

A FUTURE WHERE FREEDOM ENDURES

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."—John F. Kennedy

FOR MOST OF ITS NATIONAL HISTORY, the United States has tried to avoid the affairs of the world. Protected by two oceans and surrounded by friendly neighbors, we saw no need to engage in the great dramas of other lands. Indeed, America's first foreign policy was crafted by George Washington. He kept us out of the French Revolution, and, in his Farewell Address, urged Americans to avoid foreign entanglements. For more than 100 years, that's exactly what we did.

But that began to change in the 20th century. Two world wars and a Cold War were fought because we realized that the world was shrinking. And to protect freedom at home, we knew we would have to fight for it in other places.

Today, most Americans accept this change in national policy. On September 11, 2001, we saw that the world is smaller than we ever knew—and more dangerous than we ever imagined. But not only is the world shrinking, it is also getting flatter. In his book, *The World is Flat*, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Tom Friedman argues that we are entering into a new period of globalization and interconnectedness.

Think of a person sitting at a laptop in Texas who can do business on any product at any time, anywhere in the world. This is the marketplace of the 21st century. This was brought home to me when I traveled to Russia as secretary of commerce. I spoke with a Russian scientist who said, "Mr. Secretary, in the 20th century, the aviation industry changed the way our borders were connected. Because of the advancement of air transportation, you get on an airplane in one airport terminal, fly to another country, get off the plane in that airport terminal, and that's where our borders are connected. Today, technology means our borders are connected not by airport terminals, but by computer terminals." Information is power . . . in a few seconds . . . for a few cents.

Those who try to resist this expansion of freedom are standing on the beaches of history trying to hold back the waves. They are going to be washed away. Just look at the tide of freedom in the past 30 years. In 1975, there were about 35 countries in the world that were basically free-market economies. Today, around 135 countries are free-market economies. In 1975, there were roughly 400 million workers

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in free-market economies. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, another 400 million workers were added to free-market economies. Today, when you throw China and India into the mix, that's more than a billion additional workers. Simply put, the world is moving toward free markets. Both blessings and challenges will flow from this new era of interconnectedness.

It's not just free markets that are the wave of the future, but free governments as well. When Abraham Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg 142 years ago, democratic governments were a minority in the world. Lincoln feared that if democracy failed in America, it would fail everywhere. Hence his warning at Gettysburg that the Civil War was being fought to test whether "that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."

It has endured. And today, more than half of the world lives under free governments.

Who would have ever predicted that just a few months ago, in the span of 113 days, more than 100 million people, living on two continents, would cast free votes in nations that had never known democracy? And more than half of these voters are people of the Muslim faith who live in the broader Middle East. That's exactly what happened in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Ukraine.

Still, building a democracy is a labor-intensive, time-consuming business. There are many critics of our policy of fighting for freedom. Too many of these critics know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

The only thing more expensive than building a democracy in the Middle East is *not* building a democracy in the Middle East. The only thing more dangerous than fighting terrorists overseas is fighting them in America.

Another Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist, Charles Krauthammer of *The Washington Post*, has called this the policy of "democratic globalism." It is the newest and perhaps most profound contribution to American foreign policy since containment and the Marshall Plan. Rejecting isolationism, and transcending idealism and realism, democratic globalism is a way for America to engage the world—not just to protect our own interests, but to protect the interests of freedom everywhere. Simply put, by promoting freedom abroad, we protect it here at home. It is realism in the pursuit of idealism. As Tony Blair says, our policy of spreading freedom is both "the last line of defense . . . and the first line of attack."

So this is an historic time and a challenging moment. To spread freedom, we must bring about not only the death of terrorism and tyranny, but

also the birth of liberty. To spread prosperity, we must promote not only free government, but free markets, as well.

In a changing world, we must be willing to promote freedom. Anywhere and everywhere, we must make freedom our North Star guiding us as we make policy decisions. And as the world continues to change, we will continue to need principled leadership. After all, ideals without actions cannot long endure.

Nobel Prize-winner Elie Wiesel is a survivor of the Buchenwald concentration camp of World War II. He once described how it is that evil can exist in our world. And his answer may surprise you. The opposite of love, he said, is not hate. It's indifference. Concentration camps, gulags, and mass graves come into being not because people hate, but because they don't care. Too many times in the past, too many people haven't cared enough about gas chambers in Germany, or dungeons in Soviet Russia, or mass graves in Kurdish Iraq.

This new era of democratic globalism requires that Americans be willing to stand up, speak out, and step forward: to be informed, interested, and involved.

And above all, to be an optimist. Lincoln died just as freedom was about to take hold in the South. We are all alive as freedom takes hold of the world. What a great time to be living. What a great moment in history.

Americans are nothing if not experimenters. We love to invent, tweak, and try out new ideas. We are congenital problem solvers. And if we make mistakes, which we do, we learn from them. Our idealism is firmly rooted in the soil of pragmatism. And it has been from our very beginning.

This past year, David McCullough released a book on the founding of America. He noted that none of the founders had ever been involved in a revolution or started a new government. In 1776, they had no national currency, no bank, and no army or navy. Yet, he noted, America's founders were good at "improvising . . . and feeling their way." Perhaps no one personified this more than General Washington. Washington suffered many setbacks on the battlefield. In fact, he lost more battles than he won. A lot more. But he persevered, and, in the end, prevailed. No, the founders weren't perfect—but they were persistent. They made mistakes, but they also made history.

And so it is with us. Like our forefathers, we must stand for the power of freedom at home and abroad. Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else.

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