

Weinberg Founders Conference Keynote Address

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Stephen Hadley served as national security advisor in the George W. Bush administration.



Brief Analysis

On October 15, 2004, Stephen Hadley addressed the 2004 Weinberg Founders Conference. Mr. Hadley is assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor. The following is a selection of excerpts from his remarks. [Read a full transcript. \(templateC07.php?CID=154\)](#)

“The president has adopted a two-pronged strategy to win the war on terror. First, we will confront terror networks and the states that support them. And second, we will support the spread of democracy, prosperity, and reform as the alternatives to tyranny, hopelessness, and despair. . . .

“On September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush made a decision. America will not wait for its enemies to strike before acting against them. We will instead take the fight to the enemy. We will fight the terrorists in their sanctuaries, not in our homeland. The war that the terrorists began will be fought and finished on our terms, not theirs.

“The first battle of that war was to strike the al-Qaeda network, to capture or kill its members, to cut off its finances, and to take away its safe havens. Since then, more than three-quarters of al-Qaeda’s known leaders and associates have been detained or killed. . . . The Taliban regime, which sheltered and supported al-Qaeda, has been overthrown, and a free Afghan government is helping American soldiers hunt Taliban and al-Qaeda terrorists. And last week, millions of Afghans voted in a historic presidential election. . . .

“Our terrorist enemies are not limited to al-Qaeda. . . . The only way to secure our nation over the long term is to wage a broad war against this global menace. So, rather than seeking a narrow win, President Bush is working for a broad victory, a lasting peace, and a better world. . . . “State sponsors of terror have a choice: abandon their support for terror or face the consequences. Afghanistan, under the Taliban, made the wrong choice, and the Taliban regime suffered the consequences. Through twelve years and seventeen UN Security Council Resolutions, Iraq under Saddam Hussein also made the wrong choice. . . . As the Duelfer report shows, the sanctions imposed on Saddam were not only failing, but he was actually leveraging them to his advantage. Our choice was not between a benign status quo and the bloodshed of war; it was between war now or a greater threat in the future. After September 11, our country had to do things differently, taking threats seriously before they fully materialized. We could not afford to underestimate the threat from places like Iraq, where weapons of mass destruction and support for terror converged.

“In contrast to Saddam’s Iraq and the Taliban’s Afghanistan, other nations have made a different choice and the right choice in the war on terror. Libya, a longtime supporter of terror and a pursuer of the world’s most dangerous weapons, has chosen a new path. It has given up its chemical weapons, and elements of its nuclear weapons program are now under lock and key in a U.S. laboratory in Oakridge, Tennessee. . . .

“A third group of states have yet to make the right choice in the war on terror. And in each case, we are pursuing a vigorous diplomatic strategy along with our friends and allies.

“Iran’s oppressive theocracy seeks weapons of mass destruction and long-range delivery systems. They sponsor terror, oppose peace in the Middle East, and meddle in the affairs of neighboring countries most notably Iraq. We are working with our partners in the international community to shine a spotlight on the regime’s abuses at home and abroad. And we are working with other nations and with the International Atomic Energy Agency to expose Iran’s nuclear weapons program and to persuade Iran to abandon this effort.

“We made it clear to the regime in Syria that it cannot serve as a safe haven for terrorists and that it must take steps to halt the activities of states, individuals, and organizations that direct and engage in violence and terror. . . . We believe there may be hope for improved relations with Syria, but only if there is a change in Syrian behavior and performance. . . .

“The president’s long-term vision is to make the world safer by making it better. But the goal of a better world requires that conventional wisdom be challenged and that failed approaches be changed. From his first days in office, the president has demonstrated a willingness to do this.

“One of these failed approaches concerns America’s historic approach to the Middle East. For too long, America looked the other way while people in the region suffered under oppressive regimes. For too long, the West sacrificed its democratic principles on the altar of maintaining stability. But sixty years of excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make the world safer. Because, in the end, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. . . .

“The failure of past thinking seems self-evident, and yet the skepticism that met the president’s new forward strategy for freedom was pointed. Many predicted that we would never see the very first steps toward democracy in the region that we have already seen come to pass. Some thought Afghanistan too primitive for democratic elections. Some predicted that Iraq would break apart into Sunni, Kurd, and Shiite enclaves. Yet, we are witnessing today in both countries the power of freedom and democracy to provide the basis for national unity and the means to bridge gaps between religions, cultures, and tribes.

“The president’s initiatives and these first successes have encouraged a broader debate in the region. In recent months, political, civil-society, and business leaders from the Middle East have met to discuss modernization and reform and have issued stirring calls for political, economic, and social change. . . . From Morocco to Jordan to Bahrain, we’re seeing elections, new protections for women, and the beginnings of political pluralism. . . .

“The march of democracy and freedom will strike a major blow against our terrorist enemies, and they know it. Here is what the terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi wrote about the prospect for a democratic Iraq. He wrote, “Democracy is coming to Iraq and there will be no excuse thereafter. We pack our bags in search of another land. This is suffocation.” . . . As people see they can realize their aspirations through peaceful means, the temptation to resort to violence lessens. . . .

“Democracy and reform are also at the heart of President Bush’s approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Here, too, the president saw a strategic opportunity and was not afraid to break with conventional wisdom to pursue it. . . . President Bush believes that the kind and quality of Palestinian government is as important to Middle East peace as

the disposition of borders. The Palestinian state must have a government that is worthy of the dreams of the Palestinian people for their children, and that is a government that the Israeli people can feel comfortable having as a neighbor. This means a government based on democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, and a leadership willing to fight terror. . . .

“Already, the president’s policy has changed the terms of the debate in the Middle East. Palestinians are beginning to demand accountability and transparency from their government. They are beginning to voice their frustration with corruption, endless violence, and an ever-declining living standard. . . . The world awaits the emergence of a genuine and courageous Palestinian leadership to guide the Palestinian people to a better future. America and the international community stand ready to help. . . .

“Israel must take concrete steps to support the emergence of a viable Palestinian state. Israeli forces will need to withdraw fully to the positions they held prior to September 28, 2000. And, as the Roadmap states, Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories must stop. . . . Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s plan for disengagement from Gaza can significantly advance this vision. The plan stands to do more than just begin the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the dismantling of all Israeli settlements in Gaza and four settlements in the West Bank. It offers the Palestinian people a down-payment on a Palestinian state and an opportunity to run their own affairs in Gaza. This disengagement plan should provide a new impetus for reform of Palestinian institutions and the emergence of new leadership.

“President Bush’s policies represent a positive path to a safer and better Middle East. They are giving hope to people throughout the region who courageously advocate the blessings of liberty. They offer an alternative future to the ideologies of terror, hatred, and oppression. . . .” ❖

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