"American Leadership at Home and Abroad: The Bicentennial Challenge," is a well-chosen theme, celebrating as we are this month the signing two centuries ago of our nation's most enduring document.

I shall contribute as I can to your deliberations, cognizant of the collective wisdom and seasoned perspectives of those who have gathered for these discussions.

The U.S. Constitution, which we rightly celebrate as one of mankind's authentic triumphs, was composed by a handful of uncommon men living at the western fringe of European civilization. Franklin and Madison, Hamilton and Jay, together with their co-signers in Philadelphia 200 years ago, fashioned America's most creative and singularly brilliant expression of global leadership. This document both founded a nation and provided an ensign for a restive and weary world to follow. It was a radical act, subversive of the old order and illuminating of the one to come. The world has never been the same since.

How did this come about? I do not mean by this the events that occasioned the convening of delegates in Philadelphia during the
summer months of 1787, but rather the genius of the document they collectively fashioned.

The framers of the Constitution, as we all know, were counted among the political, social, intellectual, military, agricultural, and business leaders of what had been the colonies. In this sense, they were leaders in the most familiar and conventional of ways. But they were more than that, for they brought to their task a disciplined, informed, and sophisticated appreciation of their culture and the civilization of which they were a part. They possessed not a parochial but a universal view of the world and their place in it. The Federalist, for example, reflects the authors' acquaintance with ancient and modern history; it also reflects, in its often stunning prose, Hamilton's love of literature, Madison's sophisticated and almost uncanny comprehension of political philosophy and theory, and Jay's grasp of the law and its civilizing role.

These men were prepared for their task and free to perform it: prepared because of the breadth, depth, and richness of their education and training, and free because of the American Revolution, which at once liberated this new land and, in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, gave expression to the political thought, theories, and philosophy of eighteenth century Europe, but within the less fettered confines of an expanding New World.
We are living 200 years later, of course, and in a far different world from that of the founders of our nation, when Washington admonished his countrymen to remain free of foreign entanglements. American leaders today confront a world resembling almost not at all the one I have been referencing; but, remarkably, we remain governed under the document signed in Philadelphia by America's first leaders. They possessed a sense of the forces that were shaping their culture and their civilization; indeed, they manifested an almost magical comprehension of their times. How are we today, then, to capture for our own times the kind of leadership the Founding Fathers brought to theirs?

We will surely not do so merely by the crass use of rhetoric or symbols, images or impressions, masquerading for meaning and substance. We will not do so with riskless solutions or timid initiatives. We will not do so acting out of pure self-interest or personal aggrandizement. We will not do so by a disproportionate reliance on coercion or force of arms or the power of money. We will not do so by an opportunism which seeks to excuse or otherwise justify an ignorance of our own past or of the world as it is being shaped and formed by forces, events, and ideas whose significance we do not comprehend.

While tactical and temporary gain or advantage may be derived from the employment of such means or motives, the attaining of
strategic and more lasting objectives requires leadership that is more than illusory.

Such leadership is not easily nurtured in today's America, with our demand for daily answers and facile solutions, where the bumper sticker and the turn of a phrase on the evening news substitute for discussion and are mistaken for commentary and communication, where appearance overpowers reason and the use of images and manipulation of symbols are not only big business but more often than not a substitute for the message.

My own view is that we underestimate the average citizen's intelligence and ability. We undervalue his or her capacity to make common-sense judgments. We underuse the talent and skill and energy of our dynamic society. In short, we have somehow come to believe that top-down solutions are preferable to bottom-up ones. The Constitution, together with its amendments, vested the nation's sovereignty and security in the people. Contemporary leaders, it seems to me, should, no less than their counterparts two centuries ago, have recourse to the precepts and principles that framed our nation and infused it with the liberating and energizing proposition that the people ought to control their government and not the reverse.

In 1983, the members of the National Commission on Excellence in Education decided to test the point I have just made. The Commission had been asked to prepare a report for the Secretary
of Education and the President on the quality of schooling in America. We did so, but it was a report addressed not so much to the government as to the American people, in the form of an open letter. We entitled it *A Nation at Risk*.

Our approach was a straightforward one. If what we had to say about the nation's schools made sense to the average citizen, things would happen and government would respond. If, on the other hand, the report made sense to the government but not to the people, little would happen. Thus, we wrote our open letter to the American people in plain English. We said no more than we needed to say for the main points to be made. We defined the problem, offered possible solutions, made clear why the subject was important to the nation and its future, and invited a response fitted to the interest and circumstances of the reader.

This report of 36 pages has been reprinted over 13 million times. It provoked the most searching examination of the quality of schooling in America in more than a quarter of a century, and sparked an educational reform movement both here and abroad that remains remarkably robust.

But merely unlocking the door and opening it for citizen involvement and welcoming of new ideas does not fully define the responsibility of leaders.
As with the Founding Fathers, leaders today must be both prepared and free to perform their role: by prepared I mean deeply knowledgeable about our past, widely informed about the present, and capable of making sense of and influencing the winds of change that are blowing over the face of our small planet. And by free I mean a willingness to substitute the common good for our own.

We live in what is for America a shrinking world, more interdependent, complex, and closely linked than the early leaders of our nation could possibly have envisioned. For example, the industrial and scientific revolutions, the advancement of technology and the industrialization of labor, what the historian and philosopher Hichem Djait (Hee-SHEM Jah-EET) refers to as the forces of "modernity" are confronting and challenging the world's great civilizations more than those civilizations are confronting and challenging one another. But we tend to confuse these forces of modernity with the spreading of Western culture, Djait (Jah-EET) argues in his brief but trenchant essay entitled Europe and Islam. According to Djait, however, that is a provincial view; instead, "the pattern emerging is not a confrontation between civilizations but of each one with modernity." And it is only our mutual incomprehension that leads us to confuse the spreading of modernity with what is thought to be the expansion of Western civilization.
Djait's (Jah-EET) perspective is that of a Muslim Arab educated in France. He straddles two cultures and, thus, surmounts the provincialism of both, a rare accomplishment. How is our nation, bounded by great oceans to our east and west and by our own ignorance to our south, to prepare and equip our leaders with a capacity to surmount the profound insularity of our own country and culture? The answer, of course, is principally by means of education. But given American conventions and habits this is no easy task, valuing so little as we do the study of foreign languages, history, philosophy, geography, other civilizations and cultures, art, and the richness of our own language in both oral and written form. And, frankly, our universities could do a much better job than they do in this respect. Why is it, for example, that in the United States there is only one school of international relations that looks west to the nations of the Pacific rather than east to Europe, and that its first students will be entering in 1987? Japan, after all, is not California's Far East; it is its Near West. As Thomas Jefferson warned almost 200 years ago: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

I hope, therefore, that this conference of business and governmental leaders will take account of the role education should be playing in the preparing of our country's leadership. The tendency is falsely to assume that commitment, desire, and raw intelligence will prove equal to the task of leadership today.
They are not. Those were essential attributes for the authors of our Constitution to possess, as they are today for the nation's leadership; but in the end it was what they wrote that counted, and what they wrote was drawn from a fund of knowledge, incisively engaged and brilliantly expressed, sweeping and strategic in its scope and significance, suited not just for their time but for ours as well.

Thank you.