

**Speech by the Honorable Pamela Harriman
United States Ambassador to France
Charter Day, College of William and Mary
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For all of you, this marks the 303rd anniversary of that first Charter Day, when even the most visionary could not have foreseen the extent, reach, duration, and influence of this university's extraordinary educational life.

For me, this is also a homecoming.

Not only because I have come here from thousands of miles away, although I have. And not merely because I have served as a member of your Board of Visitors, although I prize that appointment and experience more than I can say. In fact, I understand Thomas Jefferson's decision that his epitaph should record not his highest post in government, but his connection with another Virginia college that is your junior and lies a few miles to the West and North -- a school that could be described, I think, as the William and Mary of Charlottesville.

I feel a kinship with this college that I doubt I could have with any other.

William and Mary is proudly American, but has decidedly British origins. That, I believe, is also a fair description of my own situation.

The institution is distinctly Virginian; it is Virginia at its best, a symbol and guarantor of the character of our Commonwealth.

For my part, I am honored to be a Virginian. I chose to become a citizen of the Commonwealth as consciously and happily as I chose to become a citizen of this country. I have said on other occasions that I am an American by choice; I hope I can also pay myself the compliment of saying that I am a Virginian in feeling, soul, and values -- and not just by virtue of my residence.

For me, this occasion and the degree you are conferring upon me constitute an indelible confirmation of all this. The degree, of course, comes honoris causa. But I like to think that while young men and women study four years here to graduate from William and Mary, to achieve that same distinction, I have studied substantially more than half a century since I finished school.

So on this Charter Day, I want to reflect on one of the most important of the lessons I have learned in that long period of time.

It is a lesson about both the power of ideas and the responsibility of great power; the lesson is woven through the whole fabric of American history -- and nearly a hundred years of the world's turbulent life.

But, in many ways, it begins on this campus; it began here more than three centuries ago.

For this Charter Day commemorates not only the birth of a university, but an abiding dream that has gathered strength ever since -- the dream of individual rights and a free society.

William and Mary was founded and named as the result of one revolution, the Glorious Revolution that secured the principle of constitutional law in British government. Truer to that heritage than the mother country would have wished, William and Mary then became the seedbed of a second and greater revolution.

For it was here that Wythe and Mason read their John Locke; refined and amplified British notions of liberty; and trained students like Jefferson, Monroe, and Marshall, who both fought for and defined the American nation. George Washington did not study here, but he was your Chancellor; his conception of the new nation was suffused with the wisdom of William and Mary.

The United States had many founding fathers, but almost all of its founding professors were on this campus. This was the founding college.

But the ideals honored and hammered out here proved to be infectious in more than one country -- and on more than one continent. From the start, the American idea of political and economic freedom radiated across the world, and it has been felt with new force in your generation -- in places as diverse as Cambodia, South Africa, and a Soviet Union that because of that idea, no longer even exists.

But also from the start, there has been a fundamental debate about this country's proper role. After we have given the world the idea, do we have any greater responsibility to defend it? If others make war upon the idea, is the proper role of the United States as a philosophical witness, a military bystander? That, for instance, was the view of John Quincy Adams.

In the early days, and for long after, it was possible for America to be secure in its own distant hemisphere. For the first generations, it was probably impossible to project a meaningful amount of American power far beyond our shores and apply it on a continuing basis. And for many generations after that, it was still conventional good sense to favor a policy of splendid isolationism.

But Jefferson's recommendation of "no entangling alliances" was confounded by advances in science, technology, and communication that all but literally shrank the earth. It took longer in Jefferson's day to travel from Monticello to Washington than it does today to fly around the world. Today, economic and technological linkages across national boundaries make isolationism even less possible and even more dangerous.

Twice in this century, Americans resisted giving up the wisdom of neutrality and non-involvement. Certainly before World War I, most Americans did not know their own power -- nor their nation's. And before America entered World War II, the view from the other side -- from the midst of the Battle of Britain -- was simultaneously hopeful and bleak: If America entered the war, it would be long fought and surely won; but if America stayed out, the Nazis might never be defeated.

I vividly remember the crystallization of that certainty on Pearl Harbor Day. It was morning in Hawaii, but nighttime in England. We learned of the attack while at the dinner table at Chequers, the Prime Minister's official country home. On that Sunday evening apart from the normal entourage and family, the guests included the American Ambassador, John Winant, and Averell Harriman, the Lend Lease expeditor for Franklin Roosevelt.

News from the BBC came on every night at 9:00 o'clock and the butler always brought in a small, flip top radio that Harry Hopkins, one of the highest U.S. officials of the era, had given the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister opened the radio and we heard the announcer begin a detailed summary of the day's happenings. Then came a startling interruption: "The news has just been given that Japanese aircraft have raided Pearl Harbor, the American Naval Base in Hawaii. The announcement of the attack was made in a brief statement by President Roosevelt. Naval and military targets on the principal Hawaiian island...have also been attacked. No further details are yet available."

The Prime Minister slammed down the top of the radio just as one of his aides arrived to say that the Admiralty was on the phone. Harriman and Winant followed the Prime Minister from the dining room and heard the Admiralty confirm the news. The Prime Minister immediately put in a call to President Roosevelt. The call was connected and Churchill said, "Mr. President, what's this about Japan?" Roosevelt replied, "It is quite true. They have attacked us at Pearl Harbor. We are all in the same boat now." The President added that he would go to Congress for a Declaration of War the next morning.

The Prime Minister responded that he would go down to the House of Commons and declare war on Japan within an hour after the American declaration.

He then handed the phone to Ambassador Winant who asked whether the Japanese planes had sunk any American warships. The President confirmed that that was so.

Churchill in his memoirs later recorded that "my two American friends took the shock with admirable fortitude." Harriman later recalled: "The Inevitable had finally arrived. We all knew the grim future that it held, but at least there was a future now. We all had realized that the British could not win the war alone. On the Russian front there was still a question whether the Red Army would hold out. At least we could see a prospect now of winning."

All of us in the room knew that evening that the world would now be transformed fundamentally by American power, as it had long since been transformed by the American ideal.

And, as we all know, in the aftermath of that victory, the United States of that day, the United States of Truman, Marshall, Eisenhower, and so many others did not disengage. Led by this nation, the West contained Communism -- and prevailed sooner than President Kennedy could ever have expected in what he called "the long, twilight struggle."

So America did not return to isolationism in the post-war period. But half a century later, the recurring question of more than two centuries urgently presents itself again: Will this nation choose to engage in or avoid events beyond our shores?

I believe, sadly, that question is still open -- and the outcome is still in doubt. The defeat at Pearl Harbor led to an era of American commitment. Will the victory at the Berlin Wall lead to an era of American timidity?

The danger comes not because of our national leadership. President Bush directly met the challenge of aggression, forthrightly led the United States into and through the Gulf War, and in the process relaid the foundation for America's role as a beacon of liberty. He rejected the easy politics of military or economic withdrawal from international involvement.

President Clinton has strengthened that course.

Recognizing the reality of global economics, he brought NAFTA to completion at the risk of offending several of his most important supporters.

He intervened in Haiti despite dire warnings of inevitable failure at a high cost in casualties -- and then largely succeeded with hardly any American losses at all. Later this week for the first time in Haiti's nearly two centuries of history power will pass, peacefully, from one democratically elected leader to another. It is a remarkable achievement. His steady course in the Middle East and his bold initiative in Ireland have brought both of these long, historically imbedded struggles closer to settlements that once seemed all but unattainable.

Then, in recent months, the hardest test has come for this President, who has met it with resolve and at grave political risk to himself -- in a place where, for the American people and public opinion, the stakes did not seem obviously vital and the risks were plainly considerable. The test, of course, is Bosnia.

Against the advice to stay out of it and consign the Balkans to chaos, this President insisted from the beginning that America had a responsibility to meet. Against strong pressure, at the same time he refused to unilaterally violate the arms embargo which would have driven our Allies out of Bosnia and Americanized the war.

When one side flouted common standards of decency and bombarded civilian populations with impunity, President Clinton persuaded NATO to conduct a serious and sustained bombing campaign. After the bombing had a profound effect and negotiations resumed, he moved the talks to the United States and committed his Administration to sculpt an agreement in day after day of patient, active mediation. And then he made the decisive commitment that American troops would be stationed in Bosnia as part of a peacekeeping force -- because he knew that without them, there would be no peace.

Opposition to what the President has done in Bosnia has come from a sincere, if misguided, belief that the United States can ignore this problem.

Our engagement not to make war in Bosnia but to secure a peace which the parties have made serves America's interests and its values. The call to a new isolationism restates an old argument which is both historically discredited and potentially disastrous. Last year, a proposal was introduced in Congress to withdraw the United States from the United Nations. We should reply to the new isolationism with a candid statement regarding the necessity and consequences of a measured, activist exercise of American power.

An engaged America is essential to both liberty and stability -- for the material well-being of Americans and of the rest of the world. Without U.N. and U.S. sanctions, South Africa would probably still be in the grips of an increasingly repressive apartheid -- for greater but unpunished repression was the only way a racist system could have been sustained.

Without U.S. leadership in NATO, Europe would be riven with apprehension, more likely to break again into competing power blocks, and less able to promote stability and democracy. Without this trans-Atlantic bulwark, the risks to our nation would have multiplied.

For the United States, the exercise of power in this world which we have been instrumental in shaping is not only right; it is a matter of basic national interest.

Thus, to abandon Bosnia and the Balkans would sow insecurity across Europe -- and leave the fires of conflict burning in the very place where the fuse was lit for World War I.

Not every issue demands our involvement -- and each involvement must be measured and proportionate. But the guiding principle cannot be act where it is easy, and retreat when it is difficult.

Second, the responsible exercise of American military power may bring casualties -- and that reality ought to be stated and debated at the outset. The nearly bloodless intervention in Haiti will be the exception, and not the rule. We will lose some young Americans if we act; in case after case, we may eventually lose many more if we do not.

The American people must be shown the purpose as well as the pain. I saw that again and again in a different context during World War II. Alone, Churchill could weep for those who had been wounded or killed; but that did not deter him from continuing the battle.

The price of freedom can be high. Past generations of Americans have paid that price; future generations are likely to be called on to do the same.

Third, we must strengthen our allies and our international institutions to distribute the responsibilities of global order. As Secretary of State Christopher has said, "Many of our most important objectives cannot be achieved without the cooperation of others." We should seek loyal allies, but we cannot and should not expect automatic assent. We have the most powerful forces, but neither we nor any other nation has a monopoly on wisdom. President Chirac of France made a blunt and indispensable contribution to reshaping policies toward Bosnia. His words did not always make his allies comfortable; but in the end, they made the way ahead clearer.

Fourth and finally, the exercise of American power to achieve a world of peace and justice cannot be passing or temporary, limited to one crisis, one decade, or even one century. Effort and sacrifice will be a continuing responsibility for the United States, as the world's superpower, and for other nations that enlist in this cause. To this grave responsibility, there is no end in sight.

Nor can our leadership be limited to issues of military security. The U.S. role in negotiating the NAFTA and Uruguay Round agreements will prove crucial to the long-term economic health of our own country, of our hemisphere, and of the entire world.

Efforts to encourage democracy and market reform in Central Europe, Russia and the Newly Independent States are crucial to preventing collapse or chaos, followed by a return of East-West tension.

Nothing is more foolish than the conceit of a few years ago that we have reached the end of history -- that the fall of Communism assures the unbroken triumph of liberal democracy. There are dangers already apparent in the recesses of the future -- from nuclear proliferation to the rise of militant, fanatic transnational movements. We should remember that the Russian Revolution came at another point when many thought history was finally resolving itself -- on the eve of the final year of what Woodrow Wilson called "the war to end wars."

For the United States, "the long twilight struggle" will have to be succeeded by a long noontime watch. No single threat will be as dangerous as the Soviet-American confrontation, but there will be an array of dangers.

To ignore them, to attempt to hoard our power and hide behind protectionist walls, would help multiply these threats, some of which we cannot even imagine; others of which are all too clear.

The concept of liberty, given such vibrant intellectual life here at this founding college, has reached across the globe. We Americans do not have the choice of defending it only close to home -- or only for a while, so we can then retire from the effort.

We are nearly at the close of a momentous century -- and I am conscious that I have lived three quarters of it on both sides of the Atlantic.

I have seen from the other side what the United States stands for in the world -- and what a difference it makes when this nation takes a stand.

I have felt as an American a supreme pride that my country has saved Europe and the world from aggression twice in one generation -- and then saved democracy from the most lethal totalitarian system in human history.

I hope now that we will stay the course -- that in this new world, new generations of William and Mary graduates will see through all the differences to the fact that the fundamental values they were taught here are still at stake -- and that the fate of those values abroad ultimately can determine the state of our freedom at home.

Today we look back across more than 300 years. That is easier to do than looking ahead 300 years. We know where we have already been. And we also know that when William and Mary reaches the age that Oxford has already attained, that on the sixth century anniversary of Charter Day, America and the world will be unrecognizable in many, many ways. But I am confident that if we do our part, if we exercise the power we have in the ways we should, then America will live on in liberty -- and the driving force of history will continue to be the American idea -- the very idea so often and thoughtfully nurtured in this very special place.

Thank you.