

Remarks at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Gala

Remarks

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Secretary of State

Four Seasons Hotel

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As we're all on

the same team, namely the American team, and my longtime friend Mack McLarty and his wonderful Donna. I am grateful to all of you.

I want to thank Christine for that introduction, but more than that for her leadership at the IMF, for her extraordinary strength and vision in these uncertain economic times, and for her very steady hand as she is trying to help lead us through them.

I also want to thank all the member of Congress and the diplomatic corps here tonight. It is very good seeing a lot of my former colleagues getting, to sit with my friend, Susan Collins.

And of course, I want to, along with all of you, salute our host, Jane Harman, one of our nation's most articulate, thoughtful leaders on foreign policy and national security. And now as president of the Wilson Center, she is still shaping public debate. (Applause.) And in addition to that, she is advising a lot of us and helping to make sure that the scholarship we need for better informed decisions is being done. She provides insights and counsel on a great range of issues.

And I loved the fact that Jane was just referencing that, under her leadership, the Wilson Center has become the home of the Council of World Women Leaders, the only organization of current and former women heads of state and ministers. They are working together with the State Department and others to organize a summit in the United Arab Emirates on women's leadership in the Arab world.

And Jane joined me last December at the State Department to launch the Women in Public Service Project to identify, train, and mentor emerging women leaders around the world, founded in partnership with the Seven Sisters Colleges. Jane and I are both proud graduates, she of Smith and I of Wellesley, and we are including many international and domestic partners. And I think it's exciting that we are working on these kinds of things together in addition to all of the raft of difficult problems, both those in the headlines and in the trendlines that we confront every single day.

I have to say, that film was hilarious. (Laughter.) And I have a feeling that Jane was stage managing every bit of it, but I can't wait to see all my predecessors to thank them for participating. And George Shultz, with his Don't Worry,

Be Happy song – he actually gave me a little bear that I keep in my office that has one of these buttons. When you press it, it sings, “Don’t worry, be happy.” (Laughter.) So I mean, I figured if it’s good enough for George Shultz, it’s good enough for me. So I was thrilled to see him sharing that with all of you tonight.

And the thing about Henry Kissinger is, with that accent, he can anything and you’d think it’s really smart and witty. (Laughter.) And so he and I have had some of the most amazing conversations, but I’m never quite sure I’ve understood everything that was said. (Laughter.)

But for me, the men and women you saw on the screen have become great friends, whether I knew them well, like I did, of course, with dear Madeleine Albright, or knew them from afar or by reputation at events like this. All of them have been extraordinarily helpful to me, and I’m very grateful they would come together to be part of this evening.

Well, I know it’s been, for me, a reunion. I’ve had a chance to see so many of-- a lot of my friends and colleagues over the past evening. And I want to make just a few serious points, because you’ve been very, very patient.

I think as both Jane and Christine suggested in their remarks tonight, we are very fortunate to be in the positions we’re in in today’s world, and we’re very pleased that in our own ways we can be trying to help chart our path through what is a very difficult, dangerous, tumultuous time, as the film seemed to suggest. And we’re trying to look at economic policy and foreign policy in new way

We really were having to rethink how we did business, business in government as well as business in the private sector. Now, in the government, we're calling

We're also putting a lot more attention into regional and global institutions that mobilize common action and help to settle disputes peacefully, that stand for upholding universal rights and standards; and supporting an open, free, transparent, and fair economic system; and having security arrangements that promote stability and trust.

Because I don't believe that the rise of new powers has to be a threat to American leadership. In fact, the rise of these powers is, in part, the result of American leadership – of the stability and prosperity we brought to and fostered around the world since the end of World War II. This is not 1912, when friction between a declining Britain and a rising Germany set the stage for global conflict. It's 2012, and a strong America is working with new powers in an international system designed to prevent global conflict. But we have to update that system. We have to continue to ask ourselves, "How can we make it work better?" And we cannot do it alone.

Let me also turn to a second example. Early last year, when citizens took to the streets across the Middle East and North Africa demanding their dignity, their human rights, those protests caught fire and caught most people by surprise. We saw the beginnings of responsiveness and accountability in Egypt and even in Yemen. But in Libya, Qadhafi responded with brutal violence, and the Libyan people and the Arab League, for the first time together, asked for the international community's support. So we did put together a broad coalition, led by NATO with a mandate from the UN Security Council. Think about it: The Arab League not only called for action, but members of the Arab League participated alongside NATO. Without America's high-level diplomacy, cajoling, hand-holding, and occasional arm-twisting, that coalition would never have come together or stayed together.

And now we're working with new partners to support emerging democracies and to help build credible institutions. I was just in Brasilia with President Dilma Rousseff co-chairing the Open Government Partnership, which is an effort by the United States to bring countries into the fight against corruption, a push for openness. And I was so proud that Libya was represented at that conference and made a speech about the kind of future – democratic future – that they are seeking.

Now, we all know that this is a difficult transformation. And we see countries like Syria that are trying to hold back the tide of history with brutal, horrible impact on innocent lives. But a situation as complicated as the Arab Spring demands a multifaceted response. And so we have to marry all of these tools together: old-fashioned shoe-leather diplomacy and the use of social media, using every partner that is willing to work with us, and bringing disparate stakeholders together. Only the United States of America has the resolve, the reach, and the resources to do this on a truly global scale.

And that doesn't mean we go it alone. Actually, it means the opposite. America cannot and should not shoulder every burden ourselves. As we saw in Libya, our European and NATO allies remain our partners of first resort, but new partners like those Arab nations that flew the air CAP and helped with the maritime interdiction really made a difference.

So we have to work on how we keep building those networks and how we give capability and credibility to these coalitions that come up to promote regional stability and security in a lot of hotspots. And we've paid particular attention to the Asia Pacific and the multilateral organizations there to building new architecture of institutions that will serve as a bulwark for continuing security and prosperity, and to deal with disputes like the territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Because after all, the Asia Pacific region, which stretches from the Indian Ocean all the way to shores of the

thing called democracy, and they ask me, "Can you come help us know how to have a democracy," I realized that our ultimate strength, as it always has been, rests in our values: who we are, what we represent. We can't ever lose that.

So we will need the help and partnership of everyone here. We're grateful for the Wilson Center, which is a wonderful resource for a lot of the work that we do. But mostly, we'll need citizenship to push and hold accountable our leadership, regardless of party, regardless of whether it's in government or business, to make sure that we never, ever lose what makes our country so special.

When I get off that plane representing the United States, I am so proud and so honored, and I want to be sure that whoever is the secretary of state next and next and next for 20, 30, 50, 100 years into the future will always be viewed with the same level of respect and appreciation for what this country stands for. And I need to be sure that all of you share that mission as well. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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