

# Preface

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The past year has seen what we hope represents a dramatic shift in the world's landscape. The participation of Palestinians, Afghans and Iraqis in elections and the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine have been examples of the universal aspiration of all people to make their voices heard and to govern themselves.

Today, more than fifty million people who lived under brutal regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq are on the road to democracy.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai is leading his war-torn nation forward, after 23 years of conflict and instability.

Iraq has taken the initial steps to joining the growing community of democracies in the world. In Iraq we witnessed citizens - despite the threat of terrorist violence - voting to ensure their voices were heard for the first time in decades. Elsewhere, Palestinian voters replaced an antiquated leadership with one that seeks peace with its neighbors, and held their first municipal elections since 1976.

In another region of the world, Ukrainians proved that they would not stand for an election to be rigged and stolen. The result ultimately was a presidential election that truly reflected the will of the people.

What these dramatic events graphically illustrate is that citizens of nations around the world share the desire to live in free societies founded on a profound commitment to the dignity of each individual and respect for human rights. Although individual freedoms and rights can be repressed for a time by authoritarian and corrupt regimes, history shows us that progress toward democracy is inevitable and encourages our support of the inalienable rights of freedom-loving people everywhere.

This volume illustrates our strategy to promote democracy and human rights worldwide in 2004 and 2005, and the policies and programs designed to carry it out. Democracy and governance programs provide technical assistance and other support to strengthen governing capacity and develop democratic states and institutions that are responsive and accountable to citizens. The President recently set forth in his second Inaugural and State of the Union addresses a policy of supporting democratic movements in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.

We recognize that each country has a unique history and traditions that will shape its quest for freedom. Whatever the path or pace, however, the United States is prepared to stand with those who seek freedom for themselves and their fellow citizens.

The defense of human rights is a universal responsibility. We must all be defenders of human rights. I take this opportunity to salute all of those who fight for personal freedom and liberty, wherever you are. You each play an important role in building a world that respects the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all. Your work is an inspiration to us all.

Condoleezza Rice  
*Secretary of State*