

Princeton University's Celebration of the 75th Anniversary Of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs

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(3:00 p.m. EDT)

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Thank you very much. Madame President, other distinguished members here on the dais, and especially to Anne-Marie Slaughter who I know not just as a fine Dean of the Woodrow Wilson School but also as an extraordinary scholar whose expertise I've tapped on a couple of occasions since I've been Secretary, thank you for your leadership of this great university and your leadership in this great school.

I am honored to be here today at Princeton. From George Kennan and John Foster Dulles, to George Shultz and James Baker, and of course, Woodrow Wilson, many renowned American statesmen have worn the orange and black.



I am especially honored to help all of you celebrate this historic 75th anniversary of the Woodrow Wilson School. As a professor myself, I understand how important it is to root the practice of statecraft in the study of statecraft in the systematic examination of politics and history and culture that the Wilson School offers to its students.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Seventy-five years ago, when this school was founded, it was a difficult time when the world's democracies were like islands in a raging sea. Adolph Hitler was planning his ascent to power in Germany and plotting his conquest of Europe. And Joseph Stalin was consolidating his rule and building a Soviet Union that would threaten the entire free world.

Today, however, democracies are emerging wherever and whenever the tides of oppression recede. As President Bush said in his Second Inaugural Address, "The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world."

Now, to forge realistic policies from these idealistic principles, we must recognize that statecraft can assume two fundamentally different forms. In ordinary times, when existing ideas and institutions and alliances are adequate to the challenges of the day, the purpose of statecraft is to manage and sustain the established international order. But in extraordinary times, when the very terrain of history shifts beneath our feet and decades of human effort collapse into irrelevance, the mission of statecraft is to transform our institutions and partnerships to realize new purposes on the basis of enduring values.

One such extraordinary moment began in 1945 in the wreckage of one of the great cataclysms in human history. World War II thoroughly consumed the old international system. And it fell to a group of American statesmen -- individuals like Truman and Acheson and Vandenberg -- to assume the roles of architects and builders of a better world.

The solutions to those challenges seem perfectly clear now with half a century of hindsight. But it was anything but clear for the men and women who lived and worked in those unprecedented change. Long after he was present at the creation, Dean Acheson remembered the early years of the Cold War as cloudy, and puzzling, and perilous. "The significance of events," he wrote, "was shrouded in ambiguity and we hesitated long before grasping what now seems obvious."

But despite the extraordinary nature of their time, the statesmen of that era succeeded brilliantly. They conceived doctrines and created the alliances and built the institutions that formed the foundation of a new international system, one organized to defend freedom from the spread of communism.

The ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union initiated a new moment of transformation. This was a glorious revolution, a cause for celebration throughout Russia and Eastern Europe. The Warsaw Pact countries became the new heart of NATO, and we transformed that alliance into one that Truman and Acheson would never have recognized, but would certainly have applauded. Some even thought that the engine of globalization might just make the possibility of conflict remote.

But lurking below the surface, old hatreds were gaining new power. And on a warm September morning, America encountered the darker demons of our new world.

People still differ about what the September 11th calls us to do. And in a democratic society, that debate is healthy and just and right. If you focus only on the attacks themselves and believe they were caused by 19 hijackers, supported by a network called al-Qaida, and operating from a failed state -- Afghanistan -- then our response can be limited. The course of action presumes that we are still living in an ordinary time.

But if you believe, as I do and as President Bush does, that the root cause of September 11th was the violent expression of a global extremist ideology, an ideology rooted in the

oppression and despair of the modern Middle East, then we must speak to remove the source of this terror by transforming that troubled region. If you believe as we do, then it cannot be denied that we are standing at an extraordinary moment in history.

Some would argue that this broad approach to the problem is making the world less stable by rocking the boat and wrecking the status quo. But this presumes the existence of a stable status quo that does not threaten global security. This is not the case. A regional order that produced an ideology of hatred so savage as the one we now confront is not serving any civilized interest.

For 60 years, we often thought that we could achieve stability without liberty in the Middle East. And ultimately, we got neither. Now, we must recognize, as we do in every other region of the world, that liberty and democracy are the only guarantees of true stability and lasting security.

There are those who worry that greater freedom of choice in the Middle East will only liberate and empower extremism. In fact, the opposite is true: A political culture of transparency and openness is not one in which extremist beliefs can ultimately thrive. Extremism is most dangerous when it lurks in the dark and hides underground. When there is no political space for individuals to advance their interests and redress their grievances, then they retreat into the shadows to grow ever more radical and divorced from reality. We saw the result of that on September 11th and now we must work to advance democratic reform throughout the greater Middle East.

Now, to support democratic aspirations, we must be serious about the universal appeal of certain basic rights. When given a truly free choice, human beings will choose liberty over oppression; the right to own property over random search and seizure. Human beings will choose the natural right to life over the constant fear of death. And human beings will choose to be ruled by the consent of the governed, not by the coercion of the state; by the rule of law, not the whim of rulers. These principles should be the source of justice in every society and the basis for peace between all states.

To support democratic aspirations, we must also promote democratic institutions that function transparently and accountably. We must help all young democracies to protect minority rights, to enforce the rule of law, and to build the foundations of good governance, from a thriving economy and a vibrant civil society, to a free media and opportunities for learning and for health for their people.

To support the democratic aspirations, we must recognize that liberty still faces opponents in our world. Some will never support the free choices of their citizens because they stand to lose arbitrary powers and unjust privileges. Others know that the ideology of hatred they espouse can only thrive in a political culture of oppression and poverty and hopelessness. In a world where evil is still very real, democratic principles must be backed with power in all its forms: political, and economic, and cultural, and moral, and yes, sometimes, military. Any champion of democracy who promotes

principle without power can make no real difference in the lives of oppressed people.

There are those who falsely characterize the support of democracy as "exporting" democracy, as if democracy were somehow a product that only America manufactures. These critics say that we are arrogantly imposing our principles on an unwilling people. But it is the very height of arrogance to believe that political liberty and democratic aspirations and freedom of speech and rights for women somehow belong only to us. All people deserve these rights and they choose them freely. It is not liberty and democracy that must be imposed. It is tyranny and silence that are forced upon people at gunpoint.

We know that the march of democracy is not easy. We know that coming to terms with the provision of these rights takes time. We know because of our own history in which imperfect people put together institutions that allowed us to strive everyday toward a more perfect union. But of course, in our 250 years, we are still striving and as we look at others who are still striving, we owe them our respect and our confidence that they, too, can achieve their aspirations.

For years, the entire world talked about ending the Taliban's tyranny in Afghanistan. But it was finally the United States, leading a coalition of willing nations and brave Afghans that finally put an end to that regime's persecution of its people. Although many challenges remain, Afghanistan has amazed the world with its rapid progress toward democracy even as many people begin to take it for granted.

For years, the entire world also talked about ending Syria's occupation of Lebanon. But it was the United States and France, leading a broad international coalition, with a UN Security Council mandate that together with Lebanese patriots finally achieved the withdrawal of Syrian forces after the brutal murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Since then, the Lebanese people have held their first free elections in decades. And we are now supporting them in the hard work of democratic reform that will continue long into the future.

For years, the entire world sought to make peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, while overlooking the corrupt nature and terrorist links of Yasser Arafat's rule. But President Bush refused to deal with Arafat and encouraged the Palestinian people to undertake the democratic reforms they so justly deserved. Since Arafat's death, the Palestinian people have elected a president who calls for peace with Israel and recognizes the need to fight terrorism. Now, if both Palestinians and Israelis meet their obligations, there is a true opportunity for a lasting peace.

For years, the topic of reform was not even a part of our dialogue with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. But President Bush insisted on having these difficult discussions with our two oldest friends, in private and in public. Both countries are now taking steps to greater political openness. Saudi Arabia held imperfect municipal elections earlier this year because women did not vote. But they have promised that they will vote in the future. Egypt held flawed but landmark presidential election this summer in which there was, at

least, vigorous debate of the options before Egyptians. And they will turn to parliamentary elections next year. Democracy, however, is more than a matter of holding elections. And we therefore expect both Egypt and Saudi Arabia to begin reforming the political institutions that are the key to lasting success for any democracy.

And of course, for many years, the entire world talked about ending the tyranny in Baathists Iraq. Despite 17 Security Council resolutions demanding that Saddam Hussein stop oppressing his people, refrain from threatening his neighbors and cease the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, he remained in power. The United States and a large coalition of nations finally removed Saddam Hussein. By any moral standards, the liberation of the Iraqi people was long overdue.

Now, it was only two and a half years ago that Saddam Hussein was still in control of Iraq. He was torturing his political opponents and he was plundering the Oil-for-Food program and using the money to corrupt individuals and institutions worldwide, while Iraqi children died of malnutrition and lack of medicine. He was forcing male dissenters to witness the rape of their wives and daughters. And he was shoveling the stale dirt of mass graves onto the latest of his 300,000 innocent victims. A monster like Saddam Hussein could not be a part of anyone's vision for a better Middle East.

Now, Saddam Hussein is gone and the Iraqi people have a more hopeful future. To be sure, Iraqis still face a long, hard path to that hopeful future. Historical changes of the scope and magnitude of this one are bound to be difficult. And this is a country that rests on the major fault lines of religion and ethnicity in the Middle East. It was held together for most of its history through coercion and repression. Now, despite having known little but tyranny, the Iraqi people are trying to govern themselves through politics, not violence; through compromise, not conflict. Millions of Iraqis risked their lives to vote last January. And their free representatives have drafted a constitution that enshrines the principles of democracy and the equality of all Iraqis before the law.

The United Nations having increased its presence in Iraq tenfold in just the past year is helping to organize its constitutional referendum as well as the elections that will follow at the end of the year. In both of these important votes, American and coalition soldiers will join Iraq's security forces to defend the Iraqi people's freedom of choice, whatever course of action they favor.

There is a path to success and Iraqis are progressing along it. But they must themselves maintain their commitment to the democratic political process and to a life of cooperation and compromise rather than violence. We must help them to fully develop their own security forces and they must build institutions that sustain accountability and provides public services. For their part, Iraq's neighbors must provide greater financial support and stronger diplomatic support. And the international community must continue to stand firmly at Iraq's side.

Now, clearly, the path is made more difficult by the brutal insurgency that Iraqis face.

Iraq's security forces are fighting its enemies vigorously, coalition forces are helping and America's men and women in uniform are performing heroically. Nearly 2,000 American servicemen and women have given their lives to this mission. And our nation will always honor their names and their sacrifice.

So let us be very clear about exactly who they and we are fighting. Some of the insurgency is fueled by the same thugs and henchman who enforced Saddam Hussein's tyranny for decades. They fight now to regain the unjust privileges they once had. There are many others, however, foreign terrorists like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who seek to ignite the very civil war that ordinary Iraqis are trying so hard to prevent.

These terrorists target Iraqi children receiving candy from American soldiers. They line up schoolteachers and execute them in their classrooms. They murder hospital workers caring for the wounded. And they massacre innocent Muslims who want to serve as policemen and soldiers and government officials in the new Iraq. This is not some grassroots coalition of national resistance. These are merciless killers who want to provoke nothing less than a full-scale civil war among Muslims across the entire Middle East. And having done so, they would build an empire of terror and oppression.

The choice we face in Iraq is, thus, stark. If we quit now, we will abandon Iraq's democrats at their time of greatest need. We will embolden every enemy of liberty and democracy across the Middle East. We will destroy any chance that the people of this region have of building a future of hope and opportunity. And we will make America more vulnerable. If we abandon future generations in the Middle East to despair and terror, we also condemn future generations in the United States to insecurity and fear.

Ladies and Gentlemen: We have set out to help the people of the Middle East transform their societies. Now is not the time to falter or fade.

Only four years ago, the democrats of the Arab world were hiding in silence or languishing in prison or fearing for their very lives. Now, from Cairo and Ramallah, to Beirut and Baghdad, men and women are finding new spaces of freedom to assemble and debate and build a better world for themselves and their children. They most certainly have determined enemies. But they also have determined defenders. And it is possible to envision a future Middle East where democracy is thriving, where human rights are secure, and where hope and opportunity are within the reach of these people.

I know that this vision can seem very distant at times, especially when we see so many tragic images of death, of innocent Iraqis and Afghans, and of course, Americans dying overseas. There are legitimate differences about the war we are now fighting in Iraq and in a great democracy like ours, everyone has the right to express those views freely.

But I hope that we can all step back and look at other extraordinary times and though they are not perfectly parallel, they can help us to gain a perspective on the challenges we face.

In 1989, I was lucky enough to be the White House Soviet specialist at the end of the Cold War. It doesn't get any better than that. I was there for the liberation of Eastern Europe; the unification of Germany; and for the beginnings of the peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union itself. I saw things that I never thought possible. And one day, they seemed impossible; and several days later, they seemed inevitable. That is the nature of extraordinary times.

But as I look back now on those times, I realized that I was only harvesting the good decisions that had been taken in 1947, in 1948, and in 1949. And sometimes, I wonder how in the course of events, the course of the moment, people like Acheson and Truman and Marshall and Vandenberg saw a path ahead. After all, in 1946, the Germany Reconstruction was still failing and Germans were still starving. Japan lay prostrate. In 1947, there was a civil war in Greece. In 1948, Germany was permanently divided by the Berlin Crisis; Czechoslovakia was lost to a communist coup. And in 1949, the Soviet Union exploded a nuclear weapon five years ahead of schedule; and the Chinese communists won their war. In 1950, a brutal war broke on the Korean Peninsula.

These were not just tactical setbacks for the forward march of democracy. Indeed, it must have seemed quite impossible, that we would one day, stand at a juncture where Eastern Europe would be liberated, Russia would emerge, and Europe would be whole and free and at peace. If we think back on those days, we recognize that extraordinary times are turbulent and they are hard. And it is very often hard to see a clear path. But if you are -- as those great architects of the post-Cold War victory were -- if you are true to your values, if you are certain of your values, and if you act upon them with confidence and with strength, it is possible to have an outcome where democracy spreads and peace and liberty reign.

Because of the work that they did, it is hard to imagine war in Europe again. So it shall be also for the Middle East.

Thank you very much.

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