

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu  
Warren and Anita Manshel Lecture in American Foreign Policy  
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## **Goodness Triumphs Ultimately**

### Preamble

Madam Chairperson, the Manshel Family, the first director of the Weatherhead Center, Mr. Bowie, very distinguished ladies and gentlemen, friends: good afternoon. Thank you very much for your kind words of introduction, and thank you to the splendid choir. It is a very great privilege and honor.

A few years ago, my wife and I went to a small village in the Netherlands. They decided to name the village school after me, but that's not the important part of the story. The school was celebrating its 400th anniversary, and when we arrived in the village a little girl came up to me and said, "Were you here when the school started?" I thought I was decrepit, but I didn't think it was quite so obvious.

It is a great honor to be invited to deliver this particular Warren and Anita Manshel Lecture. It's such an auspicious time when this distinguished Center, the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, celebrates its golden anniversary. Heartiest congratulations on such a signal achievement, and may the Center and its members go from strength to strength as they continue to make significant interventions in the conduct of public affairs—and particularly those relating to U.S. foreign policy.

Secondly, I must confess that I really should not have accepted such a prestigious invitation. I succumbed to the blandishments of a seductive member of the Center, Donna Hicks. I don't belong here.

The executive director, Steven Bloomfield, very kindly sent me a comprehensive brief about the history of the Center and told me about the style and ethos of the Center working as it does in a collaborative, interdisciplinary, intergenerational way with undergraduates, graduates, academics, scholars, and practitioners interacting. It was all very impressive, and he supplied me with a list of the kind of people who have performed here. In the long list of those who have contributed to the work of the Center, I noted a particular category that was missing. I am not sure whether it was an oversight, but it was quite significant. There was no mention of philosophers, ethicists, moralists, or theologians. That is why I asserted that I really do not belong here. As it is, I am neither scholar nor practitioner. After all, I am now emeritus, signifying that I have been put out of pasture.

But I have to tell you this delicious story. We were getting an honorary degree from Yale, and our representative was the president of Stanford University, who told the story of an honorary degree recipient who went on about how utterly unworthy he was of that honor. Then former prime minister Golda Meir piped up, "Oh so-and-so, get on with it. You're not so great that you can be so humble."

So do not expect a scholarly disquisition, but the ramblings of a supernumerary prelate. I speak to you not as an expert on foreign affairs. I speak to you as a religious leader who will use the categories appropriate to my discipline—deity, goodness, et cetera—and will consider whether a particular course of action was good or bad, right or wrong, and not whether in some utilitarian way it might have been successful or not, expedient or otherwise. Hence the title of my address.

### Is there Anti-Americanism Abroad?

I was recently asked to contribute to the journal *Foreign Policy*. The brief given to some twenty or so of us was to suggest one unilateral magnanimous gesture or action that the incoming U.S. president might make to counteract the alleged anti-Americanism abroad. I entered a caveat immediately in my contribution. I said that I was not aware of any anti-Americanism abroad. What I certainly could attest to was a substantial resentment and indeed hostile opposition to the policies of a particular U.S. administration and contended, as I do now, that the two are quite distinct and separate. As an elucidating example, I pointed out that in the years of the anti-apartheid struggle, the Reagan White House was firmly opposed to applying sanctions against the South African apartheid regime, preferring what it described as “constructive engagement.” Many of us were incensed by this policy and opposed it with every fiber of our being. I probably dismayed many people when on one occasion I was told of the latest Reagan rejection of our call for U.S. sanctions against Pretoria. I retorted, out of deep exasperation, “The West can go to hell!” I was then Bishop of Johannesburg, and some thought it was decidedly un-Episcopal language.

I was very angry toward the Reagan administration, but that did not make me anti-American. As it happened, we appealed over the head of the White House incumbent to the American people—and especially to the magnificent college and university students. Their campaigns and demonstrations eventually effected a change in the moral climate in this country so that Congress went on to pass the anti-apartheid legislation, with a presidential veto override to boot. This was quite an accomplishment given the huge popularity of President Reagan.

The point I am laboring to establish is that anger and resentment toward the policies of a particular administration do not necessarily translate into anti-American sentiment. We must draw that distinction and perhaps help to dispel a paranoia that causes people to have a siege mentality and permits them then to be manipulated out of a fear by those who claim to be protecting them from the “big bad wolf out there,” straining to get at them, baying for their blood. This paranoia causes them to be ready and willing to subvert and indeed jettison what many of us, perhaps naively, had believed to be entrenched American values, which so many of us admired greatly and that had inspired us to strive after similar standards in our own countries. I never imagined in my worst dreams that I would live to see the day when the United States would abrogate the rule of law and *habeas corpus* as has happened in the case of those described as “enemy combatants” incarcerated in Guantánamo Bay. Or that I would hear an American government and its apologists use exactly the same justification for detention without trial, as had been used by the apartheid government of South Africa—a practice that the United States at the time condemned roundly as was so utterly right to have done. (In all of this, I’ve been surprised at the lack of outrage from the American public one had expected.) So, it was a devastating case of déjà vu for some of us, so thoroughly disillusioning.

When I was perhaps nine or so I picked up a tattered copy of *Ebony* magazine. I still don't know where it could have come from in my ghetto township with its poverty and squalor. It described how Jackie Robinson, a black man like us, had broken into major league baseball and was playing scintillatingly for the Brooklyn Dodgers. I did not know baseball from ping-pong. That was totally irrelevant. What mattered was that a black man had made it against huge odds, and I grew inches and was sold on America from then on. With many of my fellow black kids—victims of a system that sought to instill in us a huge sense of inferiority and self hate—we found an antidote in the exploits of black American sports heroes such as Jesse Owens, who upstaged Hitler, or Sugar Ray Robinson, or Joe Louis, the Brown Bomber. (Ah, but we were devastated when he lost to Max Schmeling.) Well, that tells you my vintage.

I can't tell you how our hearts swelled with pride to see the movie "Stormy Weather" with an all-black cast with the likes of Lena Horne, Fats Waller, and Cab Calloway, whose sartorial style was slavishly imitated by our township dandies. Your history inspired us; we learned Lincoln's Gettysburg Address by heart. When the apartheid government introduced Bantu Education designed to turn us into docile kowtowing perpetual serfs, it expunged the American War of Independence from our history curriculum because that war was regarded as likely to plant subversive ideas in our impressionable and basically simple minds. The civil rights movement inspired us profoundly, and we thrilled at the soaring oratory of Martin Luther King, Jr. and were filled with a vicarious pride captivated by his "I have a dream" spellbinder. We, too, sang "We shall Overcome" in our anti-apartheid rallies. Leah and I named our firstborn child Trevor Armstrong for Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong. No, there has not been a knee-jerk anti-Americanism abroad. If anything, it is the opposite that has been very much in evidence. There might be pockets of anti-Americanism, but as a universal global phenomenon, no.

How could people easily forget your incredible generosity expressed in the Marshall Plan that helped Europe get back on its feet? And was it not demonstrated so spectacularly with that extraordinary outpouring of sympathy and concern after 9/11? That surely could not have happened, certainly not on such a vast global scale. People genuinely cared. Everywhere, virtually. And so what happened that all these positive warm feelings toward the United States were disrupted and turned into the negative ones of hostility and anger?

### Nostalgia for the Cold War

The United States quite soon began to flex its solitary superpower muscles in a unipolar world. People were talking about our responsibility for the environment, about global warming, and so on, and most of the world showed its seriousness and commitment by signing the Kyoto Protocol. The United States snubbed the world—basically seeming to say, "Go jump in the lake!"—and its unilateralism would be a defining characteristic of U.S. foreign policy from then on. President Clinton signed the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court. The second President Bush reversed that decision and would not ratify the establishment of the court because, he asserted, it would hamper American security arrangements if U.S. citizens could be charged frivolously and indicted before the court. Why U.S. citizens should be particularly vulnerable was not clear to most non-Americans. His objection misstated the nature and jurisdiction of this court, which has quite stringent rules about its authority. Very few in the rest of the world were fooled. It was yet another unilateral act by which the world's only superpower would seemingly disdainfully thumb its nose at the rest of the world. Resentment was

beginning to build up, but not as anti-Americanism, apart from exceptional instances. It was resentment toward the policies of a particular U.S. administration.

The resentment and frustration and impotence did not prevent the outpouring of love, sympathy, and support after 9/11. And then the United States did not retaliate immediately, as many of us had expected, with a kind of tit-for-tat even if the real culprits were unknown. When this did not happen immediately we believed, “Hey, a new era is dawning. Perhaps we are witnessing the birth of a new paradigm in international affairs.” As a matter of fact this act of unbridled terror, to be condemned unequivocally, would have provided just the sort of case the International Criminal Court was established to deal with. Although the terrorists had not committed an act of war, they had committed an egregious crime. They were not representatives or combatants of a particular country. They should have been treated as what they were: criminals who had to be apprehended and indicted before a tribunal such as the International Criminal Court. And the whole world, or very nearly the whole world, would have collaborated with its efforts to bring these criminals to book, and would have done so enthusiastically because it was to uphold the rule of law. But that was a route the United States could not take, having rejected the ICC. Your president was almost untouchable after 9/11. He could do no wrong. His popularity ratings were going through the roof. He was beyond criticism.

I’ve titled this section “Nostalgia for the Cold War.” We had fondly imagined that the end of the Cold War would usher in a period of peace, prosperity, and stability. The world would see a reduction in defence spending that would be diverted to more beneficial areas: education, health, housing, poverty eradication, et cetera. We did not realize that the end of this era would be so hugely disorienting. You see, the Cold War had provided us with our bearings; it defined our identities. We were pro-Communism or anti-Communism. Well, when Communism went, who were we? The Cold War was a fertile arena for simplistic world views, and so President Reagan found resonance with many when he spoke of the “Evil Empire.” The world was conveniently divided into “them” and “us.” They, of course, were the “baddies,” and we were the “goodies.” It justified morally very questionable policies. The United States supported Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, the Contras in Nicaragua, Jonas Savimbi in Angola, and elsewhere had surrogates whose human-rights records were abominable, but who were the “blue-eyed boys” of the United States because they proclaimed themselves anti-Communist. Many of their countries paid heavily for this. Angola is still trying to recover from the devastation of the civil war against Dr. Savimbi. The United States was not averse from subverting the governments of countries who were not subservient to U.S. interests including, some have alleged, assassinations of unfriendly presidents. There was the fate, it seems, of President Allende of Chile who was supplanted by the military dictator Augusto Pinochet, who in turn played havoc with his people but seemed a favorite of the United States. American protestations about spreading democracy sound hollow when people remember very recent history.

And so 9/11 came to fill the vacuum. It provided the enemy so indispensable, seemingly, to national identity. President Bush learned from President Reagan and quickly defined the world as those for or against the United States, and even more disturbingly identified certain countries as forming an “axis of evil.” They were all by definition the “baddies,” and the United States and her allies were the “goodies.” He had to find an enemy not as amorphous as “those terrorists.” So, okay: Al Qaeda. It was not a criminal act that had been committed, they said, but an act of war. But who was the enemy? Al Qaeda. But you see, according to the rules of war there has to be a country—and so Iraq was identified. It was conveniently forgotten that Saddam Hussein was

spawned and equipped and at one time supported by the United States. There had to be a regime change. Why Iraq and not Saudi Arabia, or China, or wherever else? There was no credible evidence that Saddam Hussein had provided bases for Al Qaeda. But the world's only superpower had already decided that he must go.

Saddam was not many people's favorite, but you do not just invade a country because altruistically you want its government to change. Weapons of mass destruction provided a plausible excuse. But the UN inspectors had as yet failed to produce credible evidence and were asking for more time to find that evidence, if it existed. But the United States was impatient. If the rest of the world was playing games, the United States was not. It sought the approval of the UN Security Council as the only legitimate authority for declaring a war of the kind the United States wanted, to punish Saddam for producing weapons of mass destruction. That approval was not forthcoming, and the United States decided to go it alone. Many tried to say, "Give the inspectors more time. If they find the evidence, then it would be very difficult for anyone to oppose an invasion." Some of us invoked the time-honored Christian doctrine of the "just war," with its stringent conditions for determining whether a war is justifiable or not. For example, have you exhausted all nonviolent options for resolving your particular crisis? In this case, no. What are the chances of success? For the United States (in a disastrous miscalculation), "Oh, very good." Then the war must be declared by the proper authority, and by going to the Security Council the United States conceded it was *not* that authority.

Another "just war" condition is to consider whether or not the situation would be better after the war than before. No one in their right mind could say other than that it has been disastrous. The Pope sent a special envoy to the White House to counsel against going to war. I said that if it happened without the sanction of the Security Council, it would be immoral—even if it became a successful war and improved the chaos of present-day Iraq—*ab initio*. But the emergence of an enemy galvanized U.S. patriotism. The apartheid government had used similar tactics. Criticizing the South African government showed that you were really unpatriotic. They did not evaluate the cogency of your argument. They simply ruled you out of court by impugning your patriotism, if you were a white South African. So there was yet another instance of *déjà vu*, as we observed the goings on in the United States.

I don't think anyone would disagree that the unilateral invasion of Iraq (with the connivance of some allies, nearly all of whom have paid with electoral defeats for their part in this misadventure) has been a serious miscalculation and disaster. It has dented the image of the United States, the superpower intent on throwing its weight around like a reckless bully. It has affected your discourse. Too many have acquiesced meekly in an abrogation of the rule of law. Language in a kind of *Alice in Wonderland* excursion has been made to mean what the powerful have wanted it to mean. You are fighting a war? "Yes." So those fighting against you are soldiers? "No, they are enemy combatants," a new category to which the Geneva Convention does not apply. You produced the conditions that made the violations at Abu Ghraib possible, which does not display America's best side.

If someone had appeared before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission accused of using the water torture that featured so prominently in the confirmation process for a new U.S. attorney general, that method would have been condemned roundly as a gross violation of human rights. I really could not believe what I saw and heard in this confirmation process.

All of us want to see a just solution to the Middle East crisis. We wish all God's blessings for the Annapolis meeting. But we want to say what seems to us so utterly obvious about what we learned from our particular situation in South Africa. Peace does not come from the barrel of a gun but is achieved when the fundamental rights of all are recognized, respected, and upheld. The West is quite rightly feeling guilty about its role in the Nazi Holocaust and has been only too glad that others are paying the penance for that tremendous blot on humanity's copybook. A German diplomat recently said to me that Germany was doubly guilty for the Holocaust and is guilty now for the unacceptable suffering of the Palestinian people. Recently here in Boston, I appealed to my spiritual kin, the Jews, to be true to their calling, obedient to their God, our God, the God of justice, the God of the poor and the downtrodden. I would hope that the United States would be that too. (Was it an act of cynicism, or yet another example of U.S. unilateralism to support the appointment of Tony Blair as a special Middle East envoy?)

I cannot pretend to understand the logic relating to which countries may or may not be nuclear powers. Why Pakistan and not Iran? I don't know. I am just asking, as someone utterly naive in these complex matters, does being friendly with the world's superpower have anything to do with it?

Much of the same criticisms can be leveled at the doctrines of preemptive strike and regime change. Who apart from the United States applies them, and are the determinations based on information supplied by the same intelligence services that failed so spectacularly in the case of Iraq?

I speak as one who has not only admiration but also deep love for this country. Therefore, I am glad to be able to mention at least two aspects of U.S. foreign policy that I applaud enthusiastically as the kind of things we all desperately hope would always characterize that policy. I have nothing but the highest praise for the U.S. policy towards Burma/Myanmar. When I met with Secretary of State Rice I told her, "On this issue, the United States is on the side of the angels." You really cannot be faulted. Your president has met with dissidents, and at nearly every opportunity he has spoken out clearly and unambiguously against the military junta and for freedom and democracy. And the First Lady has been quite outstanding on this issue as well. I take off my hat to them. That is the United States that we hoped your country was and would be.

America has been incredibly generous in its contributions to the Global Fund to combat tuberculosis, malaria, as well as HIV and AIDS, though it has been vitiated to some extent by ideological considerations with regard to condom use and birth control measures. But overall, I have admired U.S. generosity.

By the way, you might have wanted to know what I thought would be the one unilateral, magnanimous act your incoming president would make? I suggested that your new president would be surprised at the reaction of the world if he/she were to say to the world, "We made a big mistake over Iraq. Sorry." And while at it, shut down Guantánamo Bay and ratify the Rome Statute.

## Conclusion

This is a great country. You are some of the most generous people I have ever met, and I say that not to flatter you. As I indicated, you were tremendous in your support of our anti-

apartheid struggle, and we are free today, able to say we are seeking to be democratic, non-racist, non-sexist, because of your contribution. Without you, our victory would have been, if not impossible, a great deal more difficult to accomplish. And for that, thank you. It is part of this incredible generosity that is an American national characteristic.

This, which we inhabit, is a moral universe. Right and wrong actually do matter. There is no way that injustice, oppression, and evil can ever finally prevail. All the evidence of history validates this verdict. Ultimately, truth, justice, goodness, and compassion will triumph over their ghastly counterparts.

There is a choice being put before you, before the United States, to work assiduously with other nations for justice, equity, and peace, or to follow the unilateral path leading to isolation and resentment. I quote words that Moses spoke on behalf of God to the Israelites. He said,

*Today I offer you the choice of life and good, or death and evil. I summon heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I offer you the choice of life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life and you and you descendants will live. Deuteronomy 30: 15, 19*

It is the same choice before the people of this great country. Thank you.

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