



Remarks on the Occasion of George Kennan's Centenary Birthday

Secretary Colin L. Powell
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[[DSL/Cable](#); [Modem](#); [audio](#)]

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you, Dr. Tilghman, for that very, very warm, generous and gracious introduction. Ladies and gentlemen, it's a great pleasure to be with you here in Richardson Auditorium in the famous Alexander Hall to kick off this conference. And a special word of thanks for being here to Mrs. Kennan and the members of the Kennan family who are present.

QUESTION: I'm not a student. I'm old enough to be a father of some of the students here.

Are there any dangers I -- that I may ask you, that -- there are any way unforeseen or unseen so far that we are not aware of, besides the other two that I've already named, and they exist in the world, would you'd like to share with us?

SECRETARY POWELL: Other dangers? Is that the essence of the question?

I think terrorism, as I obviously said, lingers as number one. The interesting thing about the age we are in is that I look at it both as the chief diplomat and as a soldier. I cannot get rid of 35 years of military experience. And it's the first era I've lived in when the likelihood of major regional conflict between large countries with large industrial capability and large populations is not there.

And then we can turn our attention to the really great threats that are out there -- HIV/AIDS, poverty, starvation, improving the human condition, working on free trade, more free trade agreements with nations around the world, breaking down trade barriers. Why? Just so we can sell stuff? No, so that we can give opportunity to people in these nations to get into the economic game, get into the economic world.

It is these softer things that don't make headlines. Rule of law, ending corruption, going after disease, clean water, food for people, teaching your people the skills they need in the 21st century. This is the essence of my work and my foreign policy, a commitment to the President and to the American people. This is what will make it a better world. We've got to solve these crises, hope new ones are not generated, and I think more are on their way to solution than are being generated, which is good.

But democracy and ending of a regional conflict doesn't mean anything to people if they got no more food on their table, they're still dying from disease, still don't have access to clean water, healthcare, a better life for their children. If we don't do that, then people will lose faith in all the wonderful things I talked about. Democracy, freedom -- hey, that's great. Do I have more food? Do I have a better life? If the answer is yes, give me some more democracy. If the answer is no, I'll seek an alternative.

And so when I think about it, that's my greatest enemy -- ignorance, a lack of law, poverty, disease, and a failure to believe in democracy. We can preach it. People have to believe it. They'll only believe it if they have a better life from it.