some interest groups worrying far too much about abstinence-only programs and others obsessed with condoms. With an average of three condoms per male per year the continent is not exactly awash, as William put it, in latex. But his overall message was one of encouragement – that the world is at last engaged, with real resources and people of good will committed to making a difference. What remains to be seen is whether the approaches they have chosen succeed.

It must have been a stroke of programming genius on Janet Malkemes' part to open the program with Elaine Marshall and then come back Saturday with Shibley Telhami of the University of Maryland – because Shibley has worked for years on just this issue of bridging gaps, especially between the United States and the Islamic world. As he notes, it's a project that hasn't gone especially well, and probably won't, until we rethink the roots of Arab and Islamic resentments toward the United States and the role of our policies in making those resentments more inflamed.

Describing the extensive work he has done analyzing Arab and Muslim public opinion, working in six countries of the Middle East over the past several years in association with the polling company Zogby International, Shibley presented a series of startling, counter-intuitive findings and conclusions. For starters, on the shoot-the-messenger front, consider that the U.S.-backed government of Iraq, aside from Iran, is the only Muslim country that has attempted to outlaw al Jazeera, the immensely popular Arab satellite channel based in Qatar. The thinking of U.S. advisers in Iraq was that Arab media outlets, preeminently al Jazeera, were putting out anti-American propaganda and that this had the effect of inciting anti-American attitudes.

Never mind the rather distressing idea that this action – suppressing the media – was among the key first steps in our efforts to stand up Iraqi democracy. It also had the distinction of being flat-out wrong. In the countries Zogby surveyed, it turns out that the station you watch has zero statistical significance in terms of predicting your views on such subjects as the American war in Iraq, U.S. policy toward terrorism and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arabs who watched CNN International were just as opposed to the U.S. policies as those watching al Jazeera. Even more striking was the almost identical level of resentment toward U.S. policies among Arab-Americans here in the United States – even though the television networks they list as their favorites are CNN and Fox News. If

Arabs tuned into al Jazeera, Shibley told us, it was because that station reflected the views they already had.

That Arabs would be resentful of the United States, the world's sole superpower, isn't especially significant in and of itself – it predates the 9/11 attack. What is new is a collapse in trust and confidence in U.S. foreign policy – from 63 percent in Saudi Arabia in the spring of 2000, for example, to single digits today. What's more, very few Arabs are taking at face value the Bush administration's claim that Iraq is about democratization – not among those surveyed in Saudi Arabia, and not in any of the other five countries surveyed by Zogby -- Jordan, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates.

And what do they cite instead, as the factors they believe are driving American policy in the region? Oil, Israel and a desire to weaken the Muslim world.

Contrary to the rhetoric out of Washington, moreover, most of those surveyed in the Arab countries consider their countries less democratic, not more, since the start of the Iraq war. And why not? Shibley asks. These were countries in which pre-war public opinion was overwhelmingly opposed to the U.S.-led invasion, an invasion that happened despite that opposition and in which, rubbing salt in the wound, those same countries were pressed to provide basing and other support to the U.S.-led coalition. And in which their governments, fearful of public opposition, responded by uniformly cracking down on dissident voices.

That's a bleak run of survey findings, to be sure, but Shibley left us with some grounds for hope as well, and perhaps the stirrings of policies that might be more productive. The mood he assays tends more toward Islamic nationalism than Islamic fundamentalism, for starters – or else why would overwhelming majorities of those surveyed say they have no objection to women working outside the home? Why would the world leader these Muslims say they admire most be Gamal Abdul Nasser, the late president of Egypt and a leading voice of secular pan-Arab nationalism? Why would the runner up among most admired be Jacques Chirac, the president of France?

He also suggests that the conflict is rooted much more in policies than values, and as such is cyclical and subject to change. The biggest issue for most Arabs is unchanged from before the Iraq war and before the 9/11 attacks, too; it is resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. Second is jobs, and education – the lack of work that has consigned millions to poverty and, among those with access to education, a mismatch between the skills taught and the jobs available. The Arab-Israeli conflict probably won't be addressed until politicians are persuaded that this is a priority for American voters, Shibley suggests, and this is something I certainly witnessed in the reflexive pro-Israel positions of nearly every Democratic contender in the last presidential campaign.

Getting at jobs and education, and maybe even the Arab-Israeli conflict, are issues perhaps conducive to direct citizen action along the lines of North Carolina's Moldova project. Shibley mentioned his work with the Education for Employment Foundation,

aimed at building specific skills for jobs in demand. He also cited former Secretary of Defense William Cohen's work with a new group pressing for making Arab-Israeli peace a U.S. priority. Shibley said we could track this down by Googling on the internet and he's right – the group is the Campaign for American Leadership in the Middle East (that's CALME) and its website is [www.mideastcalm.org](http://www.mideastcalm.org). The link will be in the written conference summary we'll be sending out.

I wish that Mark Thompson, an official with the State Department's office of counter-terrorism, had been here for Shibley's address. I would like to have heard his response. Mark spoke to us earlier Saturday, from his background as a Marine, a paratrooper and State Department expert who has dealt with hostage situations and terrorist groups from the Philippines to Iraq and from Kyrgyzstan to Colombia.

He said that in his view the terrorism challenge we face is about Islamic fundamentalism, about what he called "some people's radical interpretation of Islam." He praised the quick show of solidarity by the United Nations after the 9/11 attacks, and the cooperative arrangements among national intelligence services and militaries in ferreting out terrorist cells since. He also said, contrary to the survey findings of groups like Zogby and Pew, that democratization is the answer disaffected Arabs seek and that Iraq is the test case where we can demonstrate its appeal. And he said that at bottom this is a conflict in which our own resolve is being tested, a resolve that in his view failed as terrorist attacks from Beirut in 1983 to the Khobar Towers of Saudi Arabia in 1996, the bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998 and of the USS Cole in 2000 went largely unanswered. "At some point you have to respond," likening America's showdown with al Qaida to standing up to a schoolyard bully.

Mark said that in the places he has worked he has encountered long lines for U.S. visas and an appreciation for U.S. policies that he said contradicts not only the action and rhetoric of terrorists but also the gloomier assessments in the media and polling surveys.

He may be right – I hope so – but I'm reminded of a friend at the Pentagon who assured me two years back that we had turned the corner in Iraq, after killing the sons of Saddam Hussein. When I said no, that I feared the insurgency was just beginning, he was genuinely stunned. "Why would you think that?" he asked. I replied that I was thinking about the history of the region, of the long run of occupation armies and the futile blood so many of them had shed. "Well, sure, history," he said. "But do you have any other evidence?"

But then Washington is a place that sometimes appears so fixated on what we think should or could be that we lose sight of what is.

Surely the situation's not as dire as Klaus Becker, our estimable moderator, suggested in one of his signature jokes – the one about the White House physician relaying his concerns after a physical exam of President Bush's brain. "The problem is that on the right side of your brain nothing is left," the doctor relays, "and on the left side nothing is

right.” But in any case it is long past time for us to look beyond our own slogans and to think about realities on the ground, here and around the world.

A very good person for that sort of project would be John Silvia, chief economist for Wachovia Bank, who gave us a tour de force of world conditions. It was mostly through an economist’s prism – but what an enlightening, bracing view it was.

For all the current focus on America’s engagement with Iraq and its confrontation with Islamist extremists, John reminded us that the lives of our children and grandchildren will likely be more affected by how we handle the rapidly emerging economic powerhouse of China. The combination of demographics and a government that puts growth above all else all but guarantees that China will surpass us within a generation as the world’s preeminent economic powerhouse, he notes, and will soon present the world – and especially the United States and Japan – with some extremely tough questions as to who rules in east Asia. That both relationships retain largely unaddressed legacies of conflict – stretching back to Korea in our case, to the Manchurian conquest and the rape of Nanking for Japan – only makes matters more delicate still. Especially delicate, for sure, for the people of Taiwan, a remarkable story of democratic success and self-empowerment that could end up a U.S. sacrifice to the realities of China’s new dominance.

John discussed this in terms that struck many of us as novel—of China as a very young country up against an aging United States. Novel because we think of ourselves as still brand new on history’s stage, and China as timelessly old. But the demographics of today’s China are incredibly young, John said, and that means a nation of young people thirsting more than anything for growth, expansion and jobs. The aging countries, by contrast, are those that value stability, safety, security – a job and health care and the assurance of a decent pension. John said you see that in Europe today and you’ll see it here quite soon. “In another five to ten years I guarantee that Medicare and Social Security will be THE top priority for many Americans,” he said. “It will absolutely dominate our society. We’ll want stability and we’ll take lower growth to assure it. The Chinese aren’t like that. They’re not worried about pensions. They want growth and jobs, and they want them now.”

This was something that struck me this spring, reporting in Germany, a country that has stagnated with growth no better than 1 percent or so a year for the past decade, with a vanishing birth rate and rapidly aging population that appears more interested in maintaining current benefits – health, retirement and unemployment – than in removing the roadblocks to a more dynamic economy. I wrote about Germany as an object lesson for Americans, of what might be if we don’t get our fiscal affairs and health and pension systems in order before all of us Baby Boomers retire. John Silvia suggests that from the perspective of a country like China, where GDP growth of 10 percent a year is the norm and massive economic risk-taking too, America is already much more like the aging countries of Europe than the economic dynamo we still like to pretend we are.

John touched on Iraq as well, describing it as a rather colossal bet that could turn out well – like Germany or Japan after World War II – or else go disastrously bad, a failed

“democracy demonstration project” such as we suffered in Vietnam (and the Vietnamese, too).

In the question period for John we got around to a topic that’s never far beneath the surface at our meetings – the role of the United Nations as a conduit for, and sometime restraint on, U.S. foreign policy. John gave us a wonderfully economist point of view, declaring that he wasn’t about to get into questions of morality. “Right or wrong is a real bucket of worms,” he said, “because people see things differently.” What would Sam and Miriam Levering make of that, I wondered? What would they have made of their son Frank’s monologue, the night before?

There was some stretching of the truth, to be sure, and some parts I surely didn’t recognize – even though Frank and I are the same age and I had known him almost as far back as the events he describes. He’s a little slippery, Frank is, but highly persuasive. The very first day I met him, as I recall, we were sharing a room in the big red house on the side of the mountain. It was a glorious night and Frank talked me into sleeping on the roof. Never mind that it was a steeply pitched tin roof, on the side of a hill so steep itself that someone falling would probably come to rest somewhere south of Mt. Airy. Not a problem, Frank said, producing a rope that was tied to a bureau inside and that he proceeded to cinch to each of us, at the waist. I didn’t sleep well – but I recall the stars, and the moon, and that cherry tree, too.

When Frank talked about his father’s “maniacal devotion” to world peace, or his mother’s constant journeys, the ancient cars, the careless attention to dress or food or even a place to sleep, all that rings true. But “Mr. And Mrs. Peace” could be hard-headed too, and I think they would have appreciated John Silvia’s pragmatic case for the United States maintaining the United Nations as a bulwark against a future we cannot hope to fully control. If demography means China is destined to someday overtake the United States, doesn’t that argue for building up an institution where rules are respected by all? “It’s very hard to say we’re going to be number one forever,” John said. “But if you’re number two in a safe, stable world, that’s probably better than blowing everything up.”

Our essay contest winner, ninth grader Anish Pathipati of Myers Park High School in Charlotte, wrote that we couldn’t defeat terrorism without enlisting the help of the United Nations. The topic for next year’s essay, how to make the goals and charters of the U.N relevant to today’s world, is as pertinent as the reform agenda the world’s leaders will consider when they go to New York this September – touching on topics as diverse as internal administration, peacebuilding and reorganization of the Human Rights Commission.

What remains to be seen is how committed the Bush administration is to pressing effectively for change. A less than reassuring sign is the president’s insistence on John Bolton, a nominee as U.S. ambassador distinguished mostly by the acerbic quality of his criticism and his uncollegial record at the Department of State – and yet someone it now appears the president will push through on a recess appointment. Also discouraging: House passage of a bill that would cut U.S. dues by as much as half if a highly detailed

list of reforms aren't enacted in the space of two years. We've seen that movie before – the Jesse Helms version – and few UN supporters would wish for a reprise. But on the other hand there has been a high level of engagement on the reform issues – not just by Secretary General Annan but also the high-level panel led by former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and the bipartisan panel led by former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell. These are substantial people. They want the administration to seize the moment, to do what's needed to make the United Nations a more effective organization.

I hope they succeed. Last November I had the opportunity to travel with the Security Council members to Kenya, for only the fourth meeting outside New York in the council's history. The occasion was the agreement to finalize the peace agreement ending two decades of war between the government of Sudan and the southern rebel movement led by John Garang. At the time many focused on the Council's failure, the fact that the United States had not succeeded in winning approval for sanctions against Sudan because of actions deemed genocidal in the separate conflict that had broken out the year before in the western district of Darfur. What I saw looked more like success – putting the weight of a united council behind a resolution demanding that the parties make good on the north-south peace agreement and then address the crisis in Darfur. That crisis is a long way from over but the months since November have seen a steady decrease in casualties, access for humanitarian agencies and a much-increased security force from the African Union, the signing of a declaration of principles on a ceasefire between rebel groups in Darfur and a government in Khartoum that now includes John Garang. It isn't as dramatic as making preemptive unilateral war, perhaps, but it's a lot less costly and has the merit of engaging others at our side.

You all know that I have the most pleasant task of anyone in this group, because every year I get to cobble together a talk made up of bits and pieces of the wonderful speeches we've heard all weekend. My closing is no exception, taken from the extraordinary tribute we heard Saturday to Jack Fobes, who served so ably and well at UNESCO and was such a stalwart part of our meetings here. As has been his wife Hazel – notwithstanding her comment last night that, her own son excepted, all the media is trash. I took that as hyperbole – I hope!

Jack and Hazel's friend Tom Colson told us of Jack's last full day, this past January, how he and Hazel had met with their state legislator to press for campaign finance reform and then gone on to a UN Association meeting, where Jack praised Kofi Annan's reform proposals and urged the local board to begin an educational campaign. And then the next morning, reading the Bible, he quietly died.

Tom said you might wonder, given the events these past few years, how Jack had been so unwavering in his efforts, so engaged, and so optimistic. You might wonder how he and Hazel could have remained such happy warriors, as Tom put it, not just in holding our feet to the fire here in Black Mountain but in all they did. And Tom had an explanation, too, something I'd like for us to carry with us as we head down the mountain. And this was it – that Jack and Hazel, looking at the long sweep of American history, knew that

despite gains that were sometimes painfully slow, marvelous progress has been made toward realizing those shining ideals on which this nation was founded, progress that came because men and women of good will persevered regardless of obstacles.

So as we think of Jack, of Miriam and Sam and the many who have labored here with us, let us remember, with Tom, the lesson from lives lived well. "Hang in there, people. Time is on your side."