

**“AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY: DEBATE AT THE CROSSROADS”**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY  
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Thank you Dot Ridings, for those very kind words of welcome. Before such an audience, I might have expected such generosity, but it is still very gratifying. I hope that charitable spirit will last as long as my remarks.

The truth is that I am just like most of the people you hear from every day. Yes, I come from Washington . . . but today, I am here to **ASK YOU** for help.

I know I have come to the right place. It is hard to imagine a more influential or more responsible and responsive group of Americans than the members of the Council on Foundations. You represent the best of our traditions – the helping and open hand we extend to our neighbors and to those in need everywhere.

My goal today is not to tap your wallet but your intellectual wealth, your community ties, and your patriotism.

I want to enlist your active help in an urgent but patient exercise in civic education; I am going to ask you to become involved with a national discussion on America’s role in the world. The emerging and extremely important debate about our foreign policy, a debate that must be brought to America, and engaged across this land.

Like education, or health care, or the environment or the arts, foreign policy impacts us all. But unlike these issues, foreign policy can be acted upon only at the national level, in Washington, by the leadership of our government. But it can and should be impacted by an informed electorate – and here your active involvement is urgently needed.

During this winter’s national decisions about Iraq, we watched on television the Security Council discussion, but heard only fragments of the real debate. Some of what we heard was shrill and partisan. Not enough of it was deliberate, reasoned, and informed, and now, with the end of the fighting in Iraq, too many of our fellow citizens – and the media, as well – have already

begun to tune out the talking heads and tune in the baseball season, American Idol, and the Naked Chef.

This return toward some semblance of normalcy is understandable. Information overload can be distracting as well as disturbing. But what has happened is not normal; America today is navigating a stormy and uncharted passage in our history. We need all hands on deck.

In the months since a small but powerful band of terrorists destroyed 3,000 innocent lives in the space of a few hours . . . and especially in the few weeks since a small but powerful force of American and British troops drove out a terrorist regime in Iraq, our world has changed; the United States has altered the way we see the world; and much of the world has certainly changed the way it views us.

Decisions being made are now no longer only about the future of Iraq. The questions we need to answer concern far more than a single, California-sized country in perhaps the most volatile area of the world. If Iraq were in a total vacuum, its problems would be daunting enough – incredibly complicated by almost every measure.

But Iraq is not in a vacuum, and we must look beyond the implications of what happened and may happen in Iraq to its far-reaching consequences, to the long-term exercise of American power for the well-being of the citizens of that country, of our country and of our planet.

In the near term, the stakes are high enough. They include

- The stability of the Middle East;
- The capacity of the world to deal with terrorism and weapons of mass destruction; and
- The resilience and relevance of the globe's patiently assembled international system of rules, treaties, and agreements.

More broadly and more enduringly, however the issues that need our calm, purposeful consideration go to the way we define our long-term security, the threats we face, and the means we are willing to use to overcome them.

To resolve those issues, we now need to conduct the vital national debate that we did not begin until the war in Iraq itself had almost begun, and that we then – quite responsibly – delayed while the men and women of our armed forces were under fire and successfully completed the military phase of our Iraqi policy. It is now time to return to the needed but neglected debate about our future in this shrinking, globalized world.

We in the Foundation world – a philanthropic Fifth Estate in America – have a responsibility to help to launch and nurture this important national dialogue. And I am here today to ask for your help, for your knowledgeable, authoritative engagement and leadership in the communities you lead.

Shortly I will sketch the outline of this new American debate – but first rest assured that such debate is not new – we have had them before in our history, in connection with the use of force beyond our frontiers.

For example, in 1846, the enemy was Mexico, and Americans were divided over how to deal with it.

An army lieutenant heading for the conflict said that it filled him with “horror” and he wished he had the “courage to resign” his commission. His name was Ulysses S. Grant.

A freshman Illinois congressman voted for a resolution declaring the war unnecessary and accused President James K. Polk of violating the Constitution. Said then Congressman Abraham Lincoln, the president “feels the blood of this war, like the blood of Abel, ... crying to Heaven against him.”<sup>1</sup>

Fifty years later, the enemy was Spain. The advocates of projecting American power abroad again claimed the mandate of Manifest Destiny. They included John Hay, a Secretary of State who had been President Lincoln’s private secretary; an Assistant Secretary of the Navy named Theodore Roosevelt; and an ambitious publisher named William Randolph Hearst.

They and others persuaded President William McKinley to intervene against Spanish rule in Cuba and the Philippines on now familiar grounds – the systematic violation of human rights.

His war message to Congress cited the needs of a “dependent people striving to be free” and the calamity of “people perishing by tens of thousands from hunger and destitution.” Formulating what was then a very new doctrine, the president called America to act “in the cause of humanity and to put an end to the barbarities, bloodshed, starvation and horrible miseries...” of Spanish misrule.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abraham Lincoln, speech before the U.S. House of Representatives, *Congressional Globe*, January 12, 1848, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pages 154-156.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Zimmermann, *First Great Triumph*, 262

McKinley and his advisers had vocal opponents, public figures some of whom were their equal in stature. In 1898 Andrew Carnegie, then the richest man in the world, condemned “race imperialism” in the Philippines, where he saw America “exchanging Triumphant Democracy for Triumphant Despotism.”<sup>3</sup> Mark Twain called the Philippines “a mess, a quagmire,” where Americans fought “to conquer, not redeem.”<sup>4</sup> And Carl Schurz, a much decorated Union army general at Gettysburg, a former Republican senator and cabinet secretary, warned as fighting began on Cuba, “If we turn this war, which was heralded to the world as a war of humanity, in any sense into a war of conquest, we shall forever forfeit the confidence of mankind.”<sup>5</sup>

If the language and arguments of the distant past sound familiar to us today, it is because Americans have long disagreed about whether our moral example or our military power should be the main source of our influence in the world. You can hear both views from Woodrow Wilson’s culminating in his wartime promise to make “the world safe for democracy.”

After World War I, the argument took a new turn. We had a genuine national debate over entering the League of Nations, which President Wilson lost to Henry Cabot Lodge and conservative, more isolationist members of the United States Senate.

Twenty-five years later, Americans were arguing passionately over entering or avoiding the war against fascism in Europe; outspoken opponents of U.S. intervention included former President Herbert Hoover, Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh and Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., and the debate raged right up to the Sunday of Pearl Harbor.

Within six weeks of the 1950 attack by North Korea, Senate Republicans were vilifying the President’s nominee for Secretary of Defense, General George C. Marshall, calling the author of the Marshall Plan “a living lie” and accusing him “of joining hands once more with this criminal crowd of traitors and communist appeasers who, under the continuing influence of Mr. Truman and Mr. Acheson, are still selling America down the river.”<sup>6</sup>

Fifteen years later, it was Democratic Senators – Morse of Oregon, Fulbright of Arkansas, McCarthy of Minnesota, Kennedy of New York – who spearheaded the attacks against Lyndon Johnson’s policies in Vietnam. “If

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 333

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 350

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 337

<sup>6</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 365

American boys are killed in an undeclared war,” said Wayne Morse, “it is murder.”<sup>7</sup>

When Richard Nixon ordered the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong, Senator George McGovern, later a candidate for President, called the “escalation ... reckless, unnecessary and unworkable.” Ed Koch, then a New York Congressman, and soon to be Mayor of New York City, declared, “The President is an international lawbreaker.”<sup>8</sup>

Finally, just a reminder that even our closest allies can dissent when we take military action on our own. “I am deeply disturbed...” a British prime minister cabled the president. “This action will be seen as intervention by a western country in the internal affairs of a small independent nation, however unattractive its regime.”<sup>9</sup> The year was 1983; the English leader was Margaret Thatcher; the American president was Ronald Reagan; the small, independent nation was Grenada.

Compared to the vituperation heaped on earlier American leaders in times of conflict, last winter’s short-lived domestic debate over Operation Iraqi Freedom seems like a summer storm . . . a little lightning, a little thunder and not enough rain to do more than settle the dust.

The indifference was not just surprising; it was genuinely alarming. Democracy is not a spectator sport, and if Americans drop out of the contest at home, we are not likely to field very effective teams here or abroad.

In mid-February, the dean of the Senate, Robert Byrd, forcefully voiced his anxiety about the lack of debate. “As this nation stands at the brink of battle,” he protested, “this Chamber is for the most part silent – ominously, dreadfully silent ... passively mute ... paralyzed by our own uncertainty, seemingly stunned by the sheer turmoil of events.”

What is this turmoil? It includes:

- Damage to the world’s sense of unity and order;
- Severe strain and challenge to the western alliance and global liberalism;
- The emergence of the US as such a paramount military power; and
- Actions in the Middle East with consequences that reach from France to Russia, North Korea and China, India and Pakistan.

Where do we in the US belong in this complex calculus?

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<sup>7</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, *Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power*, 552

<sup>8</sup> Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1972*, 250.

<sup>9</sup> Edmund Morris, *Dutch*, 503

As has happened in the past, we face two paths, apparently, sharply divergent. On the one hand is the so-called Bush doctrine of pre-emptive action and preventive war; on the other, the more traditional policy of active deterrence and collective defense within the framework of a global consensus or multilateralism. This may sound like a dry and almost academic debate, but it is not. It is a profound discussion about the future of the United States in an increasingly interdependent world.

To summarize the sharpest points of the debate, the proponents of the Administration's policy argue that traditional concepts of deterrence and containment will not work against terrorists or tyrants ruling rogue states, many of whom are trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Given the rapid dissemination of destructive technologies, sensitive information and capital flows in today's globalized world, threats from terrorist networks and rogue states can and will materialize more rapidly than in the past. Moreover, it is argued, these threats promise to be much more devastating if the inevitable occurs, and these actors get their hands on weapons of mass destruction.

Advocates of this new Bush doctrine – who include Vice President Cheney, the political leadership of the Defense Department, foreign policy hawks in both parties, and the neo-conservative intellectual community – argue that as the world's leading military and economic power, the United States is the most likely target of terrorist action. In the face of imminent dangers, and with the experience of the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the US not only has the duty, but the legal and moral right to launch pre-emptive attacks. The United States must maintain its military dominance, and use this power – alone if necessary – to extend free market democracy throughout the globe, ultimately the only way to deal with the long-term causes of terrorism.

This new doctrine is being played out in Iraq. Acting in concert with a small coalition, the U.S. has pre-emptively struck, neutralized potential weapons of mass destruction and set in motion the President's extremely ambitious plan for bringing stability and democracy to the volatile Middle East. Its proponents argue that the Bush Doctrine represents the most profound shift in US grand strategy in the past 50 years and is the first coherent statement of national security policy since the end of the Cold War.

The other school of strategic thinking has been less than vocal. Its advocates – many of them embedded in academia and in government institutions and organizations – have been cautious of appearing weak or indecisive in the aftermath of September 11. Still you can hear the outlines of an opposing argument in voices from the traditional foreign policy establishment, the State Department, many military leaders and a number of leading defense

intellectuals, who support reliance on a more conventional containment and deterrence policy, coupled with a commitment to strengthen international institutions and global alliances.

While agreeing that the United States must have sufficient military power to protect our national interests, this more traditional view of policy argues that pre-emption should not be elevated to the status of a cardinal norm or doctrine. While always a tactic for exceptional circumstances, making pre-emption a basic US doctrine may encourage other states to legitimize their own aggression by camouflaging it as defensive measures. Worse, the expectation of pre-emptive US actions coupled with the impossibility of confronting the huge and hugely competent US military, may trigger an even more assertive scramble to acquire weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weaponry.

Further, traditional foreign policy voices argue that the primary purpose of national security policy should be to help manage inevitable change in ways that do not generate massive upheaval and violent unrest. They worry that making the extension of free market democracy our overreaching concern will lead to the overextension of US capabilities, dragging us into peripheral conflicts, causing battle fatigue at home, and promoting a global backlash against perceived US empire-building.

The outlines of this debate – between what I would call the neocon pre-emptors and the multilateral containment advocates, can be seen today in almost every issue related to the future of Iraq.

- In humanitarian relief: Should U.S. agencies do the job, or should we depend on traditional international agencies and non-governmental organizations?
- In the issue of civil administration, where Secretary Rumsfeld, the most aggressive member of the President's Cabinet, has already let major contracts to American private sector companies, in the belief that US lives and treasury bore the burden of the war, and therefore the US should play the preponderant role in postwar Iraq. Secretary Powell, the most popular member of the Cabinet, has characteristically taken a more conciliatory position, meeting with European foreign ministers in a crash trip two weeks ago, and attempting to work especially carefully with Prime Minister Blair and the UK government.
- In the emerging political process, while senior U.S. officials are convening expatriate and indigenous Iraqis, most of the rest of the world continues to advocate for building a political process and eventually a government in Iraq by working through the UN and the international community, as a more sure route to legitimacy.

- The debate can be found even on the issue of including or cold-shouldering experienced UN inspectors in the hunt for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Central to the debate is the long-term role of the United Nations:

- irrelevant to its doubters;
- indispensable to its supporters.

The doubters argue that the UN is little more than an empty debating society. The Iraq question proved that the Security Council cannot come to any real decision; the UN did not honor its own resolutions on Iraq and the UN has had a thin record of success in such nation building challenges as Cambodia and Kosovo. The UN doubters argue that the US should regulate the UN to a second tier of importance, and some of the more extreme advocate that the US should leave the UN altogether.

On the other hand, UN supporters argue that the UN today is more important than ever, for the vast majority of the world's people and states, and for the US as well. Indeed, as it has aged and matured over 50 years, its supporters argue that the UN has become – unevenly, imperfectly but unmistakably – an organization very like that originally envisaged by the US, its chief founder and champion.

UN supporters argue that the UN is the only place the world can come together to pool strengths and share burdens. It has built the foundation for global efforts to tackle problems that respect no borders: health, the environment, chronic poverty and deprivation, challenges that threaten our security and that military power cannot surmount.

The United Nations, moreover, is at the heart of the work of generations to promote human rights on a global scale, and to make the establishment of women's rights a true priority. Perhaps most important the UN has become the essential means to create the political and physical space necessary to deal with explosive disputes in ways short of war.

On this issue of American support for the UN, we fortunately have fresh and consistent polling data. Historically, Americans have supported the UN – in principle if not with great passion. While few get out of bed in the morning thinking about what they can do that day to help the UN, most put a high value on its work and our work in it:

- 78% believe it is in America's best interest to continue to support the United Nations;

- 77% believe we have to make the UN stronger;
- And 84% believe that it is better for the UN to play a role in the rebuilding of Iraq rather than the US going it alone.

My point today is not to debate the doctrine of pre-emption, or the wisdom of our policy in Iraq. Rather, the events of the last few months represent a significant departure from the fabric of American foreign policy, particularly as it has been woven since World War II when the United States assumed global leadership and the role of superpower. We should know about and debate this change.

As different dangers shake our sense of security, should we scrap our traditional policy, or revamp and revitalize it? How can we best build a global consensus in favor of those norms and institutions which support American values and interests?

How do we best organize concerted efforts for global law enforcement, sharing of intelligence, and aggressive measures against money laundering? Should we strengthen as essential – or abandon as ineffective – the web of treaties and conventions designed to help control the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Different sides of this debate find different and unexpected allies. Key figures from the Clinton Administration are supporting Secretary Rumsfeld, while Jack Kemp, formerly a Republican Congressman and Vice-Presidential candidate, is a dissenter from the Bush doctrine. In fact, he made the point with the kind of fervor George McGovern might have used in criticizing Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam policy. "The image of an American Raj in Baghdad feeding multibillion dollar contracts to American companies," Kemp wrote recently, "will transform what the Bush administration wants the world to see as a 'war of liberation' into what would be labeled a colonial war in the eyes of the world, which, I fear, will aggravate the terrorist threat."

There is an honest, immensely important strategic argument to be resolved here. It cannot be conducted or concluded just on the op-ed pages or the Sunday talk shows. Like the great national debates of the past, this one should involve not just scholars and pundits, columnists and political leaders, but all of us. It should go on in our schools and our churches, in the polite, social conversation of friends and neighbors this year, and in the rough-and-tumble politics of the Presidential campaign next.

We need to think – and argue – out loud about a whole range of issues – how we handle the post-conflict period in Iraq, how we define preemption, how we nurture the institutions of international cooperation. The consensus we

reach will define the future of our society and our place in the world. It is important that we not be silent – it is vital to get the answers right.

Adlai Stevenson used to joke sardonically about the way Americans improvise policy in response to crises. “We’ll jump off that bridge when we get to it,” he said.<sup>10</sup>

Well, we’ve jumped. Now it’s time to see where we’re going to land and how hard.

To help focus on that future and inform the debate over it, the United Nations Foundation has been asked to support a major project at the Council on Foreign Relations, to put together and distribute an objective, thoughtful side-by-side analysis of the competing arguments. The Council on Foreign Relations is certainly the most prestigious and respected group of business, academic, and government experts in America, working on issues of American foreign policy. By late spring, the Council will launch this even-handed debate guide, and hopes eventually to have it in the hands of colleges and universities, church meetings, community groups, editorial writers and others – so the American public can better understand the opposing views and weigh into the debate on them.

We think we should help them get it out – and we hope that you will help as well. You are deeply embedded in your communities, with your schools, with your local government and non-governmental institutions. You can help to nurture this debate – as you have always worked on civic and education issues important to our society.

Your capacity to stimulate civic education is as great as the opportunity and the need. And the country needs your help today, as sponsor, convenor, stimulator, advocate. We hope you will help the Council to get the debate going, and to assure that this critical debate puts down deep roots across the country. And there is a huge group of Americans – concerned, worried, idealistic – local Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs; church and service groups; university communities; World Affairs councils and UN Associations; women’s groups and environmental groups. But, too often they don’t know where to turn, and don’t know that many others share their interests and concerns. You can be the catalyst that brings them together.

I hope you will fill in the form that is available at your table, and let us know of your interest. We will get back to you, will help make the Council’s documents available with suggestions for their use, and work with you in any way we can.

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<sup>10</sup> quoted by Donald Rumsfeld, Pentagon news briefing, April 21, 2003

You know your communities and constituencies intimately, and you have the resources to perform this service to the public and the nation with distinction and determination, in your own way and in your own community.

I know you will accept this challenge and put your wisdom and your strength into setting America on a steady, sound and safe course in a dangerous world.

As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told this meeting two years ago, your increasing philanthropic giving and leadership for international causes shows that “you have understood the nature of our times: an age when the global and the local can no longer be separated and when governments can no longer face global challenges alone. They need new partners.”

Welcome to the team.

Thank you.