

INTRODUCTION

In ordinary times, when existing ideas, institutions, and alliances are adequate to the challenges of the day, the purpose of statecraft is to manage and sustain the established international order. But in extraordinary times, when the very terrain of history shifts beneath our feet, the mission of statecraft is to transform our institutions and partnerships to realize new purposes on the basis of enduring principles.

One such extraordinary moment began in 1945, in the wreckage of one of the greatest cataclysms in human history. World War II thoroughly consumed the old international system. And it fell to a group of American statesmen—individuals like President Harry Truman, Secretaries of State George C. Marshall (1947-1949) and Dean Acheson (1949-1953), and Senator Arthur Vandenberg—to assume the roles of architects and builders of a better world.

The solutions to these past challenges seem perfectly clear now with half a century of hindsight. But it was anything but clear for the men and women who lived and worked in those times of unprecedented change.

After all, in 1946, the reconstruction in Germany was failing, and Germans were still starving. Japan lay prostrate. In 1947, there was a civil war in Greece. In 1948, Czechoslovakia was lost to a communist coup. In 1949, Germany was divided, the Soviet Union exploded a nuclear weapon, and the Chinese communists won their civil war. In 1950, a brutal war broke out on the Korean Peninsula.

These were not just tactical setbacks for the forward march of democracy. As the Iron Curtain descended across Europe and the Cold War began to take shape, it was far from evident that freedom and openness would ultimately triumph. The statesmen of that era, however, succeeded brilliantly in conceiving the doctrines, creating the alliances, and building the institutions that preserved freedom, contained the spread of communism, and ultimately resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact, and the ideology of Marxism-Leninism.

From 1989 to 1991, I had the opportunity to serve as the White House Soviet specialist at the end of the Cold



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War. It does not get any better than that. I got to participate in events that many people thought would never occur: the liberation of Eastern Europe, the unification of Germany, and the beginnings of the peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union itself. Events that seemed impossible one day unfolded rapidly, and several days later, they seemed inevitable. That is the nature of extraordinary times. And I realize now that I was only harvesting the good decisions that had been taken in 1947, in 1948, and in 1949.

We invite you to reflect on these and other critical diplomatic choices that have defined American foreign policy. A look at these extraordinary moments can help us all gain perspective on the challenges we face today.

President Bush and I believe that we are standing again at an extraordinary moment in history. The root cause of the September 11 attacks was the violent expression of a global extremist ideology, an ideology rooted in the oppression and despair of the modern Middle East. Our response, therefore, must be broad and forward-looking. We must work to remove the very source of terrorism itself by helping the men and women of that troubled region to transform their own lives and countries.

We know that the march of democracy is not easy. Our own history is one of imperfect people striving for centuries to live up to the lofty ideal of democratic principles. As we look at others who are also striving, we owe them our respect and our confidence that they, too, can achieve their aspirations.

Just as those great architects of the post-World War II era helped to lay the ground work for the democratic gains of today, we are now making decisions that will echo for many decades to come. If we are successful, we will pass on to those who follow us a foundation on which to build a world of hope, a world in which peace and freedom reign.

Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State