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[Home](#)[Issues & Press](#)[Travel & Business](#)[Countries](#)[Youth & Education](#)[Careers](#)[About State](#)

You are in: [Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#) > [What the Secretary Has Been Saying](#) > [2007 Secretary Rice's Remarks](#) > [June 2007: Secretary Rice's Remarks](#)

Remarks at the Centennial Dinner for the Economic Club of New York

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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(7:20 p.m. EST)

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.) Well, thank you, Barbara, for that kind introduction and I'd like to thank you very much for putting me on the dais of such an august group. There are a few economists here who must be wondering what they're doing sitting with a political scientist. That's a sort of joke from inside the academy. (Laughter.)

But I'm most honored in particular to be sitting with one economist, my good friend, Alan Greenspan. Alan you know as the former Chairman of the Fed, as an eminent economist, as a person who spoke in Delphic quality to lead our nation into economic growth and strength. But I know him as a very good friend who loves Brahms, and that means he's got soul. (Laughter.)

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It's an honor to join you tonight to help you celebrate your centennial anniversary. For 100 years now, the Economic Club of New York has been one of the intellectual capitals of the most dynamic city in the world. You have shaped the world of ideas. You have done so with reason, and passion, and civility. And you have helped to guide America, thoughtfully and confidently, through times of change and challenge.

One such time was the turn of the 20th century, when this club was founded. America was in the throes of a massive structural shift - the transition from an agricultural to an industrialized society. We were working to assimilate the largest wave of immigration in our history. Cities grew, but so did slums. Labor unrest was common. A new era of global trade and commerce was creating great wealth, but also dislocation. And beyond our borders, the landscape of geopolitics was shifting. New powers were rising; others were falling. And in 1914, it all went off the rails, when the guns of August began.

All this change took a toll on many working Americans, who felt a pervasive sense of uncertainty - a sense that perhaps we were losing our identity, losing our way; perhaps our future would not be as bright as our past. To some, the early 20th century looked like the beginning of America's decline. But in retrospect, to us, it looks unmistakably like the beginning of the American Century. In no small part, the person we have to thank for that is the man who joined us earlier, Teddy Roosevelt - who busted the trusts and built the Great White Fleet, who fought to conserve the natural beauty of America, and who led our nation to rise as a global power.

In terms of foreign policy, Teddy Roosevelt is often misunderstood. Some see him as a progressive idealist; others as a cold-eyed realist. After all, the same Teddy Roosevelt who sent the Marines to Cuba also won the Nobel Peace Prize for helping to end a war between Russia and Japan. The same Teddy Roosevelt who built the Panama Canal by any means necessary also used American power to eradicate yellow fever and support public health in the Philippines and in parts of the Americas. And the same Teddy Roosevelt who spoke softly to our enemies never hesitated to carry a big stick.

This was realism, to be sure, but it was something greater, something nobler, a disposition that perhaps we should call the uniquely American Realism. It is this idea that I'd like to spend a few minutes talking about tonight.

American Realism is an approach to the world that arises not only from the realities of global politics but from the nature of America's character: From the fact that we are all united as a people not by a narrow nationalism of blood and soil, but by universal ideals of human freedom and human rights. We believe that our principles are the greatest source of our power. And we are led into the world as much by our moral ideas as by our material interests. It is for these reasons, and for many others, that America has always been, and will always be, not a status quo power, but a revolutionary power - a nation with New World eyes, that looks at change not as a threat to be feared, but as an opportunity to be seized.

American Realism recognizes that human beings are flawed and fallible by nature - and that makes democratic ideals more precious, and democratic institutions more important. American Realism affirms that decisions about war and peace, poverty and prosperity, depend as much on the domestic institutions of states as on the distribution of power between them. And it is a guiding conviction of American Realism that we achieve our greatest and most enduring goals when we unite power and purpose together - for, as Teddy Roosevelt said, "power undirected by high purpose spells calamity, and high purpose by itself is utterly useless if the power to put it into effect is lacking."

That is not to say that there will never be tensions, that we'll easily bring day-to-day interests into perfect harmony with our ideals. But that is a challenge for policy, not a license to ignore our principles or our interests. It is a goal to recognize in the long run that the two are inextricably linked. In short, American Realism deals with the world as it is, but strives to make the world better than it is. More free. More just. More peaceful. More prosperous. And ultimately safer. Not perfect. Just better.

It was American Realism that informed the work of American statesmen in the early years of the Cold War - people like Truman and Vandenburg, and Marshall and Acheson, and Kennan and Nitze. It informed for years later by Kennedy, and Reagan, people who understood that we had to deal with the reality of Soviet power but should never forget the malignant nature of that state's character. It was American Realism that led them to create an open international order, rooted in free minds and free markets, self-determination and national sovereignty, not just to defend peace, and prosperity, and freedom for us in the United States, but to expand it for others. And of course, it was American Realism that led Secretary of State George Marshall to visit Harvard - 60 years ago this past Tuesday - to lay out a

visionary plan to rebuild Western Europe as a pillar of a free world.

Over the past six decades, we have seen the success of this open international order. It has turned communists into capitalists, global rivals into emerging partners, and it has enabled more people across the world to live with dignity and opportunity than at any other time in human history.

Today, economically, the international order is undeniably better off than ever. The global economy is experiencing unrivaled growth. But politically, it is increasingly clear that the international system is perhaps unequal to our present challenges. Transnational crime and terrorism, energy insecurity and climate change, the spread of disease and weapons - global threats that are testing not only our international institutions, but the state institutions of every country on Earth, including our own. Many weak and poorly-governed states are falling behind. Some are outright failing. And in today's interdependent world, when governments cannot defeat threats within their own borders, their problems quickly become our problems.

So what must be our objective? I would suggest that it is indeed transformation: to expand the circle of well-governed states that enshrine liberty under the rule of law, that provide for their people, and that act responsibly in the international system. America cannot do this for other countries. Nor should we. It must be their choice, and their initiative. But we can help and we must help. This is partnership, not paternalism.

To be sure, this is not a status quo objective. But that does not make it impractical. Indeed, helping states to transform themselves, to improve themselves, is the most realistic approach to the problems we now face - for in today's world, we are led, both by our interests and our ideals, to the following conviction: that liberty and justice within states leads to peace and stability between states. Freedom is not an abstract principle. It is the most practical way for states to organize themselves successfully, to adapt to change, and to grow economically.

To achieve this goal, we are working multilaterally with our friends and allies. We are drawing upon the full spectrum of our national power. We are creating incentives that reward and encourage transformation. And we are doing this in the manner of American Realism.

With American Realism, we are using free trade to help states transform - by expanding opportunity and prosperity for their citizens.

During the Cold War, there was a solid, bipartisan consensus in America that trade was not only critical for our economic success, but also for our national security. We need to regain that broad perspective, because today, more than ever, free trade is a vital tool of our foreign policy.

Trade is an engine not only of economic growth, but also of political transformation. Integrating into the global economy helps to open closed societies. It helps new democracies to deliver on the high hopes of their people. And it gives governments a stake in the international system.

This is how we should view the trade agreements now before Congress - for Peru, Panama, Colombia, and Korea. Asia is changing dramatically. New despots in Latin America want to drag the region back into authoritarianism. Our free trade agreements will help key allies to become democratic anchors of regional and global stability. And there is one

more task in that regard: We need to complete the Doha Round, which would help lift tens of millions of people out of poverty worldwide. Failing to realize the promise of Doha would go down in history as one of the world's great missed opportunities.

With American Realism, we are also using our foreign assistance to help states transform - by promoting good governance and fighting poverty.

During the Cold War, there was a debate about international development that reflected the broader division of that struggle. Some saw foreign aid as a tool to influence strategic partners; others as a means of doing good in the world.

Today, this old division is giving way to a new unity of purpose. In a world where some of the greatest challenges we face emerge within states, and not between them, global development is both a moral ideal and a national interest. As a result, with the full support of Congress, President Bush has launched the largest international development agenda since the Marshall Plan.

In the past six years, we have nearly tripled our foreign assistance worldwide, quadrupled it for sub-Saharan Africa - providing food to the hungry, medicine to the sick, and giving girls and boys of every race and religion, class and culture, their first experience in a classroom.

We have embarked upon a \$1.2 billion initiative to fight malaria, because no one should die for lack of a \$2 mosquito net.

And we have launched a \$15 billion contribution to the global fight against AIDS, doubled now by the President to \$30 billion. The President's Emergency Plan is the largest effort by one nation to combat a single disease.

As we increase the quantity of our foreign assistance though, we have worked to improve its quality. Our foreign assistance needs to be an incentive for transformation, not a source of dependency: It must support the efforts of developing countries themselves to govern justly, reform their economies, and invest in their people. This is the idea behind the Millennium Challenge Account. We are now working to bring a similar logic to all of our assistance. And that goal is simple: We'd like to get out of the business of foreign aid entirely, but the way to do that is by helping countries meet their own needs through the development of effective democratic institutions and economic institutions.

Finally, with American Realism, we are using all the elements of our power to help states transform, because in the face of violent enemies, those who seek freedom sometimes need more than persuasion to prevail.

In Darfur, victims of genocide are grateful for our humanitarian relief, but they also know that the United States will continue to sanction the Sudanese government, until the violence against innocents stops.

In Colombia - a state that was on the verge of failure just five years ago - our democratic ally needs the trade agreement we promised, but it also needs the military assistance to finally win its long war against narco-terrorists.

In Afghanistan, the freely-elected government of Kabul does not want another feasibility study. It wants U.S. and NATO troops to fight at the side of the new Afghan army until we break the back of the Taliban together.

And of course, in Iraq, on the frontlines of the war on terror, we are fighting for a democratic future for the Iraqi people and a safer future for us. I know that the American people are weary of the violence and the sacrifice. And so are ordinary Iraqis. Iraqis want democracy to work for them. They want their neighborhoods to be safe. And they want their country's future to belong to patriots, not to foreign terrorists. A stable Iraq will be a pillar of a different and better Middle East. And when we and our Iraqi partners succeed, it will have been because we clearly understood our interests, because we stayed true to our principles, and because we persevered to win the day.

In all of these endeavors, the United States is joining great power with great purpose. We are writing a new chapter in the history of American Realism. But to continue as a force for good in this world, we must also look to one more task. And that is to make certain that we are, in fact, strong at home.

It is fitting that we celebrate your centennial this year - for the challenges that America faces now, in 2007, are not completely unlike those we faced in 1907. Today, as before, our way of life, our way of relating to one another, is in the midst of another tectonic shift - this time, from an industrial to an information-based society and economy. Today, as before, we are working to assimilate a new wave of immigrants. Today, as before, a new era of globalization is creating unprecedented opportunities for prosperity, but clearly many Americans don't really feel that they're sharing in those opportunities. And today, as before, the landscape of geopolitics is shifting beneath our feet.

As in 1907, there is a real sense of uncertainty among many Americans today - a concern that our common identity is shifting somehow ... that changes abroad may be hurting us, not helping us, here at home. This is even leading some to speculate, again, that the American Century is giving way to the era of American decline. This mood hangs over many of those articles and news reports that we see these days about the rise of China and India, and perhaps the coming of somebody else's century. We are to believe that America has had a good run, but it must be all downhill from here.

Well, I think it won't surprise you that I don't believe that for a minute. I'm optimistic about America and about America's future. I'm optimistic because Americans value success, and we cheer success in one another. We push one another toward greater achievement. We're a competitive people.

I'm optimistic because in America it does not have to matter where you came from. It only has to matter where you want to go. I'm optimistic because America's pioneer spirit is stronger than ever, our ability to adapt to change and rise to challenges, our desire to get in the game, not sit on the sidelines. Our national disposition to always look upon the future with hope, not with fear -- as something we will shape, not something to which we will submit.

I'm also optimistic because I think from time to time about vignettes from our history. I spent some time a summer ago reading some of the biographies of our Founding Fathers. And I took a couple of things away from that. First of all, a lot of our Founding Fathers didn't like each other very much. But they still managed to come together to give us a basis for this more perfect union. I came away thinking that by all rights, by every stretch of the imagination, facing the greatest imperial power of the time, the United States should really never have come into being. Then, a few months ago, I read a wonderful book about Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War. And again, I thought: We should never have survived that, either -- our violent divisions -- and come out free. Both of those events, those outcomes, must have seemed impossible at the time.

And then more recently, in my own history, I stand before you tonight as a woman born in Birmingham, Alabama - the Birmingham of Bull Connor and the Ku Klux Klan ... the Birmingham of church burnings, and police dogs, and

water cannons ... the Birmingham in which my little classmate, Denise McNair, died in the bombing of 16th Street Baptist Church by homegrown terrorists. Yet, I stand before you tonight as the 66th Secretary of State. And should I finish my term, I would not -- I would say to you, and don't start thinking that we need affirmative action. There would not have been a white male secretary of state for 12 years. (Laughter and applause.)

I also take optimism from our history in the world. In 1989 until 1991, I was lucky enough to be the White House Soviet specialist at the end of the Cold War. It doesn't get much better than that. I was there for the liberation of Eastern Europe, the unification of Germany, and the beginnings of the peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union. And it was a heady experience because every day you came in and the world was going our way. But I realized in retrospect that, of course, we were just harvesting good decisions that had been made in 1946 and 1947 and 1948. I realized that it must have been very tough to see that vision of a future in 1946 when the question was not, could communism be stopped in Eastern Europe, but could communism be stopped in Western Europe; when the communists won 48 percent of the vote in Italy and 46 percent of the vote in France; when, in 1947, 2 million Europeans were still starving because of failed reconstruction, the Turks had civil conflict, the Greeks civil war; when, in 1948, a young Jewish state had to be recognized by Harry Truman; Germany permanently divided by the Berlin crisis; Czechoslovakia, the last free country in Eastern Europe, to fall to a communist coup; in 1949, when the Soviet Union exploded a nuclear weapon, five years ahead of schedule; the Chinese communists won their civil war; and, in 1950, the Korean War broke out.

I have to say that few would have thought that freedom was on the march in those days. And yet, somehow, because the architects of our great Cold War victory kept faith with our highest principles, supported them with national power, kept their optimism, and practiced a brand of distinctly American Realism. We had the chance in 1989 and '90 and '91 to see the emergence of the Europe for which they had hoped.

It is also the case that in 2006, I was fortunate to go with President Bush to a NATO summit in Latvia. Who would have ever thought it possible? You see, I'm really optimistic because in the large course of human events, when the tectonic plates are indeed shifting, things that seem impossible one day very often, in retrospect, seem quite inevitable. And so I am quite certain that if America stays true to her principles and practices this brand of American Realism, decades from now people will look back on this time and say, "Who could have ever doubted freedom's triumph?"

At the dawn of the 20th century, Teddy Roosevelt sent a message to our ambassador in Great Britain: "Our nation," he wrote, "glorious in youth and strength, looks into the future with eager eyes and rejoices as a strong man to run a race." America has now entered a new century. A new global race has begun. And as always, we will run it with optimism, and vigor, and purpose. And as in the past, not only will our people succeed - so will our principles. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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