Thank you so much, Ken, for those very generous words of introduction. It is truly a pleasure to be with all of you this evening and an enormous honor to accept the James H. Doolittle Prize from the Hudson Institute.

Over past the half-century, Hudson has been an incubator for creative and unconventional ideas, embodying a quintessentially American combination of idealism and pragmatism. You have helped us "to think about the unthinkable" while inspiring a sense of optimism and possibility about the future.

Beginning with Herman Kahn, the great futurist who breathed life into this extraordinary institute, Hudson has been strengthened and sustained by the leadership of Wally Stern, Herb London, and Allan Tessler, with whom I am proud to stand tonight, and by my good friend, Ken Weinstein, whose intellect and purpose have so enlivened and enriched the Hudson Institute as they, incidentally, have the Georgetown synagogue in Washington where we both regularly meet to pray and "kibitz."

It is a particular honor for me to be honored with Wally Stern tonight. Through his decades of leadership of the Hudson Institute, Wally has inspired in so many a commitment to civic life. In his brilliant way, Wally Stern remains a role model. Thank you, Wally, for all that you have done and will do; I am truly honored to be honored with you this evening.

Seventy years ago this year, 1941, was the year Nazi Germany seized control of nearly all of mainland Europe; the year the Empire of Japan launched a surprise attack that crippled our Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor; the year in which, as Winston Churchill put it, "the crisis" was "upon us."

It was in this time of crisis that General James H. Doolittle led the raid on Tokyo in the wake of Pearl Harbor. General Doolittle's daring feat offered hope when all seemed hopeless, and made clear to our allies and enemies alike that America was now in the fight, and would stay there until our Alliance prevailed.

Doolittle was a true American hero. Once called "the Leonardo da Vinci of flight," he was a man of extraordinary talent and courage—a man who believed that no matter how difficult the odds or how great the sacrifice, a risk for the sake of his country was well worth taking.

The "Doolittle spirit" still endures today, in a new generation of American heroes – leaders like David Petraeus, the most distinguished general officer of his generation and one of the greatest wartime commanders in American history.
It is found in the band of brothers who carried out with extraordinary courage and capability the operation that killed Osama bin Laden. The Doolittle spirit lives most broadly in our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who surged into Iraq in the dark days of 2007 and who today are fighting to free Afghanistan from the medieval grip of the Taliban.

At this time when so many Americans have lost their characteristic hope and confidence, the current crop of Doolittle heroes reminds everyone that America is still capable of greatness. In the years ahead, we will need that greatness—and the confidence that comes with it—to meet the multiple challenges we face at home and around the world: from Somalia to the South China Sea; from the lawless borderlands of Afghanistan and Pakistan to the borderless land of cyberspace. We must confront these threats at the same time that we face unprecedented economic challenges here at home.

At this time when we most need to be strong and steadfast, we increasingly hear voices of fear and insecurity who are calling for America to turn inward.

This is not the first time this has happened and it won't be the last, but it always ends up hurting our country and our people. In the 1930s, it was the isolationism of the "America Firsters" on the political right that denied the threat posed by Nazi Germany, insisted that Hitler was Europe's problem, and thereby helped bring about a world war.

In the 1970s, it was the American left that shouted, "Come Home, America"—insisting that the threat to freedom and peace was not from Soviet communism but from our own "irrational fear" of communism, and thereby inviting Soviet aggression.

More recently, these isolationist tendencies have, like much else in Washington, taken a partisan turn. During the 1990s, Republicans in Congress too often defined their national security priorities by instinctive opposition to what the Democratic commander-in-chief was doing in the world—in this case in the Balkans. During the last decade, Democrats in Congress too often defined their national security priorities by instinctive opposition to what the Republican Commander in Chief was doing in the world and grew emotionally invested in a narrative of retreat and defeat in Iraq.

The truth is, a platform of retreat from the world has no place in either the Democratic or Republican Party. Such a platform is not only bad governance; it is bad politics because ultimately most Americans will not support a party of retreat and defeat.

We do not live in a "post-American world." We live in a world in which American leadership and American power are more important than ever. The American people intuitively understand that. The fact is we live in a world in which our own security, freedom, and prosperity at home are inseparable from the security, freedom, and prosperity of people in distant lands.

These truths are falling out of fashion in some quarters of Washington. In Congress, we see the stirrings of what my friend Lindsey Graham has called a "unholy alliance" between the isolationist right and the anti-war left, between Democrats and Republicans
who want America to retreat from the wars we are in, pull back from our allies, and slash the spending that sustains American power in the world.

But we must not and cannot balance our budget by retreating from the world. We will not grow our economy by embracing protectionism. We will not close the deficit by gutting the defense budget. The path to restoring fiscal responsibility and economic growth at home is not through strategic irresponsibility abroad. It is through disciplined and bipartisan leadership at home and abroad.

Our real fiscal challenge and foremost responsibility lies in tackling the runaway cost of our entitlement programs. Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, together with and interest on the debt, will by 2020 consume 89 cents of every federal tax dollar, and in the absence of reform, will eventually require virtually all of our country's tax revenue to sustain them.

The best interests of our country require not only the policies of American internationalism and the strength of America's moral example, but also the exercise of American power—including, when necessary, the determined use of America's military might against our enemies.

This is the muscular internationalist view that links Democratic Presidents like John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton with Republican Presidents like Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush.

This shared view grows out of a shared non-partisan commitment to America's founding cause—which has animated our national purpose since America began. One of our nation's great poets, Walt Whitman, wrote that in America, "Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined" and for this reason, as Whitman put it, "The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem."

They are a poem that remains etched for eternity in the words of our country's founding documents; a poem that expresses a cause greater than the interest of individuals or political parties; a poem that has given us our national destiny, which is the universal, timeless cause of human freedom and economic opportunity.

That great cause will not be advanced nor our destiny achieved if our leaders today yield to the short-term political appeal of a neo-isolationism. That will only weaken our security, limit our freedom, and diminish our prosperity.

As you know, I announced earlier this year that I have decided to turn the page to a new chapter in my career and leave the Senate when my term expires in January 2013.

I must say that I am excited about what is around the bend. But as one of Hudson's scholars, the great American author Ralph Ellison, put it: "The end is in the beginning and lies far ahead." For me that means: I may be leaving the United States Senate, but I am not planning to retire from public life anytime soon, or from the causes that I have fought for throughout my career.
One cause that I promise to fight for is the need to strengthen and deepen a bipartisan center of internationalism in this country on key national security and economic issues. Although this will require the understanding, leadership, and support of both Republicans and Democrats, the fact is, the real divide when it comes to foreign policy is not between Democrats and Republicans.

It is between those who understand that our national interests require us to remain involved in the world and those who would rely on big oceans and hollow hopes to protect us. It is a divide between those who believe America cannot afford to be a world leader any more, and those who understand that America cannot afford NOT to be a leader in the world.

For me, the choice is clear and it is in the spirit of accepting that continuing responsibility that I gratefully accept the Doolittle Prize this evening. Thank you.