

Any Future History Must First Be Expressed in Words

Written by Bruce Enberg

Thursday, 23 May 2013 20:55 - Last Updated Thursday, 23 May 2013 21:41

The President made a history defining speech in front of the National Defense University today, this address was I believe on the same level with Eisenhower's 'Cross of Iron' speech that warned us against pointless military spending. Obama called for the end of the 'endless War on Terror'.

Obama, late in the speech, said, "So America is at a crossroads. We must define the nature and scope of this struggle, or else it will define us. We have to be mindful of James Madison's warning that no nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare. Neither I nor any president can promise the total defeat of terror. We will never erase the evil that lies in the hearts of some human beings nor stamp out every danger to our open society. But what we can do, what we must do, is dismantle networks that pose a direct danger to us and make it less likely for new groups to gain a foothold, all the while maintaining the freedoms and ideals that we defend. And to define that strategy, we must make decisions based not on fear but on hard-earned wisdom. And that begins with understanding the current threat that we face."

He had gone on and on like this, for a POTUS known for giving a good speech, this was his best one in terms of addressing actual policy. Cynics will cry out that his speech has an obvious disconnect from his actual policies, Medea Benjamin from Code Pink interrupted Obama three times, and he did let her talk for a long stretch. She was finally removed from the auditorium but Obama went off script to acknowledge her concerns as being very real. There were no chants of 'USA USA' to drown her out from being heard by the military audience. They did like the Commander in Chief's comeback, they liked his acknowledgement of the reality of her protest points even more.

Obama made took several swipes at Bush and the Right, "And so our nation went to war. [after 9-11] We have now been at war for well over a decade. I won't review the full history. What is clear is that we quickly drove al-Qaida out of Afghanistan, but then shifted our focus and began a new war in Iraq. And this carried significant consequences for our fight against

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al-Qaida, our standing in the world and, to this day, our interests in a vital region."

He addressed the problem of right-wing terrorists in America, "And finally, we face a real threat from radicalized individuals here in the United States."

"Whether it's a [right-wing Christian] shooter at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin, a plane flying into a [IRS] building in Texas, or the extremists [Christian racist Tim McVeigh] who killed 168 people at the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, America's confronted many forms of violent extremism in our history. Deranged or alienated individuals, often U.S. citizens or legal residents, can do enormous damage, particularly when inspired by larger notions of violent jihad. And that pull towards extremism appears to have led to the shooting at Fort Hood and the bombing of the Boston Marathon."

The entire speech bears listening to, there are many more good points. It doesn't even matter if you don't accept that he believes what he said, or that you think that he's young and naive. It doesn't matter if you're a Tea Bag Freak who thinks he read it phonetically from the teleprompter (as if they could use the word 'phonetically' in a sentence. "The phonetical-A-graph played a tune by Ted Nugent"), this speech from the 'Bully Pulpit' was significant in it's potential for affecting history. It is however, up to the rest of us to make that future history happen.

Obama said, "And that is why I intend to engage Congress about the existing Authorization to Use Military Force, or AUMF". It's unusual for a President to call for his own sword to be hammered into a plowshare. We should take him at his word, but Congress almost certainly will not. Twitter @BruceEnberg Or piggy-back a message through the communications link to the

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drone circling my bunker.