

Governor George W. Bush, "A Distinctly American Internationalism," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California, November 19, 1999

It is an honor to be with you at the Reagan Library. Thank you Secretary Shultz for your decades of service to America – and for your kindness and counsel over the last several months. And thank you Mrs. Reagan for this invitation – and for your example of loyalty and love and courage.

My wife Laura says that behind every great man there is a surprised woman. But, Mrs. Reagan, you were never surprised by the greatness of your husband. You believed it from the start. And now the rest of the world sees him as you always have – as a hero in the American story. A story in which a single individual can shape history. A story in which evil is real, but courage and decency triumph.

We live in the nation President Reagan restored, and the world he helped to save. A world of nations reunited and tyrants humbled. A world of prisoners released and exiles come home. And today there is a prayer shared by free people everywhere: God bless you, Ronald Reagan.

Two months ago, at the Citadel in South Carolina, I talked about American defense. This must be the first focus of a president, because it is his first duty to the Constitution. Even in this time of pride and promise, America has determined enemies, who hate our values and resent our success – terrorists and crime syndicates and drug cartels and unbalanced dictators. The Empire has passed, but evil remains.

We must protect our homeland and our allies against missiles and terror and blackmail.

We must restore the morale of our military – squandered by shrinking resources and multiplying missions – with better training, better treatment and better pay.

And we must master the new technology of war – to extend our peaceful influence, not just across the world, but across the years.

In the defense of our nation, a president must be a clear-eyed realist. There are limits to the smiles and scowls of diplomacy. Armies and missiles are not stopped by stiff notes of condemnation. They are held in check by strength and purpose and the promise of swift punishment.

But there is more to say, because military power is not the final measure of might. Our realism must make a place for the human spirit.

This spirit, in our time, has caused dictators to fear and empires to fall. And it has left an honor roll of courage and idealism: Scharansky, Havel, Walesa, Mandela. The most powerful force in the world is not a weapon or a nation but a truth: that we are spiritual beings, and that freedom is "the soul's right to breathe."

In the dark days of 1941 – the low point of our modern epic – there were about a dozen democracies left on the planet. Entering a new century, there are nearly 120. There is a direction in events, a current in our times. "Depend on it," said Edmund Burke. "The lovers of freedom will be free."

America cherishes that freedom, but we do not own it. We value the elegant structures of our own democracy – but realize that, in other societies, the architecture will vary. We propose our principles, we must not impose our culture.

Yet the basic principles of human freedom and dignity are universal. People should be able to say what they think. Worship as they wish. Elect those who govern them. These ideals have proven their power on every continent. In former colonies -- and the nations that ruled them. Among the allies of World War II -- and the countries they vanquished. And these ideals are equally valid north of the 38th parallel. They are just as true in the Pearl River Delta. They remain true 90 miles from our shores, on an island prison, ruled by a revolutionary relic.

Some have tried to pose a choice between American ideals and American interests—between who we are and how we act. But the choice is false. America, by decision and destiny, promotes political freedom -- and gains the most when democracy advances. America believes in free markets and free trade -- and benefits most when markets are opened. America is a peaceful power -- and gains the greatest dividend from democratic stability. Precisely because we have no territorial objectives, our gains are not measured in the losses of others. They are counted in the conflicts we avert, the prosperity we share and the peace we extend.

Sometimes this balance takes time to achieve -- and requires us to deal with nations that do not share our values. Sometimes the defenders of freedom must show patience as well as resolution. But that patience comes of confidence, not compromise. We believe, with Alexander Hamilton, that the "spirit of commerce" has a tendency to "soften the manners of men." We believe, with George Washington, that "Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth." And we firmly believe our nation is on the right side of history -- the side of man's dignity and God's justice.

Few nations have been given the advantages and opportunities of our own. Few have been more powerful as a country, or more successful as a cause. But there are risks, even for the powerful. "I have many reasons to be optimistic," said Pericles in the golden age of Athens. "Indeed, I am more afraid of our own blunders than of the enemy's devices."

America's first temptation is withdrawal -- to build a proud tower of protectionism and isolation.

In a world that depends on America to reconcile old rivals and balance ancient ambitions, this is the shortcut to chaos. It is an approach that abandons our allies, and our ideals. The vacuum left by America's retreat would invite challenges to our power. And the result, in the long run, would be a stagnant America and a savage world.

American foreign policy cannot be founded on fear. Fear that American workers can't compete. Fear that America will corrupt the world -- or be corrupted by it. This fear has no place in the party of Reagan, or in the party of Truman. In times of peril, our nation did not shrink from leadership. At this moment of opportunity, I have no intention of betraying American interests, American obligations and American honor.

America's second temptation is drift -- for our nation to move from crisis to crisis like a cork in a current.

Unless a president sets his own priorities, his priorities will be set by others -- by adversaries, or the crisis of the moment, live on CNN. American policy can become random and reactive -- untethered to the interests of our country.

America must be involved in the world. But that does not mean our military is the answer to every difficult foreign policy situation -- a substitute for strategy. American internationalism should not mean action without vision, activity without priority, and missions without end -- an approach that squanders American will and drains American energy.

American foreign policy must be more than the management of crisis. It must have a great and guiding goal: to turn this time of American influence into generations of democratic peace.

This is accomplished by concentrating on enduring national interests. And these are my priorities. An American president should work with our strong democratic allies in Europe and Asia to extend the peace. He should promote a fully democratic Western Hemisphere, bound together by free trade. He should defend America's interests in the Persian Gulf and advance peace in the Middle East, based upon a secure Israel. He must check the contagious spread of weapons of mass destruction, and the means to deliver them. He must lead toward a world that trades in freedom. And he must pursue all these goals with focus, patience and strength.

I will address these responsibilities as this campaign continues. To each, I bring the same approach: A distinctly American internationalism. Idealism, without illusions. Confidence, without conceit. Realism, in the service of American ideals.

Today I want to talk about Europe and Asia... the world's strategic heartland... our greatest priority. Home of long-time allies, and looming rivals. Behind the United States, Eurasia has the next six largest economies. The next six largest military budgets.

The Eurasian landmass, in our century, has seen the indignities of colonialism and the excesses of nationalism. Its people have been sacrificed to brutal wars and totalitarian ambitions. America has discovered, again and again, that our history is inseparable from their tragedy. And we are rediscovering that our interests are served by their success.

In this immense region, we are guided, not by an ambition, but by a vision. A vision in which no great power, or coalition of great powers, dominates or endangers our friends. In which America encourages stability from a position of strength. A vision in which people and capital and information can move freely, creating bonds of progress, ties of culture and momentum toward democracy.

This is different from the trumpet call of the Cold War. We are no longer fighting a great enemy, we are asserting a great principle: that the talents and dreams of average people – their warm human hopes and loves – should be rewarded by freedom and protected by peace. We are defending the nobility of normal lives, lived in obedience to God and conscience, not to government.

The challenge comes because two of Eurasia's greatest powers – China and Russia – are powers in transition. And it is difficult to know their intentions when they do not know their own futures. If they become America's friends, that friendship will steady the world. But if not, the peace we seek may not be found.

China, in particular, has taken different shapes in different eyes at different times. An empire to be divided. A door to be opened. A model of collective conformity. A diplomatic card to be played. One year, it is said to be run by "the butchers of Beijing." A few years later, the same administration pronounces it a "strategic partner."

We must see China clearly -- not through the filters of posturing and partisanship. China is rising, and that is inevitable. Here, our interests are plain: We welcome a free and prosperous China. We predict no conflict. We intend no threat. And there are areas where we must try to cooperate: preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction... attaining peace on the Korean peninsula.

Yet the conduct of China's government can be alarming abroad, and appalling at home. Beijing has been investing its growing wealth in strategic nuclear weapons... new ballistic missiles... a blue-water navy and a long-range airforce. It is an espionage threat to our country. Meanwhile, the State Department has reported that "all public dissent against the party and government [has been] effectively silenced" – a tragic achievement in a nation of 1.2 billion people. China's government is an enemy of religious freedom and a

sponsor of forced abortion – policies without reason and without mercy.

All of these facts must be squarely faced. China is a competitor, not a strategic partner. We must deal with China without ill-will – but without illusions.

By the same token, that regime must have no illusions about American power and purpose. As Dean Rusk observed during the Cold War, "It is not healthy for a regime ... to incur, by their lawlessness and aggressive conduct, the implacable opposition of the American people."

We must show American power and purpose in strong support for our Asian friends and allies – for democratic South Korea across the Yellow Sea... for democratic Japan and the Philippines across the China seas ... for democratic Australia and Thailand. This means keeping our pledge to deter aggression against the Republic of Korea, and strengthening security ties with Japan. This means expanding theater missile defenses among our allies.

And this means honoring our promises to the people of Taiwan. We do not deny there is one China. But we deny the right of Beijing to impose their rule on a free people. As I've said before, we will help Taiwan to defend itself.

The greatest threats to peace come when democratic forces are weak and disunited. Right now, America has many important bilateral alliances in Asia. We should work toward a day when the fellowship of free Pacific nations is as strong and united as our Atlantic Partnership. If I am president, China will find itself respected as a great power, but in a region of strong democratic alliances. It will be unthreatened, but not unchecked.

China will find in America a confident and willing trade partner. And with trade comes our standing invitation into the world of economic freedom. China's entry into the World Trade Organization is welcome, and this should open the door for Taiwan as well. But given China's poor record in honoring agreements, it will take a strong administration to hold them to their word.

If I am president, China will know that America's values are always part of America's agenda. Our advocacy of human freedom is not a formality of diplomacy, it is a fundamental commitment of our country. It is the source of our confidence that communism, in every form, has seen its day.

And I view free trade as an important ally in what Ronald Reagan called "a forward strategy for freedom." The case for trade is not just monetary, but moral. Economic freedom creates habits of liberty. And habits of liberty create expectations of democracy. There are no guarantees, but there are good examples, from Chile to Taiwan. Trade freely with China, and time is on our side.

Russia stands as another reminder that a world increasingly at peace is also a world in transition. Here, too, patience is needed – patience, consistency, and a principled reliance on democratic forces.

In the breadth of its land, the talent and courage of its people, the wealth of its resources, and the reach of its weapons, Russia is a great power, and must always be treated as such. Few people have suffered more in this century. And though we trust the worst is behind them, their troubles are not over. This past decade, for Russia, has been an epic of deliverance and disappointment.

Our first order of business is the national security of our nation – and here both Russia and the United States face a changed world. Instead of confronting each other, we confront the legacy of a dead ideological rivalry -- thousands of nuclear weapons, which, in the case of Russia, may not be secure. And together we also face an emerging threat – from rogue nations, nuclear theft and accidental launch. All this requires nothing short of a new strategic relationship to protect the peace of the world.

We can hope that the new Russian Duma will ratify START II, as we have done. But this is not our most pressing challenge. The greater problem was first addressed in 1991 by Senator Lugar and Senator Sam Nunn. In an act of foresight and statesmanship, they realized that existing Russian nuclear facilities were in danger of being compromised. Under the Nunn-Lugar program, security at many Russian nuclear facilities has been improved and warheads have been destroyed.

Even so, the Energy Department warns us that our estimates of Russian nuclear stockpiles could be off by as much as 30 percent. In other words, a great deal of Russian nuclear material cannot be accounted for. The next president must press for an accurate inventory of all this material. And we must do more. I'll ask the Congress to increase substantially our assistance to dismantle as many of Russia's weapons as possible, as quickly as possible.

We will still, however, need missile defense systems – both theater and national. If I am commander-in-chief, we will develop and deploy them.

Under the mutual threat of rogue nations, there is a real possibility the Russians could join with us and our friends and allies to cooperate on missile defense systems. But there is a condition. Russia must break its dangerous habit of proliferation.

In the hard work of halting proliferation, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is not the answer. I've said that our nation should continue its moratorium on testing. Yet far more important is to constrict the supply of nuclear materials and the means to deliver them – by making this a priority with Russia and China. Our nation must cut off the demand for nuclear weapons – by addressing the security concerns of those who renounce these weapons. And our nation must diminish the evil attraction of these weapons for rogue states – by rendering them useless with missile defense. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty does nothing to gain these goals. It does not stop proliferation, especially to renegade regimes. It is not verifiable. It is not enforceable. And it would stop us from ensuring the safety and reliability of our nation's deterrent, should the need arise. On these crucial matters, it offers only words and false hopes and high intentions – with no guarantees whatever. We can fight the spread of nuclear weapons, but we cannot wish them away with unwise treaties.

Dealing with Russia on essential issues will be far easier if we are dealing with a democratic and free Russia. Our goal is to promote, not only the appearance of democracy in Russia, but the structures, spirit, and reality of democracy. This is clearly not done by focusing our aid and attention on a corrupt and favored elite. Real change in Russia – as in China – will come not from above, but from below. From a rising class of entrepreneurs and business people. From new leaders in Russia's regions who will build a new Russian state, where power is shared, not controlled. Our assistance, investments and loans should go directly to the Russian people, not to enrich the bank accounts of corrupt officials.

America should reach out to a new generation of Russians through educational exchanges and programs to support the rule of law and a civil society. And the Russian people, next month, must be given a free and fair choice in their election. We cannot buy reform for Russia, but we can be Russia's ally in self-reform.

Even as we support Russian reform, we cannot excuse Russian brutality. When the Russian government attacks civilians – killing women and children, leaving orphans and refugees – it can no longer expect aid from international lending institutions. The Russian government will discover that it cannot build a stable and unified nation on the ruins of human rights. That it cannot learn the lessons of democracy from the textbook of tyranny. We want to cooperate with Russia on its concern with terrorism, but that is impossible unless Moscow operates with civilized self-restraint.

Just as we do not want Russia to descend into cruelty, we do not want it to return to imperialism. Russia does

have interests with its newly independent neighbors. But those interests must be expressed in commerce and diplomacy – not coercion and domination. A return to Russian imperialism would endanger both Russian democracy and the states on Russia's borders. The United States should actively support the nations of the Baltics, the Caucasus and Central Asia, along with Ukraine, by promoting regional peace and economic development, and opening links to the wider world.

Often overlooked in our strategic calculations is that great land that rests at the south of Eurasia. This coming century will see democratic India's arrival as a force in the world. A vast population, before long the world's most populous nation. A changing economy, in which 3 of its 5 wealthiest citizens are software entrepreneurs.

India is now debating its future and its strategic path, and the United States must pay it more attention. We should establish more trade and investment with India as it opens to the world. And we should work with the Indian government, ensuring it is a force for stability and security in Asia. This should not undermine our longstanding relationship with Pakistan, which remains crucial to the peace of the region.

All our goals in Eurasia will depend on America strengthening the alliances that sustain our influence—in Europe and East Asia and the Middle East.

Alliances are not just for crises -- summoned into action when the fire bell sounds. They are sustained by contact and trust. The Gulf War coalition, for example, was raised on the foundation of a president's vision and effort and integrity. Never again should an American president spend nine days in China, and not even bother to stop in Tokyo or Seoul or Manila. Never again should an American president fall silent when China criticizes our security ties with Japan.

For NATO to be strong, cohesive and active, the President must give it consistent direction: on the alliance's purpose; on Europe's need to invest more in defense capabilities; and, when necessary, in military conflict.

To be relied upon when they are needed, our allies must be respected when they are not.

We have partners, not satellites. Our goal is a fellowship of strong, not weak, nations. And this requires both more American consultation and more American leadership. The United States needs its European allies, as well as friends in other regions, to help us with security challenges as they arise. For our allies, sharing the enormous opportunities of Eurasia also means sharing the burdens and risks of sustaining the peace. The support of friends allows America to reserve its power and will for the vital interests we share.

Likewise, international organizations can serve the cause of peace. I will never place U.S. troops under U.N. command – but the U.N. can help in weapons inspections, peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. If I am president, America will pay its dues – but only if the U.N.'s bureaucracy is reformed, and our disproportionate share of its costs is reduced.

There must also be reform of international financial institutions – the World Bank and the IMF. They can be a source of stability in economic crisis. But they should not impose austerity, bailing out bankers while impoverishing a middle class. They should not prop up failed and corrupt financial systems. These organizations should encourage the basics of economic growth and free markets. Spreading the rule of law and wise budget practices. Promoting sound banking laws and accounting rules. Most of all, these institutions themselves must be more transparent and accountable.

All the aims I've described today are important. But they are not imperial. America has never been an empire. We may be the only great power in history that had the chance, and refused – preferring greatness to power and justice to glory.

We are a nation that helped defeat Germany in 1945 – which had launched a war costing 55 million lives. Less than five years later we launched an airlift to save the people of Berlin from starvation and tyranny. And a generation of Germans remember the "raisin bombers" that dropped candy and raisins for children.

We are a nation that defeated Japan – then distributed food, wrote a constitution, encouraged labor unions and gave women the right to vote. Japanese who expected retribution received mercy instead. Over the entrance of one American army camp, there was a banner that read, "Be neat. Be soldierly. Be proud. Behave. Be American."

No one questioned what those words meant: "Be American." They meant we were humble in victory. That we were liberators, not conquerors. And when American soldiers hugged the survivors of death camps, and shared their tears, and welcomed them back from a nightmare world, our country was confirmed in its calling.

The duties of our day are different. But the values of our nation do not change. Let us reject the blinders of isolationism, just as we refuse the crown of empire. Let us not dominate others with our power – or betray them with our indifference. And let us have an American foreign policy that reflects American character. The modesty of true strength. The humility of real greatness.

This is the strong heart of America. And this will be the spirit of my administration.

I believe this kind of foreign policy will inspire our people and restore the bipartisanship so necessary to our peace and security.

Many years ago, Alexander Solzhenitzyn challenged American politicians. "Perhaps," he said, "some of you still feel yourselves just as representatives of your state or party. We do not perceive these differences. We do not look on you as Democrats or Republicans, not as representatives of the East or West Coast or the Midwest.... Upon [you] depends whether the course of world history will tend to tragedy or salvation."

That is still our challenge. And that is still our choice.

Thank you.

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