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*As Prepared for Delivery*

I want to express my pleasure at being included in the inauguration symposia for President Young, who so ably worked for me when I was Secretary of State. In Michael Young, the University of Utah has an energetic administrator whose hard work and vision will greatly benefit this fine school.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a privilege to speak today to so many of you who are interested in the Middle East. I believe that the honest exchange of ideas and information plays a vital role in conflict resolution, and lecture series like this one can assist that process.

Ibrahim Karawan has posed a good question for my remarks today: “Where does U.S. policy in the Middle East go from here?” Before starting to answer, I should review what has happened in the Middle East since September 11, 2001. Once we have chronicled those events, we should have a better understanding of why they occurred. Then, we can begin to predict directions for American policy in the region.

This is a time of incredible opportunity for resolving issues that have festered for decades. In early January, President Bush said, “I believe democracy can take hold in parts of the world that have been condemned to tyranny. And I believe when democracies take hold, it leads to peace.”

The president’s assertion was met with skepticism by some and with downright mockery by others. Now, however, in April, a wind of change is blowing in the Middle East. Among Arab reformers, there is a belief that this wind has blown down a metaphorical Berlin Wall in the region.

Criticism of the President has ebbed and skeptics are now asking themselves a simple question: Could Bush be right? Is freedom, as President Bush announced last month, “on the march” in the Middle East?

Only time will tell if there will be a flowering of democracy along the banks of the

Nile and the Euphrates. There are many hurdles yet to overcome in a region that has been prone to heartbreaks and setbacks. However, it is clear that something dramatic has happened in the Middle East since the invasion of Iraq. Citizens are taking up the gritty responsibility of self-determination.

Listen how U.S. Army Col. Mark Martins describes the effects of the successful Iraqi election. “Democracy,” Martins said, “is not a luxury car. It is an all-terrain vehicle and good for fighting insurgency.” He is right. What is happening isn’t always pretty, but it’s sometimes very effective.

Perhaps nothing better represents what has happened in the Middle East than the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon. “People power” is changing things in Lebanon, much as it did in Ukraine months ago during the Orange Revolution.

As a result of the pressure, Syrian leaders last week promised to pull out all of their military and intelligence forces from Lebanon by the end of the month, before the nationwide elections scheduled for late May.

And the development in Lebanon is only one part of a shaking-up of the chess board in that region of the world.

Just consider what else has happened during the past two years in the Muslim World:

- = Libya has given up its WMD program.
- = Afghanistan, freed from the Taliban, has conducted a successful election.
- = Iraq experienced a free and fair election. While the jury is still out on the future of that country, the election was a clear and compelling example of the exercise of democracy.
- = Palestinians conducted a free and fair election in January when they chose Abu Mazen to replace Yasir Arafat, a revolutionary who never could make the transition to being a political leader
- = Egypt recently said it will now hold multi-candidate elections for President -- not just one candidate.

While many factors undoubtedly contribute to these transformations, I am biased enough to believe American leadership heads the list, starting with our involvement first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq. It is becoming increasingly evident that toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein has contributed to a growing impulse in other countries toward reform.

Last month, King Abdullah of Jordan recognized this evolution that is occurring. At first, he said, Arab countries feared that reform “was going to be imposed from the outside.” But now, he said, reform is no longer taboo. It is being “openly debated” in the Arab world. Partly as a result of U.S. engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, pressure for reform is bubbling up from the grassroots in other countries.

Assisting this grassroots effort is the proliferation of satellite television and of the internet, which are effectively spreading information and ideas. Increasingly, it is difficult for governments to control the news that their people receive.

As Nadim Shehadi of the Center for Lebanese Studies at Oxford University recently said, “The regimes that are built on the principle of controlling information -- like the old Eastern Europe-style of controlling information and controlling thought, if you like -- are not sustainable any more. They are in a time warp.” The new technologies appear to be having the same effect on Middle Easterners as televised news had on Americans during the Vietnam War. Satellite television and the internet very well could be the voice of democracy for the Middle East.

Of course, despite the encouraging trends, many problems remain that will require American leadership, attention, and involvement. Among them is the need to use public diplomacy in the Muslim world to better explain U.S. policies. Because a decades-long battle for the hearts and minds of the Islamic world has just started.

It is critical that the Muslim world understand that we have no problems with Muslims in general, only with extremists who advocate, promote and execute violence.

Last month, President Bush took a major step in the right direction of strengthening our public diplomacy by nominating Karen Hughes as Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy. By choosing one of his closest personal advisors to take this position, the President is clearly signaling the importance he attaches to improving our public diplomacy.

In the broader Middle East, there are three specific challenges facing American policymakers:

The first challenge is fostering the emergence of a stable, representative Iraq at peace with its neighbors. Whatever your views of the wisdom of the war were originally, a hasty departure at this point would diminish our credibility around the world.

Furthermore, there are grounds for guarded optimism. Reconstruction is going forward. Political parties are organizing. Iraqi security forces are being trained. Progress may be slower than many had hoped, but it is occurring.

Most importantly, Iraqis disproved critics who didn't believe the country could successfully conduct the election for a 275-seat general assembly on January 30. Iraq experienced a 60 percent turnout among voters who risked their lives to go to the polls.

Since then, General John P. Abizaid, head of U.S. Central Command, has recently said that he believes we have "gone from a primarily military environment to a primarily political one."

So -- the purple finger may yet replace the car bomb as the most effective agent of change in Iraq!

Still, we cannot and should not underestimate the difficulties ahead as Iraq approaches a December target date of establishing a working constitution and a permanent government.

An important hurdle was cleared last Wednesday when the general assembly broke a 10-week political deadlock to appoint a president and two vice presidents.

And just one day later, Ibrahim Jaafari, a physician and longtime leader of one of Iraq's major Shiite religious parties, was selected to serve as prime minister.

But, until a permanent government is finally in place, and possibly longer, we can fully expect attacks on Iraqi and coalition forces to continue, especially in Sunni areas. Civil war remains a possibility. And, neighboring countries could meddle in Iraqi affairs, feeding ethnic and religious strife. Given these realities, a protracted U.S. military presence appears unavoidable. But it was encouraging to see U.S. military leaders say that training of Iraqi forces is going well enough to consider major reduction in us forces by this time next year, as reported in today's *New York Times*.

Preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is the second specific challenge

confronting the United States in this region. Should Iran “go nuclear,” its weapons will allow Tehran to threaten U.S. forces and allies in the region.

It will also create immense pressure on other countries -- Saudi Arabia chief among them -- to do likewise, setting off destabilizing regional arms races. Not least, a nuclear Iran will raise the risk that deadly technology or materials might find their way into the hands of terrorists bent on using them against the United States.

The United States, and the international community, must insist on absolute adherence to all commitments regarding nuclear weapons. Iran has been a flagrant offender in this regard.

President Bush is right to embrace a multi-lateral effort to try to halt progress by Iran to acquire nuclear weapons.

And he is right to use a mix of carrots and sticks in our approach to this challenge.

The European Union is currently taking the lead in negotiations with Tehran aimed at extending Iran’s temporary halt to its nuclear enrichment program into a permanent, verifiable freeze. We are now working with them by offering the “carrot” of possible accession to the World Trade Organization.

But we must also be prepared to use sticks. And there are, of course, sticks that fall short of full-fledged military action, like political and economic sanctions by the United Nations Security Council. Iran, like North Korea, has a track-record of playing cat-and-mouse when it comes to its nuclear programs.

To be blunt, simple declarations of intent by Iran are worthless. And so, any agreements that are concluded must include provisions for international inspections -- any time and any place.

Third, and finally, but most importantly, the United States must work to promote the Arab-Israeli peace process. Two events -- the re-election of President Bush and the emergence of a new Palestinian leadership in the wake of Arafat’s death -- have created a unique opportunity for negotiating peace between Arabs and Israelis.

I believe this current window of opportunity is similar to the one that existed in 1991. Then, Washington seized the moment to convene the Madrid Peace Conference, the

first-ever face-to-face meeting of Israel and all of its Arab neighbors.

Today, the president should of course continue with his goal of spreading democracy in the Middle East. And the January election in Iraq was a critical step in the right direction. But it is imperative that the president also actively promote peace between Israelis and Arabs, which I believe he wants to do.

Stability in Iraq and peace between Palestinians and Israelis can be pursued at the same time. In fact, addressing the latter improves the chances of attaining the former. The road to peace doesn't run through just Jerusalem or just Baghdad. That is a false choice. Today it arguably runs through both.

So the real question is how to take advantage of this window of opportunity to achieve that peace. Specifically, what steps should be taken? Who needs to do what?

An important first step has already occurred -- Israel now has a negotiating partner on the Palestinian side. That partner emerged January 9 when Abu Mazen was elected as the Palestinian president. He has displayed a commitment to end the violence and resume negotiations with Israelis. He has cracked down on extremists and used very conciliatory language towards Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has responded in kind, releasing Palestinian prisoners and reducing the area of West Bank territory falling within Israel's new security barrier.

When Sharon and Mazen have met, they seem to understand one another.

Now, Palestinian officials must continue to clearly and unequivocally renounce terror as a means of achieving a political result -- and call upon their supporters to do likewise. And those Palestinians should commit themselves to an unequivocal, good-faith effort to crack down on terrorist groups targeting Israel.

In exchange, Israel should resume substantive negotiations for peace without requiring that all terrorist activities cease in advance. To require the absence of any terrorist act in advance simply empowers the terrorists themselves to prevent the resumption of peace negotiations.

The United States should itself clearly embrace and articulate the unequivocal, good-faith standard for the resumption of dialogue. The United States should further prevail upon Israel to freeze settlement activity in the occupied territories during the resumption of peace negotiations, as called for by the "Road Map."

And Washington should do everything that it can to encourage both sides to resume substantive negotiations. And it should serve, where necessary, as a direct participant in the talks, offering suggestions, brokering compromises and extending assurances.

Finally, the administration must make it unambiguously clear to Israel that while Prime Minister Sharon's planned withdrawal from Gaza is a positive initiative, it cannot be simply the first step in a unilateral process leading to the creation of Palestinian "Bantustans" in the West Bank. I hope and believe that may be happening as we meet here today, at the very time that Pres. Bush is meeting with Prime Minister Sharon in Crawford, Texas.

Fostering the Arab-Israeli peace process will test American resolve, patience, and leadership. But, of course, the United States cannot "create peace" in the Middle East. Only Arabs and Israelis can do that. Washington's role is to help them. As we continue with that role, above all else, we need to remember five historical truisms about this dispute.

First, there is a Catch-22 regarding the issue: Israel will never enjoy security as long as she occupies the Territories. But the Palestinians will never achieve their dream of living in peace in their own state alongside Israel as long as Israel lacks security. It is a tragic version of the chicken or the egg question.

Second, there is no military solution because neither side can "win" the conflict by dominating the other.

Third, a political process and dialogue are essential. In the Arab-Israeli dispute whenever the political process breaks down, there will be violence on the ground.

Fourth, hardliners on both sides have been the biggest impediment to the development of a fair settlement, including Arabs who won't accept Israel's right to exist and Israelis who want to keep the land.

And fifth, only the United States can serve as an effective mediator because of our country's special relationship with Israel.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, it is clear that the United States must and will continue to play a key role in the Middle East, and we have a variety of tools to address the challenges presented there.

There will be times when we must go it alone. And we should not forget that the surest and best test of a great power is its ability to act unilaterally to protect its vital interests -- when that is required. In dealing with shadowy, stateless groups like Al Qaeda, we face a radically different adversary. Preemptive military action against terrorist groups and states that harbor them is not merely justifiable. Sometimes, it is imperative.

However, if indeed we do live in a “unipolar world,” it is important that America not be viewed as an empire. It is not, and does not intend to be.

Indeed our track-record proves, that -- from rebuilding Western Europe and East Asia after World War II to peacefully concluding the Cold War. We have a history of exercising our power in ways that advanced the human condition.

Indeed, I would submit to you that the United States rightly views itself as the final guarantor of international security, the chief engine of economic growth, and the historic champion of democratic values around the world. But it wants and needs the cooperation of an international community that cherishes freedom and free markets.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am optimistic that a better world is possible for our children and grandchildren, and for those in the Middle East. But a brighter future will require American leadership. And I don't just mean leadership by our elected officials.

I also mean leadership by all citizens who understand the stakes that confront us as a nation, and who appreciate the importance -- indeed, the imperative -- of U.S. engagement on the world stage, and particularly in the Middle East.

Thank you.