
Reprint of Remarks Secretary of State Madeleine K Albright Presented Before the 10th Annual George C. Marshall Lecture

By

Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright

[The following is a reprint of Secretary Albright's remarks before the 10th Annual George C. Marshall Lecture held in Vancouver, Washington on October 30, 1998]

It is a great honor to participate in what I consider to be one of the foremost lecture series in the United States. Seven years ago, this lecture was delivered by Colin Powell, who said that of all the military leaders in American history, General George Marshall stood head and shoulders above the rest.

It is an astonishing truth about the person we honor in this lecture series that the first thing I did when I became Secretary of State was hang in my office a portrait of the greatest diplomatic leader in American history, former Secretary of State George Marshall.

Winston Churchill called Marshall "a great American, but more than that." For by his vision and capacity for decision, Marshall helped lift an entire continent from its knees.

In recent years, we seem to have observed the fiftieth anniversary of everything from the end of World War II to the founding of the United Nations to the breaking of the color line in baseball.

Today brings to mind another such anniversary. For it was in 1948 that Congress approved the famous plan that bears George Marshall's name. That plan extended a lifeline of billions of dollars in aid and technical help to a Europe devastated by war.

By offering that lifeline, America helped unify Europe's west around democratic principles, curbed Communist inroads and planted the seeds of a trans-Atlantic partnership, the fruits of which we are still harvesting.

Just as important was the expression of American leadership that the Marshall Plan conveyed. After World War I, America had withdrawn from the world, shunning responsibility and avoiding risk. Others did the same. The result was unchecked aggression in Asia and the rise of great evil in the heart of Europe.

After the trauma of World War II and the soul-withering horror of the Holocaust, it was not enough to say that the enemy had been vanquished—that what we were against had failed.

Marshall's generation was determined to build a lasting peace. And the message that generation conveyed from the White House, from both parties on Capitol Hill, and from the millions of average Americans who donated to the relief effort, was that this time America would not turn inward; this time, America would lead.

Today, almost a decade after the Cold War's end, it is not enough for us to say that Communism has failed. We, too, must heed the lessons of the past, accept responsibility for the future, and lead.

Because we face no superpower rival, our task is different than that faced in Marshall's day. But although it may seem less dramatic, it is no less important. For the choices we make will determine whether the world begins the new century falling apart in crisis and conflict: or coming together around basic principles of political and economic freedom, the rule of law, and a commitment to peace.

If we are wise and strong enough, our citizens will benefit from a world economy that has regained its footing and resumed broad-based growth. We will find it safer and more rewarding to study, trade, travel and invest abroad. And our armed forces will be called upon less often to respond to urgent and deadly threats.

In such a world, more people in more nations will recognize their stake in abiding by the international rules of the road and in seeing that others do so as well. Nations will be more likely to work together to respond to new dangers, prevent conflicts and solve global problems. There will be a growing and principled consensus about what is fair and unfair on trade, and what is right and wrong on human rights.

The most we can hope, in our time, is to build a solid foundation for such a world. It is, nevertheless, a tall order. And fulfilling it will require that we pass some rigorous tests, both as a government and as a people.

First, and most generally, we must fortify the relationships that comprise the heart of the international system, while helping nations that are weak, troubled or in transition to participate more fully.

This is the job that dominates the day to day diplomacy of the United States.

For example, in Europe, we are striving to fulfill the vision Secretary Marshall proclaimed but the Cold War prevented: the vision of a Europe whole and free, united as President Clinton has said, "not by the force of arms but by the possibilities of peace."

Last year, NATO invited the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary to join in reality the alliance for freedom that their peoples have always embraced in spirit. And across the continent, militaries whose guns were once pointed at each other are now deployed beside each other building peace in Bosnia and planning for the security of Europe's future.

In Asia and the Pacific, we see a region of immense dynamism and optimism despite the current financial problems.

To build security, we have broadened our military cooperation with our close ally Japan. We have urged North Korea to end its dangerous and self-imposed isolation. And we are engaged in a strategic dialogue with China aimed at expanding cooperation in areas where we agree and making progress on others, such as human rights and trade, where we do not yet see eye to eye.

In Africa, poverty, disease and disorder have cut off millions from the international system. But Africa is a continent rich both in human and natural resources. Its best leaders understand the need to end the devastating civil and cross border conflicts that slow economic and social progress. They understand, as well, the need to pursue reforms that help private enterprise and democratic institutions gain a foothold.

As President Clinton's visit to the region earlier this year reflects, we are committed to helping all those in Africa who believe in human freedom and are prepared to do what is necessary to help themselves.

Closer to home, through the Summit of the Americas process, we have forged a hemispheric commitment to defend democracy, expand commercial ties, fight the war against drugs, and maintain peace from Patagonia to Prudhoe Bay. It is encouraging that Colombia's new President Pastrana, with whom President Clinton and I met earlier this week, seems determined to lead his long-troubled country into a new era of stability and law.

Strengthening the bonds that hold the international system together is an ongoing challenge. A second challenge, new and urgent, is responding to the global financial crisis.

Over the past quarter century, the vision of expanded trade and free markets that was embodied in the Marshall Plan has helped prosperity to spread, not only in Europe, but around the world. Hundreds of millions of people have lifted themselves out of poverty. Even with the current crisis, per capita incomes in Korea and Thailand are 60% higher than a decade ago.

These policies have paid especially high dividends here in the American Northwest, where the economy is an export powerhouse, and the boom in trade with Asia has provided good jobs in everything from computers to shipping to agriculture.

Now, however, these policies are being tested. The crisis of financial confidence which began in Southeast Asia has spread to East Asia and Russia and now endangers economies in our own hemisphere. There remains a risk that leaders in some nations will panic and turn to the false god of protectionism or the impossible goal of isolation in today's global economy.

The Administration is determined to get the prosperity train back on track.

To this end, President Clinton has outlined a bold plan for restoring growth and preventing the further spread of the crisis in financial confidence.

We are doing all we can to help American firms remain competitive in Asia.

Congress has approved our share of resources for the International Monetary Fund.

The independent Federal Reserve Board has cut interest rates—twice.

And Japan has finally begun to take the steps needed to get its huge economy moving in the right direction.

The best news, however, would be if the shock of this crisis results in a commitment to sounder and more transparent financial practices around the globe. It is encouraging that some of the countries hit hardest, especially Thailand, Korea and Brazil, have responded by deepening their commitment to democracy, fighting corruption and undertaking difficult economic reforms.

As we look ahead, we know that the health of the global economy will depend on maintaining and expanding the commitment to open trade, open markets and open books. But we also know that there are problems that markets alone cannot solve.

This is a lesson we learned in our own country when we adopted laws to ensure the integrity of our financial system and created programs to help our citizens cope with economic dislocations.

The changes needed to put the global economy back on track will not occur overnight. The economies most directly affected must continue to take the medicine that will help them get well. Our allies in Europe and Asia must do their part in restoring growth.

And our international financial institutions must do more to help countries cope with the social hardships created by the current crisis, and develop better strategies for preventing future ones.

A third major challenge to the international system is posed by the competition among different nations and peoples for land, resources and power.

This challenge is as old as history itself; but as the years go by and technology continues to advance, it is ever more urgent. Today, sophisticated weapons are more available, more deadly, more mobile and less expensive than ever before.

Our task is to do all we can to restrain and channel such competitions, so that differences are resolved peacefully and with respect for the legitimate rights of all.

To do this, we must help people in trouble-plagued regions to place their hopes for the future above bitter memories of the past; to put reconciliation above revenge; and to transform old battlegrounds into the common ground of mutual security and the search for a better life.

Americans may be proud that around the world our country is standing shoulder to shoulder with the peacemakers against the bombthrowers; supporting the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland; trying to end conflict in Central Africa; working with our partners to implement the Dayton Accords in Bosnia; and—as we have seen so dramatically these past two weeks—striving to overcome obstacles to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The memorandum signed by Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Washington last week reaffirms that negotiations work. It demonstrates that, regardless of their differences, Israelis and Palestinians want to find an alternative to protracted conflict and that they recognize that a viable negotiating process can get them there.

The agreement brings tangible benefits to both sides. Palestinian jurisdiction over lands on the West Bank will increase substantially, and new economic opportunities have been created. Israel will benefit from the Palestinian commitment to wage an unprecedented, systematic and structured effort to fight and defeat terror.

Enormous obstacles remain, but by creating circumstances for launching permanent status negotiations, both sides will now have a chance to talk about the issues that will define and resolve a real Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The understandings reached at the Wye Plantation provide further evidence that the peace process is resilient and can overcome severe setbacks. But it still has a long way to go. Last week, Israeli and Palestinian leaders made the hard choices required to reach an agreement. Now they must make the hard choices necessary to implement that agreement and to set the stage for further progress.

Our effort to build peace in the Middle East and elsewhere is not international social work, as some suggest.

It is smart for America, because we are better off when regional conflicts do not arise, threatening friends, creating economic disruptions and generating refugees. And it is also right for

America to help others avoid unnecessary bloodshed, and enable people to enjoy what President Clinton has called the quiet miracle of a normal life.

A fourth challenge we face is the need to repel threats posed by governments and factions that have contempt for international standards of law and human rights.

Our foremost effort here is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and poison gas.

Some point to the South Asia nuclear tests earlier this year and to the spread of missile technologies and say that arms control is futile. They say that because nonproliferation rules are sometimes broken, we should accept a world with no such rules at all. That is dangerous nonsense.

Certainly it will take more than treaties to keep Americans secure.

We need the best defense we can devise, the best intelligence we can develop and the best emergency planning we can prepare. But we also need the best legal framework we can establish to detect and diminish these threats and discredit those who brandish them. By so doing, we can cut the number of weapons we might one day face, and reduce the chance that the deadliest arms will fall into the wrong hands.

For example, we will be safer if we keep working with Russia to reduce nuclear arsenals and prevent nuclear smuggling. We are determined that no nukes should become "loose nukes."

We will be safer if, through our diplomacy, North Korea's dangerous nuclear program can be forever put to rest, and we are able to persuade that country to end its reckless development and sale of missile technologies.

We will be safer if we can give enforcement teeth to the Biological Weapons Convention, and if we can develop a sound bipartisan approach to the issue of ballistic missile defense.

And we will be safer if we can bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force. Its purpose is to ban nuclear explosive tests of any size, for any purpose, in any place, for all time. There could be no greater gift to the future.

To protect our security, we must also wage and win the battle against international terror.

As the U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa so tragically demonstrated, well-financed terrorist leaders such as Osama bin Laden have vowed to kill Americans worldwide. Their goal is to cause our country to abandon its friends, allies and responsibilities. To that, I can only say, that the nation whose finest planted the flag at Iwo Jima and plunged into Hell at Omaha Beach will not be intimidated.

Our flag will continue to fly wherever we have interests to defend. The President has requested, and Congress has approved, funds to help us better protect our people. And we will fight the struggle against terror on every front on every continent with every tool, every day.

In Kosovo, another threat to international stability has arisen as a result of the repression perpetrated by Serbian President Milosevic.

In recent days, NATO's threat to use force if necessary to end Serb atrocities has led to the withdrawal of troops and allowed civilians displaced by violence to begin returning home. International monitors, backed by NATO overflights, will seek to ensure that President Milosevic lives up to the promises he has made.

Meanwhile, we are urging the parties to find a political solution that would end the crisis and bring democratic self-government to the people of Kosovo.

Fifth and finally, we face the challenge of sustaining progress around the world towards democracy and respect for human rights.

Now, there are those who cling to the false sense of order that comes when political dissent is stifled and everyone knows his or her place. They haul out the old stereotypes and say that, "Well, freedom may work in some places, but the people in such and such a country are not ready; they do not really want it; they do not really need it."

To use a diplomatic term of art, that is balderdash.

No society can reach its potential unless its people are free to choose their leaders, publish their thoughts, worship their God and pursue their dreams.

This is a lesson we have learned time and again this century, from South Africa to South Korea and from Central Europe to Central America. It is a lesson we hope will be applied now in Cambodia, Indonesia and Nigeria. In each country, new leaders have an historic opportunity to bring their nation into the democratic fold. If that is their choice, the United States will do all it can to help.

We must also be willing to speak out for human rights and for religious and political freedoms whether they are under assault in a small country such as Burma or a big country such as China. And if we are told to mind our own business, we must respond that human rights are our business because, as Martin Luther King once said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

We must strive, as well, to improve working conditions around the world. Because I suspect you are like me. When we buy a blouse or a shirt, we want to know that it was not produced by people who were under-age, under coercion, in prison or denied their basic right to organize.

We Americans cannot and will not accept a global economy that rewards the lowest bidder without regard to standards. We want a future where profits come from perspiration and inspiration, not exploitation.

We must also do all we can to advance the status of women, because no country can grow strong and free when denied the talents of half its people.

In years past, we have made enormous progress. But today, around the world, terrible abuses are still being committed against women. These include domestic violence, dowry murders, mutilation and forced prostitution. Some say all this is cultural and there's nothing we can do about it. I say it's criminal and we each have an obligation to stop it.

Last but not least, the United States must continue to lead the world in its support for the international war crimes tribunals, because we believe that the perpetrators of genocide and ethnic cleansing should be held accountable, and those who see rape as just another tactic of war must pay for their crimes.

Some decades ago, in the depth of Cold War tensions, Walter Lippman wrote about the realities of his time in words that may serve as a warning to ours.

“With all the danger and worry it causes...the Soviet challenge may yet prove...a blessing [wrote Lippman]. For...if our influence...were undisputed. we would, I feel sure, slowly deteriorate. Having lost our great energies because we did not exercise them. having lost our daring because everything was...so comfortable. We would...enter into the decline which has marked...so many societies...when they have come to think there is no great work to be done. For then the night has come and they doze off and they begin to die.”

Although Mr. Lippman was often right during his career. I am convinced that on this point he was wrong.

For almost as long as I have been alive, America has played the leading role within the international system. And today, from the streets of Sarajevo to villages in the Middle East, from classrooms in Central America to courtrooms at The Hague, the influence of American leadership is as deeply felt as it has ever been.

This is not the result of some foreign policy theory. It is a reflection of American character.

We Americans have an enormous advantage over many other countries because we know who we are and what we believe. We have a purpose. And like the farmer's faith that seeds and rain will cause crops to grow, it is our faith that if we are true to our principles, we will succeed.

Let us, then, do honor to that faith. As we seek to find our way through an era of great turbulence and new dangers, let us reject the temptation of complacency and follow instead the example set for us by Secretary of State and General George C. Marshall.

Let us be doers. And by living up to the heritage of our past, let us together fulfill the promise of our future—and enter the new century free and respected, prosperous and at peace.

To that mission, this afternoon, I pledge to you my own best efforts, and respectfully summon your support.

And I thank you once again for the opportunity to be here with you this afternoon.