

Bush's West Point Speech (June 1, 2002)

....Our war on terror is only begun. But in Afghanistan it was begun well. I am proud, I am proud of the men and women who have fought on my orders. America is profoundly grateful for all who serve the cause of freedom. And for all who've given their lives in its defense. This nation respects and trusts our military. And we are confident in your victories to come.

....The attacks of September the 11th required a few hundred thousand dollars in the hands of a few dozen evil and deluded men. All of the chaos and suffering they caused came at much less than the cost of a single tank.

....The gravest danger to freedom lies at the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology. When the spread of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missile technology, when that occurs even weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations.

For much of the last century America's defense relied on the cold war doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking.

Deterrence, the promise of massive retaliation against nations, means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies....

Yet the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge.

In the world we have entered the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.

Our security will require the best intelligence to reveal threats hidden in caves and growing in laboratories. Our security will require modernizing domestic agencies, such as the F.B.I., so they are prepared to act and act quickly against danger. Our security will require transforming the military you will lead. A military that must be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world. And our security will require all Americans to be forward looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives.

....Along with our friends and allies we must oppose proliferation and confront regimes that sponsor terror as each case requires. Some nations need military training to fight terror and we will provide it. Other nations oppose terror but tolerate the hatred that leads to terror and that must change.

....All nations that decide for aggression and terror will pay a price. We will not leave the safety of America and the peace of the planet at the mercy of a few mad terrorists and tyrants. We will lift this dark threat from our country and from the world.

...When leaders like John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan refused to gloss over the brutality of tyrants they gave hope to prisoners and dissidents and exiles and rallied free nations to a great cause.

Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods but not different moralities. Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time and in every place. Targeting innocent civilians for murder is always and everywhere wrong. Brutality against women is always and everywhere wrong.

There can be no neutrality between justice and cruelty, between the innocent and the guilty. We are in a conflict between good and evil. And America will call evil by its name.

By confronting evil and lawless regimes we do not create a problem, we reveal a problem. And we will lead the world in opposing it....

And finally, America stands for more than the absence of war. We have a great opportunity to extend a just peace by replacing poverty, repression and resentment around the world with hope of a better day.

Through most of history poverty was persistent and inescapable and almost universal. In the last few decades we've seen nations from Chile to South Korea build modern economies and freer societies, lifting millions of people out of despair and want. And there's no mystery to this achievement. The 20th century ended with a single surviving model of human progress based on nonnegotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women and private property, and free speech, and equal justice and religious tolerance.

America cannot impose this vision. Yet we can support and reward governments that make the right choices for their own people. In our development aid, in our diplomatic efforts, in our international broadcasting and in our educational assistance, the United States will promote moderation and tolerance and human rights. And we will defend the peace that makes all progress possible.

When it comes to the common rights and needs of men and women, there is no clash of civilizations. The requirements of freedom apply fully to Africa and Latin America and the entire Islamic world.

The peoples of the Islamic nations want and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as people in every nation. And their governments should listen to their hopes.

A truly strong nation will permit legal avenues of dissent for all groups that pursue their aspirations without violence. An advancing nation will pursue economic reform to unleash the great entrepreneurial energy of its people. A thriving nation will respect the rights of women, because no society can prosper while denying opportunity to half its citizens.