

**“The Heart of the Matter:
The Humanities and Social Sciences
for a Vibrant, Competitive, and Secure Nation”**

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Written Remarks

Thank you, Jonathan, that kind introduction.

Let me also add my note of gratitude to the Chicago Humanities Festival and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

These are two organizations that make tremendous contributions to advancing the studies of the arts and humanities in the United States and throughout the world.

Before beginning my conversation with Jerome McDonnell and you, and I wanted to set the stage here (literally) by presenting some vignettes drawn from my own experience.

Let me tell talk about Afghanistan, where I served for over five years after 9/11, on two tours of duty as soldier, and one one as our nation’s ambassador.

Since our military intervention in Afghanistan in late-2001, our application of hard power has cost the U.S. taxpayers over \$550 USD billion in military operating costs.

The price, by the way, of deploying one soldier to Afghanistan for one year is about \$1 million dollars. At the height of the surge in 2011 we had 100,000 troops, adding up to around \$100 billion USD per annum.

[Optional: Over that same period of time, we have also spent about \$50 billion USD equipping, training, and paying the salaries of the Afghan National Army and Police.]

To date, there have been over 2,200 American troops killed in the Afghan Theater of War, and almost 20,000 wounded. The estimated health care costs to cover the current and future Iraq and Afghan war veterans’ claims are estimated at upwards of \$1 trillion USD (I said trillion, not billion).

That is the price of hard power.

Then there is soft-power, Harvard Professor Joe Nye's concept that described the ability to willingly attract and co-opt - rather than coerce - as a means of persuasion.

Soft power is about culture, values, and smart nuanced foreign policy ... its fount is the magnetic potential of the arts and humanities.

In Afghanistan, the U.S. application of soft power has been modest in terms of costs, and often high payoff when considering the results.

Two examples.

First, archaeology and history.

The Afghan people have a proud history enriched over the ages by their nation's pivotal location as the geographic, commercial, religious, and cultural crossroads of Persia, and Central & South Asia.

But after decades of brutal political and ethnic warfare marked by Soviet occupation, civil war, and Taliban abusive rule, relics of the past have been destroyed, history expropriated by fanatics, and the Afghans' sense of common identity dangerously eroded.

One of the most valued members of our 1400-strong Embassy staff in Afghanistan in 2009 was our Embassy Archaeologist, one of only two such experts assigned to American diplomatic missions around the world.

Among other projects, she led the way in promoting the restoration of the old citadel of Herat – Qala Iktyaruddin in western Afghanistan at the gateway to Persia.

The citadel was perhaps first built by Alexander the Great, leveled by the Mongols, rebuilt, destroyed again by Tamerlane's forces, and then made splendid by a shah in the 15th century.

It again fell into ruin during the wars of modern times.

The Herat citadel is the story of the once and hopefully future greatness of Afghanistan.

Please watch this brief video clip in which Afghans talk about the renovation of their citadel.

[Slide 1 – Video of the Herat Citadel]

The total U.S. contribution to this project was a little over \$1 million – as I mentioned earlier - the cost of stationing one U.S. Army Soldier or Marine in Afghanistan for one year.

Second – music.

You will recall that the Taliban, when they gained control of Afghanistan in the mid-1990s, banned the playing of music throughout the country. That prohibition ended with the defeat of their regime in late-2001.

When I served as our Chief of Mission in Kabul in 2009, I became acquainted with the Afghan National Institute of Music in Kabul, an Afghan fine arts school established in 2006, dedicated to the musical education of children – including many of them economically disadvantaged.

The children are taught Western orchestral and traditional Afghan music, and most are incredibly skilled at both.

Indeed, one of the most accomplished violinists, a young girl named Marja, who previously walked the streets of Kabul selling gum, was admitted to the Institute after the American director saw her each day standing on the street peering through the windows transfixed by the students' practicing their lessons.

Five years later, she intends to apply for admission to the Julliard School.

The Institute in February of last year had a crowning achievement when it sent its student orchestra to perform at the Carnegie Hall in New York City and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

I was invited to attend the sold-out concert at Kennedy Center and have never sat through a more uplifting and emotional event.

Well-attended by many Afghan and Afghan-American citizens, it was as if in the course of the repertoire, those in the audience were witnessing the Afghan cultural phoenix rising from the ashes of war.

Watch this video excerpt of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music students, joined by an American student orchestra, performing at the Kennedy Center on February 7th, 2013.

[Slide 2 – Video of the Afghan National Institute of Music Performance at the Kennedy Center, February 7th, 2013]

Victor Hugo once wrote, “Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.”

His words were validated that evening at the Kennedy Center.

While no one in attendance could predict the near-term future of Afghanistan, all could agree that just as the youthful Afghan musicians that winter evening demonstrated they could excel on a world class musical stage, there was no reason that the Afghan nation could not one day claim a place of dignity and respect on the world diplomatic stage.

By the way, the level of U.S. Embassy support – that is, U.S. taxpayer support – to the Institute has been about \$500,000 USD per year (the cost of one U.S. Soldier of Marine serving in Afghanistan for six months).

[Optional: Here, I have to point out, that the cost of a 4-string violin is considerably less than, say, a U.S. Army Stryker Infantry Combat Vehicle priced at \$4.9 million USD per unit. And the former, in Afghanistan at least, actually packed far more punch per dollar than the latter.]

Now before joining Jerome, a final message to everyone here in attendance.

While in the 1989 cinema classic, *Field of Dreams*, farmer Ray Kinsella – played by Kevin Costner – achieves success by listening to the inner voice that whispers, "If you build it, he will come" ... I do not think this is the necessarily the best way in this year of 2014 to inspire the younger generation to study of the arts and humanities.

Sulking in one's arts and humanities classroom, worrying about declining enrollments, while cursing the STEM god, might be good grist for a Shakespearean tragedy, but does little to help the cause.

You have to get outside of the box and compete for market share.

My third and last short video clip, is from *Colbert Nation*, August 15th, 2013 and features Duke President, Dick Brodhead.

[Slide 3 – Video of Duke President Richard Brodhead on Colbert Nation, August 15th, 2013]

Now look – for me, taking on the Taliban is a much much less daunting task than facing Stephen Colbert.

But we all need to suck it up, so to speak, and go on the offensive.

Go to where the target audiences are, and engage them on their home turf.

I know this can be hard and uncomfortable work.

However, I remember seeing on the office desk of one of our many stellar Embassy performers in Afghanistan a sign that she said served as her daily inspiration in the conduct of her very difficult assignment:

[Slide 4 – “Life Begins Where Your Comfort Zone Ends”]

I would encourage you to get outside of your comfort zone, take risk, and remember that not only is the X-Files adage “The truth is out there” operative, but that those in the younger generation who need to be introduced to and inspired by the arts and humanities – like the truth, are out there as well.

Thank you.

[Heart of the Matter slide]

Jerome...