

Chris Dodd for President

Beyond Iraq and Into an Era of Bold Engagement

Remarks as delivered

Thank you, Ann, for that generous introduction. It's a pleasure to be here. And many thanks to the Center for Citizen Diplomacy, and the Greater Des Moines Committee on Foreign Relations for providing this opportunity. I particularly want to thank Ann Shodde, Dick Goodson with the Des Moines Council on Foreign Relations and Ted



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Townshend for his generosity. I believe that as many as 5 million Americans belong to citizen diplomacy organizations – men and women who understand the ability of individual Americans to contribute to our international standing, our power as a democracy and our ability to lead as a moral force throughout the world.

I come before you today as a father, a United States Senator for 26 years, and a candidate for the Presidency because the need to make America more secure and prosperous could not be greater. Never in my lifetime has there ever been an election with more at stake for America, for the world – indeed, for the common values of all humanity.

For all the uncertainties in the world today, what is clear is that six years of a Bush Administration have made America and the world less secure, not more secure – our place in the world less certain.

Today we face the immediate and unfolding civil war in Iraq, the growing threat of state-less terrorist organizations across the globe, a dangerously confident Iran and resurgent Taliban.

We face a continuing crisis of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases afflicting whole continents, rising economic disparities in the United States and around the world, and a clear and present danger to our planet – global warming.

We face all this and more – and we do so with fewer allies today than ever before.

And so, the uncertainties and dangers of this moment are palpable. To understand where we are today and what course we must now pursue, you must start with Iraq.

Just today, my Republican Senate colleague, John McCain, who also seeks the Presidency spoke about our involvement there.

I understand that while he acknowledged setbacks in our efforts in Iraq, he reiterated his support for the President's troop surge strategy, arguing that it is succeeding and that we cannot afford to redeploy our troops out of Iraq.

No one questions Senator McCain's patriotism. He is a war hero and a friend.

But like the President, John McCain is very very wrong.

According to a news report, the day after Senator McCain toured a Baghdad marketplace—a visit guarded by 100 American soldiers, three Blackhawk helicopters, and two Apache gunships—21 Shia workers from that same market were ambushed, bound and shot to death north of the capital.

Senator McCain's market visit makes clear the point many of us have made for some time.

We don't need a surge of troops in Iraq – we need a surge of diplomacy and politics. Every knowledgeable person who has examined the Iraq situation for the past several years—Baker and Hamilton, senior military officials, junior officers—has drawn the same conclusion--there is no military solution in Iraq. To insist upon a surge is wrong.

The Bush/McCain Doctrine is not succeeding – it is failing.

Our policy is not only failing to make Iraq more secure. By sapping our military of its strength and America of its leadership in the world, the Bush/McCain policy has made America less secure.

That is why, tonight, I am calling on all the Democratic candidates in this race to join me in clearly standing up to the President once and for all by stating their support for the Feingold-Reid legislation that sets a firm timetable to end this war by March 31st, 2008.

After more than 3,200 lives lost, tens of thousands wounded and \$400 billion spent, it

is time to bring an end to a war that at every turn has failed to make America safer.

The hour is late. It is time to begin putting our country on a more secure path.

The moment has arrived for leadership that stands up and announces without equivocation that prolonging this war will not make us more secure – ending it will.

And that, my friends, is why I come before you this evening.

For all our challenges—from the Middle East to international terrorism, from global warming to an ascendant China—the question is the same: is America's political, economic, and moral strength up to the tasks before us?

Are we prepared to face our challenges in this century with the boldness, optimism and the strength as we were in the last?

The answer depends on the choice we make today and the political choice we make in the Presidential election of 2008.

If we choose unilateralism in 2008, then the answer is "no" – no, because policies that isolate America have time and again failed to shape our future for the better.

Should the American people choose a second path—one of bold engagement in the world—then I believe the 21st Century can be a century of optimism and opportunity.

But even here, it will take a leader with the experience, conviction and the vision to confidently lead on day one.

Indeed, positive, bold engagement that restores America's reputation as a secure, reliable and responsible leader would form the bedrock of a national security doctrine in a Dodd Presidency – a national security policy rooted in a reenergized military, strengthened international alliances and policies that enhance America's security for the long-term.

How that would look and what that would mean is the subject of my remarks this evening.

Why am I so certain that go-it-alone policies leaving America isolated will fail?

One word – history.

At the end of the First World War, the call to withdraw from world affairs was irresistible. America began to shut her shores to immigrants – to cut off international trade. The Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles and refused our seat at the League of Nations.

Some have argued in retrospect that there were valid reasons for such decisions. They are wrong.

What is not debatable however, is that when Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo began to build their empires, there was a woefully inadequate multilateral response to their aggression.

The result was World War Two.

In its aftermath, America could have once again drawn inward. Instead, the trials of Nazi war criminals in the German city of Nuremberg which commenced more than sixty years ago were a seminal moment in international engagement and justice.

Indeed, Nuremberg has a deeply personal meaning for me. My father was the Executive Trial Counsel under Chief Prosecutor and Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson.

The Nuremberg trial was by no means the obvious choice of the collective world community.

It was said, why not just shoot the Nazi leaders, as Churchill wanted, create show trials as Stalin wanted or give in to legal scholars, who said there was no court or precedent under which to try them?

Why not?

Because America has always stood for something more and deeper.

Because we understood that our power came from our ability to lead – not by the example of our force, but the force of our example.

Such principles led Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman to create international institutions that would serve the common good and security of all nations for decades to come.

Institutions such as NATO and the United Nations, which together fostered the cardinal tenet that the use of force should be reserved for self-defense and collective security.

For 60 years, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, stood for a cooperative, connected, and a disciplined world economy based on law and economic liberty.

With each institution, America helped draw nations away from dictatorship toward democracy and security. Away from vengeance toward justice.

Our leaders created systems and structures for the postwar world because the world's problems could not have been addressed without international cooperation and American leadership. This international architecture strengthened America's global leadership and enhanced America's security.

That was the legacy George W. Bush inherited on January 20th, 2001. A strong America that the world looked to for leadership.

We all recall the immediate aftermath of 9/11: our allies standing with America in its decision to destroy the al-Qaeda terrorist network and topple the Taliban.

The United Nations Security Council gave our decision international legitimacy.

For the first time in its history, NATO invoked Article V, the common self-defense clause.

Our actions in Afghanistan were in keeping with sixty years of American precedent, multilateralism, once again fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies.

At that moment, America was poised to lead in the 21st century as we had in the last.

But in case after case, this Administration has not led – and as a consequence, the world has not followed us, leaving us less respected, less secure and more isolated.

Instead of uniting the world against global terrorism, the Bush Administration divided our allies, preemptively taking America to war with Iraq.

Instead of strengthening the alliances and institutions of the last century for the often harsh realities of the new one, the Bush Administration rejected some and ignored others.

From the UN and NATO to the Geneva Conventions and the Kyoto Protocol, no agreement, no framework was too significant to belittle, to weaken, to discredit – regardless of how important they were to America’s security.

At a moment when the character and temperament of who sat in the United States Chair at the United Nations Security Council never mattered more, the Bush Administration circumvented the Congress to seat John Bolton – the personification of disdain for not simply the United Nations, but the very notion of multilateral diplomacy.

I shall never forget that at the very moment President Bush was fighting to promote John Bolton, he let a man like Colin Powell go – a man who understood the dangers facing America when he said the world is "beginning to doubt the moral basis of our fight against terrorism."

To be clear, the world has drastically changed in a very short period of time.

In the Middle East, our involvement in Iraq has inflamed a region-wide war breaking out between Shia and Sunnis, elevating the dangerous nuclear posturing of Iran and the actions of Hamas and Hezbollah, which threaten the region’s stability and Israel’s security on a daily basis.

In Asia, unlike its democratic neighbor India, China is building itself into an economic and military superpower on the backs of immoral labor practices and a disregard for basic human rights, the environment and the principles of fair trade through the manipulation of their currency.

North Korea invests hundreds of millions of dollars to feed its nuclear ambitions rather than its impoverished people.

Africa is stricken by HIV/AIDS, malaria, continuing poverty and genocidal civil conflict, and most importantly the lack of hope for a better future.

And in Latin America – where I lived and worked as a Peace Corps volunteer.

You can enter almost any home from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego and see a picture of John F. Kennedy. Today, our president can barely be seen in public in Latin America.

It is stunning and illustrative of how much has been lost in less than six years that we are losing a public relations battle in Latin America to Hugo Chavez.

In so many ways, this picture—of an isolated America, of emerging rogue states, and weakened international alliances to contain them—bears an unsettling resemblance to the world in the years leading up to World War Two.

These problems cannot be addressed region-by-region, country-by-country. The world has drastically changed – from terrorism and disease, to nuclear proliferation and growing economic inequality, today's challenges know few borders.

In the interconnected world of the 21st Century, restored American leadership will be critical.

But let me be clear – hope alone will not wipe away the damage to America's moral authority these last 6 years.

Hope alone will not bring our allies back to our side.

Hope alone will not restore America's leadership.

Like never before, we need a President who is ready to lead from day one.

There will not be a single day, a single moment for on-the-job training. Not one.

I believe a more secure world lies in policies rooted in bold engagement, example, and resolve – the three principles that would guide the national security policy of a Dodd Administration. Principles that will be put to the test on the first moment of the first day of my presidency.

It begins with getting our Iraq policy right – not with a military build-up there, but by drawing down our forces. Iraq must assume the responsibility of policing and governing itself.

Late last year, on one of my visits to Baghdad, I met a bright young West Point graduate named Brian Freeman. Brian told me, "Senator, it's nuts over here. Soldiers are being asked to do work we're not trained to do. I'm doing work that the State Department people are far more trained to accomplish, in fostering diplomacy. But they're not allowed to come off the bases because it's too dangerous here. It doesn't make any sense."

A short time later, I learned Captain Freeman had been killed in Iraq.

To me, Brian is the human face of this war, reminding me of the terrible price our military and their families are paying for our leaders' mistakes.

Indeed, Brian's story reminds us our armed forces have been left so depleted that vast segments are reporting not-ready-for-duty – two-thirds of Army combat units here in the United States are not combat ready. Eighty-eight percent of the National Guard are not prepared to take on these challenges.

More than 140,000 of the brave men and women in uniform are bravely sacrificing for our nation in Iraq, rotating in and out of the country, multiple times, with deployments extended from twelve to fourteen months, straining their families, taxing morale. Retired General Barry McCaffrey describes the U.S. Army "rapidly unraveling."

With Iraq taking a toll on our ability to perform critical national security missions—from the Korean Peninsula to the Middle East—as president, I will immediately begin to redeploy our combat troops within and without of Iraq's urban areas to the border areas, and to bases in Kuwait and Qatar and to augment our forces in Afghanistan.

For those troops who remain during the coming twelve months, the mission will be narrowly and clearly defined – train and equip Iraqi security forces, assist in border security, undertake narrowly target counter terrorism activities and protect US personnel and facilities.

Relocated to bases in Kuwait and Qatar, US troops will be better able to defend our vital regional national security interests.

And to Afghanistan, where I will redouble our efforts to capture Bin Laden, dismantle al Qaeda, and neutralize the Taliban once and for all to keep America safe.

On the first day of a Dodd Presidency, I will begin rebuilding the military this Administration has hollowed out.

I will reorient our defense budget to reflect national security priorities.

I will strengthen America's industrial capacity to meet our military's needs over the next 5 years.

Never again will the United States Army rely on a single supplier of critical safety equipment like ceramic body armor plates as they did during the initial stages of the Iraq War.

Unlike the Bush Administration, in a Dodd Presidency, I will launch a national initiative to mobilize our manufacturers and industry leaders to contribute to ensuring our men and women in uniform have the equipment they need to be safe and effective.

America will have a President that understands the United States is strongest when we have leaders that call on every citizen—from our soldiers to our machinists to our captains of industry—to do their parts in matters as serious as war.

In addition to rebuilding our military, as President, I will strengthen international alliances to fight terrorism and prevent nuclear weapons from getting into the wrong hands.

The fact is, our real challenges in all of these areas lie not alone with our enemies – we know who they are.

Our challenges also lie with those we call our friends or strategic allies – nations like Saudi Arabia and Russia who continue to suppress freedom and democracy and permit conditions that allow our enemies to thrive.

What America needs is a President who will insist the House of Saud stop sending money to terrorists to take up residence elsewhere and start using their resources and efforts to bring stability and peace to the Middle East.

What America needs is a President who will look into Vladimir Putin's eyes not to get a sense of his soul – but to tell him America wants to work together with Russia, not against her, but cannot in the face of his blatant disregard for a free press and suppression of political dissent.

What America needs is a President who understands that the choice between coddling tyrannical leaders or going to war with them is a false choice when America is no longer acting alone.

When America is once again a leading, strong moral voice in the world, it will be the terrorists and the tyrants who are isolated – not the United States.

That is why we need to rebuild strong international institutions – much stronger than

they are today.

When the IMF stands by as China and other nations manipulate their currency to the detriment of international trade—when the UN cannot even settle on a definition for terrorism—then the next President needs to acknowledge that the alliances and institutions of the 20th Century are not up to the tasks of the 21st Century.

As President, I will forge major reforms at the UN that give it more authority to act and make it more transparent and accountable.

With America taking the lead, the UN must be a centerpiece in the fight against terrorism instead of an obstacle to those efforts.

International institutions and alliances are not perfect, nor are they panaceas for all problems. But they are critical for creating a framework for international dialogue – for an international system that will uphold American values.

The Dodd Doctrine of positive, bold engagement also means bringing smaller players out of the shadows and onto the world stage, opening new markets, building new relationships.

We all agree the United States needs to take urgent action to end its dependence on Middle East oil.

In addition to the consequences of global warming both environmental and political, no nation can fight terrorist organizations on one hand while financing their supporters on the other.

A comprehensive energy policy is a critical component of bold engagement in the 21st Century. A Dodd Presidency would insist upon sharing with our allies the same renewable energy technology that will allow America to achieve energy independence – rendering the oil bribes offered by Iran's Ahmadinejad and Venezuela's Chavez irrelevant, opening new markets for American goods and services, and creating conditions for democratic principles to take hold.

It is time we help countries end their alliances of necessity with dictators simply because they are desperate for oil and aid. An America that leads on energy opens new doors in its relationship with nations from Latin America to Africa and Asia.

Lastly, we need a President who will lead by example.

I firmly believe that for every Jihadist and terrorist, there are millions of others who are not – a "silent majority" of the Muslim world that has the desire to turn away from terrorism, toward an alternative that offers a more secure and prosperous future for them and their children

At a meeting last year with 20 retiring Peace Corps volunteers in Jordan, I was told by these fluent Arab speakers that for all our challenges, the people in the villages where they had worked still admired Americans. They simply wanted our leaders to live up to America's high ideals.

That tells me that the present anti-American climate around the world is not irreversible.

As President, I would set a goal of significantly expanding the Peace Corps world-wide. Our people are our best ambassadors. I firmly believe you cannot hate America if you know America.

In 2008, some say we need experience, others say we need hope. I say we need both.

When people wonder why I joined the Peace Corps, I have a simple answer: an American President asked me to.

At this difficult moment in our nation's history, I believe the next President must ask the American people once again to take part in something larger than themselves.

My daughter, Grace, was born two days after the September 11th attacks – from the hospital, we could see the smoke rising from the Pentagon.

Recently, as Grace was getting ready for school, she looked up at me and said, "I wonder what my day is going to be like."

A moment later, she looked up again and said these exact words: "I wonder what my life is going to be like." She had just turned 5.

That, my friends, is why I am running for President. Because the answer to that question is what I have been talking about today.

It has been said that "to govern is to choose." With the right choices, we can govern

wisely.

We can return to our values, so that when the history of this century is written, historians will note that America preserved freedom with the example a free people sets for the world. That America asserted its moral strength along with its military might.

That is the history I hope my daughters will read one day – that in a broken time we stood strong.

Let our children and grandchildren say that at the beginning of the 21st Century, after an uncertain start, America returned to her heritage. America led again. Thank you.

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