

the State of Israel, an island of democracy in that part of the world. We have very strong ties there, as we should. Correspondingly, Europe has had very strong ties with the Palestinian people through the years. It goes way back. Significant portions of their population have ties to that region. So a NATO peacekeeping force comprised of both the military units from the European nations and some, I would say, proportionate amount of American forces would be perceived as a balanced force and could come, in my judgment, and provide a sense of security to support such frameworks of peace and accords as these two nations could hopefully achieve with our help and the help of other nations.

Again, it would only be at the invitation of the two Governments, but I think it is a concept that I have addressed on this floor many times. Others have likewise; indeed, some prominent journalists whom I respect. I do hope that it be given consideration.

General Jones in his testimony yesterday said it has been brought up in the North Atlantic Council of recent. Other nations are interested in this concept, and I hope our Nation, the United States, can get behind and explore the options.

I thank the distinguished Senator from Kentucky.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, how much time remains in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 25½ minutes remaining.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 256

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate resumes the bankruptcy legislation, there be 20 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote or in relation to the Feingold amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S TRIP TO EUROPE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I, along with others, had an opportunity yesterday to get a briefing from the President about his trip to Europe. It was a bipartisan group, well attended, and everyone was quite interested in getting the President's views of the results of his trip.

It is clear that the Iraqi election has transformed the political landscape, not only in the Middle East but in Europe as well.

First in the Middle East, we have witnessed in the last few months the election in Afghanistan on October 9, the election in the Palestinian territories on January 9. We have witnessed the Rose revolution up in Georgia, the Orange revolution in Ukraine. Then we have had the election in Iraq. And in

the post-Iraq period, we have seen people take to the streets in Lebanon.

It is clear with the unified message from the French and the Americans that the international community wants, at long last, Syrian troops out of Lebanon—entirely out, not just the troops but the security forces as well—so that the Lebanese elections this spring can be uninhibited by foreigners.

All of this is going on, and added to that we have the President of Egypt saying they are going to have a real election. That has certainly not been the case in Egypt in the past. A real election presumably means real choices with the opposition allowed to speak, participate, and run for office.

We have even seen some elections in Saudi Arabia, though women are not yet allowed to vote. That is a step obviously in the right direction.

What is happening here? I think the Iraqi policy of the President of the United States is transforming the Middle East and transforming European attitudes toward America and the policy in the Middle East. The President's trip last week I think underscores that.

He had unanimous support from NATO, all 26 countries, to do something within their capability to help the Iraqi emerging democracy. The French want to help. The Germans want to help. This is an enormous transformation in Europe, as well as in the Middle East. All of this, I would argue, is a result of the extraordinarily effective war on terror and particularly the Afghanistan and Iraqi chapters.

The President's grand strategy is not just to protect us at home—and that has worked so far; since 9/11 they have not been able to hit us again—but through these policies of transformation, he sort of drained the swamp and made it likely that the kinds of people who tend to join up with these terrorist groups will feel a sense of hopelessness in their own countries because they do not have a chance to influence outcomes and determine their own governments and their own fates.

This is an incredible step in the right direction. Clearly, problems remain, and at the top of the list would have to be Iran and North Korea. With regard to Iran, the President is pursuing a multilateral policy in which the British, the Germans, and the French engage the Iranians, hoping to convince them to follow the policy chosen by Muammar Qadhafi, for example, in Libya, witnessing what happened to Saddam Hussein in Iraq, deciding it would be better to give up weapons of mass destruction and work his way back toward being part of the community of civilized nations. The Europeans hopefully will make that point to the Iranians, and we are looking forward to pursuing a very aggressive policy. Everyone in Europe agrees that a nuclear Iran is simply not an option.

While we do have growing areas of agreement with our European allies,

there are some differences. As the Senator from Virginia pointed out, we are not happy about the apparent decision of the European community to trade with China in possibly missile technology or other military equipment that could potentially destabilize Asia and raise the anxiety of the Japanese, for example, and ourselves and exacerbate the cross-straits problem between China and Taiwan. So we do have our differences with the Europeans on that.

The President made it clear that in addition to the public meetings he had with President Putin of Russia, privately he also aggressively emphasized the importance of Russia continuing in a democratic direction and the importance of not unraveling the democratic reforms of the early 1990s if Russia is going to be a place where foreign investment will be willing to go. If there is not a respect for the rule of law and not a free press, not the kind of atmosphere in which one can function, the chances of Russia realizing its aspirations will be significantly set back if President Putin continues down the path he has chosen.

The new Ukrainian President was there. It was very exciting for all of the 26 NATO members to have an opportunity to see this hero. His opponents tried to kill him, and he is still in the process of trying to recover from the poisoning that almost took his life. It was remarkable to see the Ukrainian people take to the streets and demand an honest election, get an honest election, and elect someone who is westward leaning and who wants to bring the Ukraine into the European community and make it a country that can advance the hopes, desires, and aspirations of the Ukrainian people.

Finally, the President indicated he had an extraordinary, uplifting experience in Slovakia. He said he was standing there in the square speaking to the Slovakian people, and he said the best evidence that they have a genuine democracy was that one fellow had a sign up with some kind of anti-Bush comment on the sign. The President said the man stood there quietly holding up his sign during all of the President's speech, and the President pointed out that that was a further illustration that in Slovakia they are free to speak their mind and peacefully protest. The President thought that was a good sign of the stability and effectiveness of the new Slovakian democracy. By the way, that is a country that is making remarkable progress, which is, I am sure, the reason the President chose to go there.

I conclude by saying that President Bush clearly had a good week, and the reason he had a good week is because he has been pursuing policies that are working. Democracy is breaking out, springing up, taking root all through the Middle East, and the Europeans look at that and have to conclude that whether or not they supported the Iraq war initially, that single decision to liberate Iraq could well be the turning

point in transforming the Middle East into a place where democracies that respect the rights of minorities, engage in protection of human rights, and have free presses are the wave of the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair let me know when I have 6 minutes remaining on our time, please.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will so inform the Senator.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. President, President Bush has recently concluded an historic and highly productive trip to Europe. During my review of what was said, and more importantly, what was accomplished, I was struck by the number of significant issues that were addressed and how so many of them portend a better future for our important transatlantic relationship. This was a "good news" trip, which might explain why its coverage in the U.S. media was minimal at best.

There is no doubt that relations between the United States and Europe have been strained, especially over the conflict to liberate the people of Iraq. And, as we know, the media seems to thrive on reporting bad news at the expense of the good, which can distort what actually exists.

I know, for example, that reading about the situation in Iraq in the press forms one perception of reality. But, one gets a very different point of view if they visit Iraq and meet with our military personnel who are serving there, as I was able to do recently. One would think that they are talking about two completely different countries. The fact is that Iraq is not all doom and gloom, nor is it yet the place we envision it to become.

It is evolving politically, economically, socially, and yes, it is facing significant challenges from insurgents and terrorists. Yet, thanks to the vision and fortitude of President Bush, the extraordinary men and women in our military and diplomatic service, and the Iraqi people, Iraq is becoming a more secure country working toward its own unique form of representative government.

In Europe, it is my firm belief that we have far more in common than we have differences over foreign policy. Again, the media has tended to focus its reporting on the problems between us, which distorts the reality of our relationship with Europe. And, what is that reality? What are the issues? And, how do we see the transatlantic alliance in the future?

I come to this issue without any "rose colored" glasses. As a congressional delegate to the World Economic Conference in Davos, Switzerland, last January, I experienced first-hand the depth of resentment toward the United States felt by many Europeans. But on that same trip, in a meeting with French President Chirac, I also saw the beginning of the end of this feeling.

We have a vision for Iraq and the Middle East in general that calls for individual freedom and representative government. I do not think that the French, or any other democratic, European nation was opposed to this "vision." Rather, they were skeptical that President Bush could actually move his vision of freedom to becoming a reality in an area of the world pretty much devoid of democratic governments, with a few exceptions like Israel and Turkey.

In our meeting with President Chirac it was clear that he saw that United States polices in Iraq are beginning to work, that freedom might really take root in the Middle East, and that France and the rest of Europe had to be a part of this historic process.

By working together with European leaders, President Bush has put our transatlantic alliance and relations with Europe back on a normal track. We came to agreement on some issues, agreed to work on others, and identified those where we differ.

The list of results and issues addressed by President Bush during his trip is impressive and I want to highlight some of the major ones that fall into several categories:

First, with respect to NATO, all 26 member countries have now agreed to provide some form of assistance to support the NATO mission of training Iraqi defense forces.

With regard to Afghanistan, NATO continues to expand its role as the leader of the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, and the United States and NATO agreed to work toward merging the United States-led Operation Enduring Freedom and ISAF into one allied command.

With regard to Ukraine, strong support was expressed by NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer and President Bush for the future accession of Ukraine into NATO.

With regard to the E.U., the United States and the E.U. issued a joint statement in support of the people and the Government of Iraq.

United States concerns were clearly expressed to the E.U. about lifting its arms embargo against China.

President Chirac understands these concerns and there will be more United States and E.U. discussions on the embargo.

The United States and Germany announced joint actions on cleaner and more efficient energy policies and on climate change, which will include: Joint activities to develop and deploy cleaner, more efficient energy technologies; Cooperation in advancing climate science; and joint action to address air-pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

With regard to Iran, the United States and its European allies exchanged views on nuclear weapons in Iran and agreed to that it is not in the world's interest and that a common approach on this issue should be developed.

The United States agreed to take a more proactive role in the European-

led negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program.

With regard to Russia, President Bush made clear to President Putin the importance of promoting democracy in Russia.

Both presidents announced cooperation in combating the spread of man-portable air-defense systems or MANPADS.

Both agreed that Iran and North Korea should not have nuclear weapons.

Both voiced strong support for a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine.

Presidents Bush and Putin announced six areas, called the Bratislava initiatives, designed to bring Russia and the United States closer together. These initiatives are: nuclear security cooperation, World Trade Organization, energy cooperation, counterterrorism, space cooperation, and humanitarian, social, and people-to-people programs

With regard to Lebanon, President Bush and President Chirac jointly announced their condemnation on the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and pledged their mutual support for a free, independent, and democratic Lebanon.

I began my remarks by stating that President Bush's European trip was historic and productive. The partial list of issues I just mentioned clearly shows how much President Bush and European leaders have moved beyond policy differences over Iraq and that we share a common vision for a peaceful, democratic world. We may not always agree on how to reach our objectives, but we can agree on what those objectives are.

Our remaining challenge to further strengthen our ties with Europe is to change the negative perception that many average Europeans have of the United States. This is where the media can, and should, play a constructive role by balanced reporting on the true state of our relationship with Europe.

Let me repeat that we have far more in common with Europe than the differences between us and President Bush made great strides in promoting our common vision of the world with our allies.

It is now up to the rest of us to reinforce the President's message of working with our European allies, just as it is up to the Europeans to understand that President Bush's goal of promoting freedom around the world is a perpetual one that is in all mankind's interest to promote.

I close by commenting on some statements that were made yesterday in a hearing. In the Senate Armed Services Committee, under the leadership of Senator JOHN WARNER and Senator CARL LEVIN, we had General Jones, General Abizaid, and General Brown, who represent the commands responsible for the Iraqi conflict. In his opening statement, General Abizaid made the comment that as a result of what

has happened in Iraq, in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Afghanistan, we have now seen free and open elections in Afghanistan, and we have seen free and open elections in Iraq. We have seen an election take place in Saudi Arabia that were it not for the conflict in Iraq would never have happened. We have seen the people in Lebanon rise up against their Syrian invaders and put pressure on the Syrian Government to return that country to the people of Lebanon.

We have seen the Government of Libya turn over their nuclear weapons to the IAEA and to the United States for examination, to rid their country of the potential to have any nuclear weapons.

We have seen the leader of Egypt now proclaim he wants to see democratic elections in his country for the first time.

There are any number of instances that have occurred and are going to occur in the Middle East, a part of the world where violence has prevailed for decades, and where the terrorist community has trained and perpetuated itself for decades. Were it not for the vision of President Bush relative to the freedom of the Iraqi people, were it not for the support of Congress and the American people of that vision, and were it not for the strong leadership of our military, the strongest, greatest fighting force in the world, those events General Abizaid ticked off yesterday simply would not have happened.

If he had come in 12 months ago and said here is what is going to happen in the Middle East over the next year, no one would ever have believed that what he said would come to be true. The fact is it did. The fact is the people of Iraq are moving toward freedom and democracy. The fact is that now, after President Bush's highly successful trip to Europe, the Europeans have a better understanding of the importance of the transatlantic alliance working together to promote our president's vision of freedom throughout the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I will take the remaining time on the Republican side. I thank my colleagues, Senator WARNER, Senator MCCONNELL, and Senator CHAMBLISS, for laying out the leadership our President has shown in going overseas, talking about our fight for freedom, and showing it is a fight for freedom for every country that has a democracy, and that it should also be a shared responsibility.

I appreciate the President's leadership and our Senators for talking about what is happening. It is incredible, the changes we are seeing in the world because of the President's steadfast determination that we are going to do the right thing, that America will be the banner of freedom throughout the world, and that we could use help from

our allies and hopefully they will understand and agree it is a shared responsibility for all the freedom-loving peoples of the world.

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I want to take a moment, as I do on March 2 every year since I have been in the Senate, and before me Senator John Tower did the same thing, to commemorate Texas Independence Day.

Today is, indeed, the 169th anniversary of the day when a solemn convention of 54 men in a small Texas settlement took a step which had a momentous impact, not only on Texas but on the future of the United States. These 54 men, including my great-great-grandfather Charles S. Taylor from the town of Nacogdoches, met on March 2, 1836. They were in Washington-on-the-Brazos and, after laying out the grievances they had with the Government of Mexico, they declared:

We therefore . . . do hereby resolve and declare . . . that the people of Texas do now constitute a free, sovereign and independent republic.

They brought the Lone Star Republic into existence with those words. At the time, Texas was a remote territory of Mexico. It was hospitable only to the bravest and most determined of settlers. While few of the men signing the declaration could have predicted Texas's future prosperity, they immediately embarked on drafting a constitution to establish foundations for this new republic.

The signers of the Texas declaration, as their forefathers who signed the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, risked their lives and families when they put pen to paper. They were considered traitors to Mexico because they were in a Mexican territory. But they were going to fight for freedom and independence.

My great-great-grandfather Charles S. Taylor didn't know it at the time, but all four of his children had died when he left home to go and sign the declaration of independence. His wife took the children in what is now called the "runaway scrape," when the women in the Nacogdoches territory took the children to flee from what they thought might be the oncoming Mexican army. In the "runaway scrape," many children died. They were fleeing to Louisiana at the time. But my great-great-grandmother had the same spunk and determination as my great-great-grandfather, so she returned to Nacogdoches and they had nine more children. That was one of the examples that was set by people of that time who believed freedom was worth fighting and dying to achieve.

They spent their last days in Texas, trying to build the Republic and eventually supporting the statehood of Texas coming into the United States of America.

While the convention met in Washington-on-the-Brazos, 6,000 Mexican

troops held the Alamo under siege, seeking to extinguish this newly created republic.

Several days earlier, from the Alamo, Col. William Barrett Travis sent his immortal letter to the people of Texas and to all Americans. He knew the Mexican Army was approaching and he knew that he had, really only a few men, under 200 men to help defend the San Antonio fortress. Colonel Travis wrote:

Fellow Citizens and Compatriots: I am besieged with a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual Bombardment and cannonade for 24 hours and have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison is to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly over the wall. I shall never surrender or retreat.

Then I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, of everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due his honor and that of his country—Victory or Death.

No Texan—no person—can fail to be stirred by Colonel Travis' resolve in the face of such daunting odds.

Colonel Travis' dire prediction came true, 4,000 to 6,000 Mexican troops did lay siege to the Alamo. In the battle that followed, 184 brave men died in a heroic but vain attempt to fend off Santa Anna's overwhelming army. This battle, as all Texans know, was crucial to Texas independence because those heroes at the Alamo held out for so long that Santa Anna's forces were battered and diminished. Gen. Sam Houston gained the time he needed to devise a strategy to defeat Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto a month or so later on April 21, 1836. That battle was won and the Lone Star was visible on the horizon at last.

Each year on March 2, there is a ceremony at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park where there is a replica of the modest cabin where the 54 patriots pledged their lives, honor, and treasure for freedom.

Every year I honor the tradition Senator John Tower started by reading this incredible letter from the Alamo, written by William Barrett Travis, that showed so much about the kind of men who were willing to stand up and fight for freedom, men we have seen throughout the history of our country, starting in 1776 and going on. Even today, as we know, our young men are in Iraq and Afghanistan, fighting the war on terrorism.

I think it is important for us to remember our history. I am proud to be able to do it. We were a republic for 10 years before we entered the United States as a State. We are the only State to enter the United States as a republic, and we are very proud that we are now a great State, a part of the