

The following text may be printed, copy/pasted, or downloaded and emailed.

## **Bush promotes spread of liberty - for safety's sake**

WARREN P. STROBEL AND STEVEN THOMMA  
Knight Ridder Newspapers  
January 21, 2005

WASHINGTON - President Bush proclaimed a bold, even revolutionary, foreign policy in his inaugural address Thursday, but he offered no specifics about how he plans to rid the world of tyranny, which tyrants he'll target or what other foreign or domestic goals he might be willing to sacrifice to promote freedom.

Bush's declaration that "the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world" was reminiscent of predecessors from Woodrow Wilson to Ronald Reagan, and especially of John F. Kennedy's 1961 pledge to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

But while Wilson, Reagan and Kennedy argued that America should battle tyranny because doing so is right, Bush said America must battle tyranny because it can never be safe so long as tyrants rule.

"The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands," Bush said.

That effort to link the security of Americans in their homes to the promotion of liberty abroad reflects the profound effect that the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks had on Bush's and much of the nation's thinking.

So far, however, Bush's efforts to defeat tyranny have been confined largely to Afghanistan and Iraq, and to a lesser extent to Iran and Syria and to the communist regimes in Cuba and North Korea.

In many other countries where freedom is severely limited but where the United States gets energy, trade, counterterrorism cooperation or diplomatic help, the administration has done little. They include China, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Russia and Egypt. In others with less strategic or economic weight, for example Zimbabwe and Burma, the U.S. campaign against tyranny has been largely rhetorical.

In the wake of his speech, is the president now willing to pressure China and risk a trade war that could raise the cost of consumer goods for U.S. citizens and hurt the American economy? Will he pressure pro-American Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, who took power in a coup and whose rule is fragile enough as it is?

"These are the countries that people are going to be watching. Not the ones that are enemies" anyway, said Jennifer Windsor, the executive director of Freedom House, a nonpartisan group that promotes democracy worldwide.

Freedom House lists 89 countries, with 44 percent of the world's population, as "free." It lists 54 countries as "partly free" and another 49 as "not free."

Last month, Freedom House put Russia, whose president, Vladimir Putin, has received nearly unconditional backing from Bush, in the "not free" category because of Putin's concentration of power and intimidation of the media and political opponents.

Nor did Bush specify what means he favors to spread democracy and defeat dictatorship, other than to say, "this is not primarily the task of arms." He touched only briefly on the deeply troubled U.S. effort to transform Iraq into a stable democracy, which so far has cost 1,360 American lives and \$200 billion, and he never mentioned the country by name.

Tools other than warfare that the president could use include covert action to undermine oppressive governments, economic sanctions or, less confrontationally, foreign aid, persuasion and public diplomacy.

Bush follows a long line of presidents who've who interpreted Puritan leader John Winthrop's 1630 idea of America as a "city upon a hill" to mean that the United States has a unique role to play in sharing liberty with the world.

But Bush may be the first president to declare that the United States cannot be safe unless all others are free.

Ivo Daalder, a foreign policy analyst at the Washington-based Brookings Institution who served in the Clinton administration, said it remained to be seen whether Bush's rhetoric was just that or whether he was determined to make promoting democracy "the most important foreign-policy priority we have."

"And if so, have we really understood the implications of that?" said Daalder, who served at the National Security Council under President Clinton. "That is the fundamental question."

For example, he said, "Is it Mr. Bush's intent to tell the oppressed in the world to rise up in the expectation that the United States stands ready to help them?" If women in Saudi Arabia start driving automobiles and are attacked by their conservative government, "Are we going to send the 82nd Airborne" division?

Windsor of Freedom House acknowledged the uncertainties, but she credited the president with making perhaps his strongest statement ever about the importance of democracy in U.S. foreign policy. Bush said that in dealing with other governments he would be "making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people."

After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the president aggressively pushed for change in societies in the Muslim world and elsewhere.

He's launched an initiative to promote democracy in the Middle East, which has produced modest results so far; pressed for elections in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestinian areas; and increasingly tied U.S. foreign aid to good governance in developing countries.

Yet around the world, especially in regions where memories of foreign crusades or colonization linger, these moves often are seen as attempts at American hegemony.

Critics overseas also point to the revelations of abuses of detainees by American personnel at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison and elsewhere as evidence of U.S. hypocrisy.

Human Rights Watch, in an annual review this month, said, "The United States' record at home and overseas in 2004 - most notably the government's use of coercive interrogation and disregard for the Geneva Conventions in its treatment of detainees in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, exemplified by the images of torture from Abu Ghraib prison - has undermined" its reputation as the world's leading advocate of human rights.

Bush's secretary of state in waiting, Condoleezza Rice, was grilled by both Democrats and Republicans in the Senate this week about U.S. double standards in pushing human rights.

"For the `axis of evil' countries we have a certain set of criteria, but yet it doesn't extend to other countries like China and Russia and other places," Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., told Rice.