

November 6, 2003: President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East

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Remarks by President George W. Bush on the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy

United States Chamber of Commerce

Washington, D.C.

President Bush's remarks on the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy laid out in broad terms his views on the development of democracy and freedom in the world.

On China, he said:

"Our commitment to democracy is tested in China. That nation now has a sliver, a fragment of liberty. Yet, China's people will eventually want their liberty pure and whole. China has discovered that economic freedom leads to national wealth. China's leaders will also discover that freedom is indivisible -- that social and religious freedom is also essential to national greatness and national dignity. Eventually, men and women who are allowed to control their own wealth will insist on controlling their own lives and their own country."

On democracy in the Middle East, he said:

"More than half of all the Muslims in the world live in freedom under democratically constituted governments. They succeed in democratic societies, not in spite of their faith, but because of it. A religion that demands individual moral accountability, and encourages the encounter of the individual with God, is fully compatible with the rights and responsibilities of self-government..."

"...There are, however, essential principles common to every successful society, in every culture. Successful societies limit the power of the state and the power of the military -- so that governments respond to the will of the people, and not the

will of an elite. Successful societies protect freedom with the consistent and impartial rule of law, instead of selecting applying -- selectively applying the law to punish political opponents. Successful societies allow room for healthy civic institutions -- for political parties and labor unions and independent newspapers and broadcast media. Successful societies guarantee religious liberty -- the right to serve and honor God without fear of persecution. Successful societies privatize their economies, and secure the rights of property. They prohibit and punish official corruption, and invest in the health and education of their people. They recognize the rights of women. And instead of directing hatred and resentment against others, successful societies appeal to the hopes of their own people"

"...Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe -- because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export."

Full text at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>