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"Building a Better World: One Path from Crisis to Opportunity"

Remarks as Delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, at the Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, Thursday, September 5, 2002.

Thank you, Strobe [Talbot], for that very nice introduction. And let me extend my congratulations to you on your new job as president of this great institution. Your own long record of service, public service, and intellectual contributions to the public debate have made their marks on policy, and I know that's something you're going to continue to do here at Brookings.

In my last job, at SAIS [School for Advanced International Studies at The Johns Hopkins University], I wasn't supposed to say nice things about this place across the street. But now I can, and it's something I'm delighted to do, especially since Brookings is doing something very important with this series, which is trying to put September 11th and its aftermath into context.

And I know that there are some, including quite a few in the back of the room, who have come here this morning with great expectations—big hopes that I'll put at least one topic into context. Now on that score, you'll be happy to know that I plan to take bold, preemptive action. Now that seemed to get your attention.

I refer to my boss, Donald Rumsfeld, who did a masterful job of putting so much into context in his press briefing on Tuesday, especially when he said about that particular regime—I'm sure you can guess which one—he said and I quote, "It has not been playing tiddly winks."

If you missed Tuesday's briefing, you missed one of the all-time great briefings. Now they're all great, but he was in especially fine form on Tuesday. And knowing that there would be a few media folks here today, I decided to ask Rumsfeld himself for a few pointers. So this morning, before I left, I said to him, "You handle the press pretty well. Is there anything I should keep in mind over at Brookings? There

might be a few media types around, you know."

And he said, "Whatever you do, don't try to be hard-hitting, witty or clever. In other words, don't try to be like me. Just be yourself." I could see he was warming to the subject. His hands were getting animated, and he said, "Here's how you deal with the media. Begin with an illogical premise and proceed perfectly logically to an illogical conclusion. After all, they do it all the time. But if you do it first, they'll be eviscerated."

Now some of you may not know, but "eviscerated" is the famous word that passed the lips of one of our distinguished Marine generals who had the Taliban stomped a few weeks ahead of their time. To that, my hard-charging Marine colonel military assistant quickly added, "Well, we Marines may not know how to spell 'eviscerated,' but we sure know how to do it."

In the vein of people who know how to do things well, I must say I cannot think of a more inspiring time to be part of America's national security team than right now. It is a distinct privilege to serve with President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Colin Powell, Condi Rice and Don Rumsfeld. The American people have every reason to be both proud and appreciative of how that team is pursuing both this nation's noblest goals and its fundamental security objectives.

And that gets me to the point of my speech today. Even if I don't talk about a particular regime today—and I'm not going to—I know that most of you in this audience will still listen to what I have to say and take it seriously. And that is really why I appreciate this particular crowd. And that is why I'm going to ask you to bear with me through a speech that is a little longer than usual, but which addresses some issues that are extremely important and I think may be in danger of being missed. And if any of you are just waiting until I get to that other subject, you might as well leave now.

Today, just a week shy of the first anniversary of the attacks, it is appropriate to take the opportunity to go beyond the headlines, to get some altitude and some perspective on the situation we face today. On that Tuesday last September, there was one American who looked on the aftermath of the attacks from a very great altitude—literally—from a vantage point some 250 miles above the earth's surface. Aboard the International Space Station, astronaut Frank Culbertson and his Russian crew members could clearly make out the plume of smoke that wafted from the World Trade Center. Later, they could see a black shroud envelop the Pentagon. A day later, Culbertson reflected that even from space, he could clearly observe a dramatically changed world beneath him.

Meanwhile, here on earth, Shafeeq Ghabra, a Palestinian and a professor of political science at Kuwait University, was directing Kuwait's public information center here in Washington that September 11th. Three weeks before, he had visited the World Trade Center with his seven-year-old son and taken photos there. Looking back on the attacks, on a distance of almost a year, he observed last week in The New York Times that a small number of Muslims killed a much larger number of Muslims in New York City.

Each person's view of what happened that day—an American in space and an Arab Muslim here in

America—in its own way captures a fundamental truth: What happens in the United States cannot fail to have its impact on the rest of the world. It certainly was no mistake that the World Trade Center, a symbol and hub of America's economic dynamism, was a target. And when the American market was damaged, shock waves reverberated—and rumble still—around the world.

But the attacks also shined a searchlight of truth on the real intentions of the terrorists. For as Shafeeq Ghabra pointed out, the terrorists seek to target not just America, but Muslims and Islam by attacking the ideals of tolerance, justice and openness that are the aspirations of millions of Muslims around the world, as well. If the terrorists are successful in destroying these ideals, East and West alike will suffer. As I've been pointing out to audiences since that day, the terrorists target their fellow Muslims, upon whom they aim to impose a new kind of violent tyranny—a tyranny that pretends to be based on Islam but which owes more to the totalitarian impulses of the 20th century than to the great religion that the terrorists are attempting to hijack. The hundreds of millions of Muslims who aspire to modernity, freedom and prosperity are just as much on the front lines of the struggle against terrorism as are we.

Nowhere was this struggle more evident than Afghanistan, where totalitarian brutality imposed by the Taliban offered sanctuary to terrorists with their own radically backward and chauvinistic distortion of Islam.

The United States and its coalition partners mobilized against that grave threat and we now fight a war on terror.

This is a war that we will win. But we also must fight the much larger war that was exposed last September, and this is a war too that we must win. This larger struggle is part of another dimension of the war, a dimension that President Bush addressed in his State of the Union message, but one, in my view, that does not get emphasized enough. That larger war we face is a war of ideas, a struggle over modernity and secularism, pluralism and democracy and real economic development. In his State of the Union message, President Bush declared that in this fight, "America will lead," he said, "by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere. We have a greater objective," the President said, "than eliminating threats and containing resentments; we seek a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror."

Part of building that just and peaceful world that the President envisions lies in the next steps that we must take in that larger struggle, for what we have before us is less a clash of civilizations, as some have theorized, than a collision of misunderstandings between the Muslim and Western worlds.

I acknowledge that my view on the subject of East and West, one that has been shaped by more than two decades of personal experience, is decidedly optimistic. But that does not mean that I can't see a truth that we must confront today. So let me be clear: There's a dangerous gap between the West and the Muslim world, and we must work to bridge that gap and we must begin to do so now.

Part of bridging that gap is helping to expose the lies at the heart of the terrorists' methods and convincing their potential followers that theirs is a blind alley leading to defeat and ignominy. Part of

exposing that blind alley, though, is to offer a better alternative, the alternatives of liberty and justice, as President Bush has said, fundamental pillars of a just and peaceful world.

When it comes to certain countries and individuals around the world, we may be a very long way from that better alternative, but that is all the more reason why we need to start working to bridge that dangerous gap now. The arena where we will most readily be judged in how we narrow the gap is Afghanistan, and that is one of the reasons why it is so important that we succeed there. As we look at Afghanistan 11 months after the war on terrorism began, we see, quite, frankly, a mixture of good news and bad news, but some of the bad news, I think, has been exaggerated and is in danger of drowning out the fundamentally remarkable news: Afghanistan has been unbelievably transformed for the better in less than a year. There are still a great many problems that remain to be solved, but that is hardly surprising in a country that has suffered from 23 years of civil war and brutal invasion.

Our challenge is to preserve what has already been achieved and to build on it to help the Afghan people establish a peaceful, just and prospering society. We can't expect to solve all the problems of the last two and a half decades overnight—and there are many problems—and we are quite attuned to the existing challenges. But on the whole, I would say that over the last 11 months there has been much more good news from Afghanistan than bad.

The Afghan people have been liberated. The Taliban regime is out of power, and along with large numbers of al Qaeda, they are killed or captured or dispersed and on the run. That fact alone has paved the way for other significant developments, some of which are transforming the landscape in that war-torn region, both literally and figuratively. Early last September, the U.N. was warning that more than 5 million Afghans, some of whom were surviving on cattle feed, grass and insects, were facing death from famine without international help. It's worth noting that even before last September, the United States was the largest contributor to humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, and when military operations began last October, humanitarian efforts were an integral part of our military missions from the very beginning. The U.N. World Food Program, supported by the U.S. government, provided 575,000 metric tons of food to almost 10 million Afghan people, including record amounts of food during the bombing campaign. Today the picture is vastly different. Famine has been averted and refugees are returning in unexpectedly, indeed, record large numbers. That success itself presents a new challenge. The returning refugees will place new strains on a still tenuous food supply this winter. But we are no longer worried about widespread starvation.

In support of the great work being done by USAID and the United Nations, our soldiers have pitched in, and along with Afghan labor, have built some 50 schools. That alone means that 62,000 more children, boys and girls, youngsters whose first lessons taught them that the sound of gunfire was a natural part of life, can now go to school and learn new lessons, dream new dreams. And that is certainly one of the most far-reaching ways we can help these young Afghans build their own better world.

A Ministry of Women's Affairs is up and running, in itself a counterpoint to the old regime as stark as anything that might have been imagined just a year ago. And President Karzai recently promoted Afghanistan's only remaining female air force parachutist to the rank of general. Farmers have returned

to their fields, and with the help of U.S. seed programs, crop production has increased some 82 percent over last year.

So as the social infrastructure gets slowly rebuilt, so too does the political framework. In another encouraging development, the Loya Jirga, or Grand Council, elected Hamid Karzai president of the two-year transitional government in a process based on traditional principles of representation, ethnic balance, accountability and legitimacy. One senior adviser to Karzai said that for the first time in more than 20 years, the people of Afghanistan are acquiring a voice. But now we must empower the Afghan government, whose ministries are weak and whose governmental coffers hold less than a third of what their modest budget requires. And we must reinforce President Karzai's popular mandate with enough resources to fulfill promises to the Afghan people.

The crucial factor in sustaining representative government in Afghanistan is, first and foremost, sustaining a stable and secure environment in which such a government can gain a firm hold and ultimately flourish. The United States is deeply engaged with the Afghan Transitional Authority and the international community on this task to include training the Afghan National Army, which our soldiers consider one of their most important tasks in Afghanistan today. The recently graduated battalions of the Afghan National Army represent a critical first step toward the formation of a true national security force, along with police and border guards. We're also taking immediate steps to improve security in particular regions of the country by having people from the State Department in some of the provincial areas team up with our Special Forces to help encourage harmony among the regional leaders and between regional leaders and the central government. Our people can help mediate disputes, smooth over conflicts and play an unheralded but pivotal role in supporting Afghanistan's political equilibrium.

Security, although far from perfect, is far better than it was just a year ago. The International Security Assistance Force in Kabul, under the able leadership of first the British and now the Turks, has played an important role in this regard. It's important to remember that the original business of the ISAF was to prevent that capital city, the capital of all Afghans, from being dominated by a single ethnic group, a development which, in the mid-1990s, contributed significantly to the rise of the Taliban. ISAF has been accomplishing that mission successfully, and one of our most urgent tasks is to identify a new lead nation to take over when Turkey's commitment to that role expires in December of this year.

We're also considering the possibility that ISAF could play some useful roles beyond Kabul if ISAF could be enlarged. We do not oppose ISAF expansion. I think there are some benefits that could possibly come from using ISAF in ways outside the capital that might include patrolling, training the Afghan National Army in regional locations along with police and border forces, and assisting with the new Afghan army national battalions as they are deployed.

We welcome and support these developments and encourage the international community to provide the leadership and resources necessary to make it happen. But while we consider the possibility of a new and larger role for ISAF, our highest priority must go to sustaining ISAF in its current mission.

We must also help reconstruct a stable economy. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of

economic assistance not just for the economy, but for security and political stability as well. The more resources that flow through the country and through Kabul, the more readily we can ease discontent and increase everyone's stake in their new institutions. Once a major transit point along the fabled Silk Road, Afghanistan can once again become an important hub for regional trade. That can only happen through the resourcefulness of the Afghan people, which exists in abundance; with adequate roads, which clearly must be rebuilt; and with international economic assistance, which we also need in abundance.

Through the leadership of the State Department, we secured pledges of substantial economic assistance at the Tokyo donors conference early this year. Having said that, our biggest single concern now is that the economic aid is not coming through at the levels pledged in Tokyo. Quite simply, some of the donors are not giving their fair share. In fact, only a little more than 30 percent of the \$1.8 billion pledged for the first year has been delivered so far. Most of that money was needed for humanitarian assistance projects, with many Afghans still waiting for real reconstruction to begin.

As cash only trickles in, the potential for risks promises to grow. Winter approaches, and for those refugees who return from Pakistan and Iran—and I mentioned earlier it's a record number, some 1.6 million, the largest return of refugees in modern history—their gamble on the pledges of the international community could mean disaster. But it should not. The United States is now the predominant supporter of the multilateral relief and recovery effort, and we're glad to lead the way, but we can't do it alone. So, to those who have promised their support, I offer the college student's familiar plea: Send money now! Looking ahead, another reason why this assistance is so important is that, as I suggested, over time it will help create the kind of incentives that can bind the country together, giving regional leaders a stake in the system and gradually building national institutions. That is essential to stabilize and strengthen Afghanistan's legitimate national institutions.

We support President Karzai and the Afghan Transitional Authority, and we continue to look for ways to help Afghanistan build a secure and unified country. Our emphasis is on helping Afghans establish the means to provide their own stability and security. Our mission in Afghanistan is one of liberation, not occupation. We know very well that we have a huge stake in Afghanistan's success. We remember the steep price that we had to pay when Afghanistan was a failed state. Having come this far and done so much, we must not walk away.

As the situation in Afghanistan improves, it's encouraging to note that there have been some important positive developments in other parts of the Muslim world as well in the last couple of months, and I refer specifically to Turkey and Indonesia. Although these developments haven't grabbed the headlines that the arrest of individual terrorists or the uncovering of new plots typically garner, they could prove in the long run more important for building a lasting peace.

In the same way that we must acknowledge what's wrong if we want to progress forward, it is equally important to recognize what's right. That recognition itself is a way to encourage true progress and further accomplishment.

A country that occupies one of history's great strategic crossroads has, through a recent series of reforms, put itself at a historic crossroads as well. Last month, Turkey's Parliament adopted some truly groundbreaking reforms. Turkey addressed broad political reform by granting television, radio broadcasting and education rights in Kurdish and other regional dialects. It also broadened freedom of expression, stiffened penalties for illegal migration, changed its death penalty statutes and recognized the jurisdiction of European supranational bodies.

Turkey's economy minister rightly summarized those reforms as "a huge mobilization in favor of Europe." Should Turkey be allowed to join the EU, it will, in fact, be a mobilization in favor of us all. Through the years, Turkey has been one of America's most steadfast allies, quickly offering support after the attacks last September, including ground forces in Afghanistan. And, today, Turkey carries out another tough responsibility as a leader of that International Security Assistance Force in Kabul, following Britain's initial six-month tour. But Turkey's leadership goes far beyond its role as soldiers and peacekeepers. Turkey's aspiration to join the European Union is one that should be welcomed by all people who share the values of freedom and democracy.

I know that our European friends may grow weary of having Americans tell them about the importance of bringing Turkey into the EU, but especially in the light of Turkey's latest reforms, what is at stake is more than just a technical process of EU accession. It goes back to that point about the struggle of ideas, for in the long run, the way to defeat extremism is to demonstrate that the values that we call Western are indeed universal, to demonstrate that the benefits that we enjoy, the benefits of free and prosperous and open societies, are available to all Muslims as well.

Never has our stake in Turkey been greater. Turkey offers an important model to the Muslim world as it embarks on its own road to representative government. As the great American scholar of Turkish history Bernard Lewis has observed, Turkey's experience shows the entire Muslim world that democracy is difficult but also that it is possible.

History attests that fashioning and sustaining democracy and free markets is a difficult undertaking. In the West, it took centuries. But Turkey charted its course through the 20th century with enormous courage and determination. Now it is positioning itself for the 21st century. Its historic commitment to modernity and moderation deserves support and vindication.

America and Europe can bolster Turkey and help it continue to succeed. In so doing, we amplify the message that Turkey's success can send to the rest of the Muslim world and indeed to the developing world as a whole. This is a model worthy of emulation.

Indonesia is another important example of a country seeking to build a democratic government based on a culture of inclusion and participation, even in the face of its extraordinary diversity and enormous economic obstacles.

And like Turkey, Indonesia has chosen to take some bold steps forward. In fact, in the last year alone, Indonesia has arguably made more progress toward democratic reform than its entire 57-year history.

Indonesia's highest legislative body recently passed a series of amendments to its Constitution that further solidify its democratic transition, including one provision that provides for an early end to the privileged position of the military in the parliament.

But as important as the amendments that were passed is an amendment that was rejected. Although some religious parties pressed to have Islamic law, or Shari'a, be recognized in Indonesia's national law, the national legislature rejected that proposal and rejected it overwhelmingly. In so doing, they confirmed the powerful belief in religious tolerance that is shared by the great majority of Indonesians, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, in the country that has the largest Muslim population of any in the world.

In a visit to Indonesia last month, Secretary of State Powell praised Indonesia's support for the war on terror, which has been significant. And he also encouraged Indonesia to step up the pace of legal reforms, reforms which will not only contribute politically, but will help economically by encouraging investors. His visit helped move our two nations closer to normal military-to-military cooperation, a step that ultimately will pave the way to more effective dealing with the threats posed by terrorists. Secretary Powell and Indonesian leaders, including President Megawati, discussed how the Indonesian armed forces can improve not only military effectiveness, but their professionalism, through reforms to safeguard against human rights abuses. That would be the aim of our cooperation.

My three years in Indonesia as ambassador gave me a unique opportunity to study and appreciate that remarkable country, its people, its rich cultures, and most importantly, its tradition of tolerance. That experience, and experiences before and since, have strengthened my appreciation of the fundamental common ground between East and West. Many people do not realize that Indonesia's Muslim majority is the largest in the world. But even many who know that fact do not realize that Islam is not the state religion, that the state accords equal status to the five major religions of its people. There is every reason to believe and to hope that Indonesia, with its own traditions and culture, can move forward, because when people are free to work and keep what they produce, they work hard and organize creatively. And if we are serious about opposing terrorism, we also must be serious about helping Indonesia in its quest for a stable democracy and a stable country.

But finally, while we wage the war on terror, we must also be mindful of that larger war, the struggle against enemies of tolerance and freedom the world over. One tool we have in this struggle is our ability to reach out beyond governments to people and to individuals. We must appeal to broad populations, especially those voices struggling to rise above the din of extremism, voices that tell us the Islam of Mohammed is not the religion of bin Laden and the suicide bombers.

I am convinced that the vast majority of the world's Muslims have no use for the extreme doctrines espoused by groups such as al Qaeda and the Taliban. Very much to the contrary—they abhor terrorism; they abhor terrorists who have not only hijacked airplanes, but have hijacked one of the world's great religions. They have absolutely no use for people who deny fundamental rights to half their population or who indoctrinate children with superstition and hatred. In winning this larger struggle, it would be a mistake to think that we are the ones to lead the way. But we must do what we can to encourage

moderate Muslim voices. This is a debate about Muslim values that must take place among Muslims. But it makes a difference when we recognize and encourage those who are defending universal values.

And when we give them moral support against the opposition they encounter, we are, indeed, helping to strengthen the foundations of peace. When Egypt sentenced human-rights campaigner Saad Eddin Ibrahim to seven years in prison for his efforts to promote democracy, President Bush expressed concerns about Dr. Ibrahim's case directly to President Mubarak. As you know, we also recently turned down requests for additional aid beyond the Camp David accords because of that issue. And the State Department will continue to press our concerns with Egyptian authorities.

When the American and noted Muslim Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani spoke at a State Department-sponsored panel on terrorism in January of 1999, he addressed what he called "the authentic traditional voice of Islam, which is moderation and tolerance and love and living in peace with all other faiths and religions." And he went on to caution that there was, at that time, an imminent threat of catastrophic terrorist attack on America -- on American soil by Islamic extremists. Following his message, some Muslim organizations here in the United States publicly condemned him for what they called "false and defamatory allegations" and organized a boycott against him. But learning tolerance and progress -- these are qualities that we espouse but that the extremists today consider subversive.

In that same article I mentioned at the beginning, Kuwaiti political science professor Shafeeq Ghabra described studying here in the United States, when he'd been influenced by the anti-American slogans popular at the time. But Ghabra's American professors surprised him with their tolerance. And "tolerance," he wrote, "even without accepting the other view, does have a moderating power on people and permits for the repetition of the cycle of understanding. Tolerance breeds tolerance. As a professor of political science at Kuwait University," he says, "I practice my old professor's technique on my own fundamentalist students."

This past Tuesday, an Egyptian-born resident of the United States reflects in The New York Times on what we might call the dangerous gap between her view of Islam and that of her fellow Egyptian, Mohammed Atta, one of the hijackers. Mona Eltahawy's Islam embodies tolerance and acceptance of others -- a view that questions why Atta, allegedly in the name of Islam, was filled with such hatred. She writes of the debate here in America about the relationship between Islam and modernity and notes that she is "saddened that such a debate has not taken off with equal vigor in other parts of the world. But, Eltahawy concludes, "that debate must continue, for," as she puts it, "only by reclaiming our own voice can we silence the zealots." In his State of the Union message, President Bush spoke powerfully of the brave men and women who raise their voices to advocate the values of "human dignity, free speech, equal justice, respect for women, and religious tolerance." They are out there, as we have seen. The system will progress only when we all become truly serious about supporting and encouraging those voices, abroad and here at home.

I have spent a good deal of my career, more than two decades, thinking about East and West, and my experience has convinced me that we share a fundamental common ground. It is on that ground that we can build the ancient dream of peace and freedom, prosperity and security, a dream that we share. On

this ground, we can build a better world, one that proceeds on a path from crisis to opportunity.

And a year after the horrific attacks on America, we can affirm this truth: The single greatest threat to peace and freedom in our time comes from terrorism. So this truth we should also affirm: that the future does not belong to the terrorists; the future belongs to those, no matter what their creed, who dream the oldest and noblest dream of all—the dream of peace and freedom. The future belongs to those who labor with courage and commitment to build a better, peaceful and tolerant world.

Thank you. [Applause.]

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