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Remarks by National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley to the Council on Foreign Relations

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It is an honor to once again have the opportunity tonight to address the Council on Foreign Relations. I would like to use this occasion to discuss the nature of the enemy the United States faces in the War on Terror, and why the President's agenda of freedom and democracy is a vital part of the War on Terror.

Four and a half years ago, this Administration came into office at a propitious moment. The great ideological struggles of the 20th century between democracy and totalitarianism had ended with a decisive victory for freedom. While there might be differences among them, no great power conflicts loomed on the horizon. Globalization, and revolutionary information and communications technologies, were opening up new opportunities for economic development and the spread of democratic values. The United States had an opportunity to transform the international system in ways that would enhance American security, promote our values, and contribute to prosperity well into the new century.

But the new international environment also brought new security challenges. Instead of great power conflict, the United States found itself confronted by a more diffuse array of threats. The attacks on the Homeland on September 11, 2001, provided a stark demonstration of the most serious dangers we and our friends and allies face. A terrorist enemy showed it could attack America and kill thousands of our citizens. This same terrorist enemy operated out of a national safe haven - Afghanistan - where it sought to develop weapons of mass destruction and inculcated in its recruits a murderous ideology.

Since that tragic day, the United States and its allies have waged war against al Qaeda, its associates and supporters, and the deadly scourge of terror and intimidation more broadly. An international coalition has taken the fight to the enemy, targeting its leadership, denying it safe havens, and disrupting what it needs to support its operations. Together, we have worked to narrow the space in which terrorists can operate, communicate, and transit freely. Together, we have worked to cut off the lifeblood of the terrorists, denying them key funding and recruiting sources.

As we continue these efforts to disrupt, degrade, and ultimately, defeat al Qaeda and its supporters, we are better able to define the enemy. We are facing a transnational movement of extremist organizations, networks, and individuals - as well as their state and non-state supporters - that share

an extremist ideology and pursue a common strategy. We see the outline in their numerous videos, audiotapes, letters, declarations, and websites. In a recent letter, Ayman Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's second-in-command, details the terrorists' strategy.

The first step, in Zawahiri's words, is to "expel the Americans from Iraq." Zawahiri believes this is possible because previous terrorist attacks on our forces led to U.S. withdrawals. Zawahiri defines the second stage of the strategy in these words: to establish "an Islamic authority or amirate, then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate - over as much territory as you can - to spread its power in Iraq, i.e., in Sunni areas, in order to fill the void stemming from the departure of the Americans, immediately upon their exit and before un-Islamic forces attempt to fill this void."

In al Qaeda's vision, Iraq would then become the safe haven from which to launch attacks against non-Islamist governments, including Israel, as well as Iraq's neighbors. Ultimately, al Qaeda hopes to rally the Muslim masses, overthrow the moderate governments of the region, and reestablish the Islamic caliphate that, in our current day, would rule from Spain to Indonesia and beyond.

The aspirations of these terrorist extremists do not end with the Middle East. As Zarqawi has vowed, "We will either achieve victory over the human race or we will pass to the eternal life." Abu Bakar Bashir, the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, the Al Qaeda affiliate responsible for deadly bombings in Indonesia, recently declared: "If the West wants peace, they'll have to accept to be governed by Islam." When asked what the United States can do to stop attacks against its territory, Usama Bin Laden replied in his 2002 "Letter to America" that in addition to abandoning the Middle East, America should convert to Islam and end the immorality and godlessness of its society and culture.

One might wonder how seriously to take such claims. But 9/11 taught us that we cannot afford to treat these words as idle boasts. That is why the President has been so steadfast in taking the fight to the enemy. Retreat may appear tempting to some in the face of the savagery we witness on television. But withdrawal from the fight - like putting our heads in the sand - will not make the threat go away.

We would be misguided if we ignored these statements merely because they seem so extreme or because we cannot comprehend the mindset that would embrace them. The greater economic, military, and political resources the terrorists seek make more credible their stated agenda: to destroy Israel, to intimidate Europe, to assault the American people, to develop weapons of mass destruction, and to blackmail our government into isolation.

From the beginning, the War on Terror has been both a Battle of Arms and a Battle of Ideas. As the President has said, "We're fighting the terrorists and we're fighting their murderous ideology." In the short run, we must use our military forces and other instruments of national power to fight the terrorists, deny them safe haven, and cut off their sources of support. But in the long run, to win the War on Terror we must win the Battle of Ideas. We must counter the grim totalitarian vision of the terrorists with the positive vision of freedom and democracy. As we make progress in the Battle of Arms and the terrorist network becomes more decentralized, the need to present an alternative vision becomes even more critical. For what increasingly links these groups is not some central chain of command but their common ideology.

In this Battle of Ideas we must encourage Islamic moderates to dispute the distorted vision of Islam advanced by the terrorists. A struggle is under way for the soul of Islam - an ideological struggle for the support and loyalty of the Muslim world. Winning this struggle will require a direct challenge to the extremist voices within Islam. This is obviously not something the American government can do. It is Muslim voices from around the world that must take up this challenge.

And it is beginning to happen. Muslim clerics and legal scholars in the United States and elsewhere have issued statements condemning terrorism. We must champion these efforts and empower other moderate voices throughout the Muslim world that stand for peace and tolerance.

We have some grounds for optimism in this struggle. While our enemies conduct and call for the slaughter of innocents, the overwhelming majority of the Muslim world - along with other civilized peoples everywhere - is increasingly outraged by the atrocities committed in London and Madrid, in Bali and Beslan, in Istanbul and Morocco. This can only further erode the position of the terrorists.

Another source of optimism comes from the statements of our enemy. In his letter to al Zarqawi, Ayman al-Zawahiri notes how the tactics of Zarqawi's "Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia" have weakened support for the global extremist movement. Zawahiri tries to dissuade Zarqawi from the mass murder of Shi'a and from releasing videos of beheadings. Attacking Shi'a mosques, Zawahiri says, "won't be acceptable to the Muslim populace however much you have tried to explain it, and aversion to this will continue." Videotaped beheadings are "among the things which the feelings of the Muslim populace who love and support you will never find palatable." Even Zawahiri understands it is very hard to base a lasting popular movement on mass murder.

In addition to disputing the terrorists' twisted version of Islam, an alternative vision is needed. As the President noted on October 6th, we seek "to deny the militants future recruits by replacing hatred and resentment with democracy and hope across the broader Middle East." We have the more powerful vision, and we can be confident in its power.

We have seen the vision of the terrorists realized in Afghanistan under the Taliban. A barbaric regime imposed an artificial conformity that eliminated individual freedom, enslaved women, destroyed the nation's cultural history, and ruled by terror. Girls were kept shuttered at home, barred from attending school. In acts of senseless cultural violence, pre-Islamic artifacts and the world's tallest Buddhist statues at Bamiyan were destroyed. Afghans young and old lived in constant fear that their words, their dress, and their deeds would somehow run afoul of a theocracy that sought to brutalize and subjugate. The regime was condemned by virtually the entire civilized world.

To whom would such a regime appeal? What is the attraction of the radical ideology that produced it? The appeal is not to the world's destitute, based on their poverty. Muhammed Atta and the other 9/11 hijackers were predominantly middle class and well-educated. They and many Islamic terrorists like them are clearly alienated from their societies. Unable to visualize a meaningful future within their political systems, they are susceptible to radical alternatives to it. When people have been denied their fundamental rights, they have little stake in the existing order.

The terrorists capitalize on this discontent and stoke it with a narrative of Arab and Muslim grievance

and victimization at the hands of the infidel West and the Zionists. The terrorists offer a radical vision of a totalitarian system brought about through violence and the killing of innocents. The terrorists' vision is based on enslavement, and it is precisely because the people the terrorists seek to enslave are powerless that they are vulnerable to its siren song. The terrorists' vision is also based on elitism, in which a privileged few decree what is best for everyone - and use terror to impose their will.

The antidote to this radical vision is democracy, justice, and the freedom agenda. This agenda offers empowerment as an alternative to enslavement. It offers participation in place of exclusion. It offers the marketplace of ideas instead of the dark world of conspiracy theory. It offers individual rights and human dignity in place of violence and murder. Fundamentally, it means people participating in governing themselves, rather than being governed by others whom they never choose, never change, and never influence.

We know that freedom and democracy requires more than just elections. It requires a set of institutions, laws, and patterns of accepted behavior. But elections are a critical instrument for advancing the cause of freedom and democracy. As we have seen in the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, elections catalyze change and can accelerate the creation of the institutions, laws, and patterns of behavior on which freedom and democracy ultimately rest.

We can have confidence that with freedom, justice, and democracy on our side, we hold the winning hand in the Battle of Ideas. For the current struggle is reminiscent of struggles in the last century against earlier totalitarian visions - fascism, communism, and Nazism. Those ideologies similarly relied on terror to advance their twisted visions and to control whole populations. They also empowered elites who perceived themselves to be the vanguard of a utopian future and felt justified in imposing that vision on others. They too found fertile soil among people who were powerless, either as victims of corrupt dictatorships, or the multiple devastations of world wars and economic deprivation.

We can take heart from the fact that the vision of democracy and freedom proved stronger than the false utopian visions of both fascism and communism. When the captives of these false visions had the opportunity to choose freely, they chose freedom. And so it will be as we confront the ideology of the 21st century terrorists.

The advent of democracy and freedom alone will not put an end to terrorism for all time. The bombings in London this summer show that even developed democracies are not immune from domestic terrorism. But democracy does seem to weaken the appeal of the terrorist extremists. As our Indian friends are quick to point out, India has the second largest Muslim population in the world. Yet thus far Muslims from India have not been discovered participating in the global jihad in either Afghanistan or Iraq.

Moreover, the violent denunciation of democracy by the extremists themselves conveys how serious a threat they know it to be. In the book *The Future of Iraq and The Arabian Peninsula After The Fall of Baghdad*, Yussuf al-Ayyeri, one of Usama Bin Laden's closest associates, wrote: "It is not the American war machine that should be of the utmost concern to Muslims. What threatens the future of Islam, in fact its very survival, is American democracy." Al-Zarqawi denounced the Iraqi elections in

January, declaring: "The legislator who must be obeyed in a democracy is man, and not God. . . . That is the very essence of heresy and polytheism and error, as it contradicts the bases of the faith and monotheism, and because it makes the weak, ignorant man God's partner in His most central divine prerogative - namely, ruling and legislating." The terrorists themselves speak so fearfully about - and so forcefully against -- democracy precisely because they understand that it is a fundamental threat to their ideology of fear and oppression.

Our task is to offer the agenda of freedom, justice, and democracy as an alternative to totalitarian extremism, not to impose it. For democracy cannot be imposed, it can only be chosen. A people must find their own freedom - and often they must fight for it. When they do, the result will reflect their own history, culture, and national experience. Not all democracies in the Middle East will look the same - and none will look exactly like those of the United States and Europe. Liberalization and democratization will happen in differing ways, and at a different pace, in each country.

We can be an advocate for democracy in the Middle East. We can be catalysts for reform. We can help create the conditions that foster rather than block change. But although we can prod history, we cannot dictate it. And despite the centrality of freedom and democracy, it is not the only item on our agenda. We still must deal with the pressing problems of fighting terrorism, combating nuclear proliferation, resolving conflicts, and addressing pressing issues such as building a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. One of the greatest challenges facing the President has been to promote democracy and freedom while not forsaking our ability to address and advance our other goals.

The challenge is particularly acute since some countries that need greater democracy and freedom are also our allies on the frontlines of the War on Terror. We must find a way to support their fight against terrorism at the same time we encourage these states toward liberalization.

Such an approach is not without risk. But we cannot cling to short-term stability and ignore the long-term costs of such a policy. The events of 9/11 showed us the consequence of failing to address the underlying hopelessness and despair that made the Middle East fertile ground for the terrorists.

The experience of the last two years has confirmed the President's conviction that we can be successful in pursuing both the freedom agenda and our other goals. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we helped liberate those countries from regimes that threatened our interests. But rather than installing a friendly dictatorship, we supported the efforts of the Iraqi and Afghan people to build governments based on freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. This dramatically accelerated the pace of democratic change in these countries. The large voter turnouts in the recent Afghan and Iraqi elections show that this was a transformation that the people of both countries desperately wanted. Both are now allies in the war on terror. And as these young democracies take hold, they will provide an example that will spur the pace of democratic change in the region. Their example will be further strengthened as a newly liberated Lebanon - and a Palestinian Authority now in charge of Gaza and parts of the West Bank - build democratic institutions while exerting control over the terrorists in their midst.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt - key allies in the War on Terror - have also heard and begun to act

on the message of change. Saudi Arabia held its first elections for regional municipal councils. Egypt conducted its first multi-candidate Presidential election. Change in these countries may not be fast enough for some. But the President's words and his Administration's actions are giving the reformers in those countries the necessary cover and political space to pursue their own freedom agendas. In time, these nations will find their own way to democracy. As they do, we will continue to work with them to confront terror.

Whether in the Middle East, Central Asia, or throughout the Islamic world, we do not need to make an "either/or" choice between promoting democracy and fighting terror. Indeed, the two causes are mutually reinforcing. In the short-run, security is needed for democracy to flourish - for elections to be held, for governments to provide services to their people. And in the long run, it is freedom, democracy, and justice that are the antidote to the terrorists' appeal and the true source of security and stability.

We need to be bold in our vision, yet wise in our implementation of the Freedom Agenda. This project is not the work of three years, nor the work of eight years. Rather, it has been the work of this country since its inception. Whether as President Carter's human rights agenda or President Reagan's bold steps to expand the frontiers of freedom, our nation has long championed the cause of democracy, justice, and freedom. As President Bush has said, this effort will be a "generational challenge." But while the work of generations, it is our responsibility to pursue it diligently today.

Thank you very much.

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