



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

PURSuing TRUTH · DEFENDING LIBERTY SINCE 1844

Mike Pompeo Speech at Hillsdale College September 27, 2021

I was saying to Dr. Arnn, “That much applause before you speak is dangerous.” Dr. Arnn, thank you for that kind introduction. He told me that Greek word, I had no idea what it meant. So, he was right, I’m not as smart as you might think.

I have a number of things I want to share, things that are on my heart tonight. Things we can have a conversation about when I take some questions at the end. I’m privileged I’m now out of the administration, so you’ll get a chance to get Mike Pompeo unplugged. My wife would always joke in the administration and say, “Mike you go on the Sunday shows and you don’t smile.” I’d say, “Honey, we’re talking about really dangerous, tough things.” Now I can smile. It’s been a long eight months, and I want to talk about some of those things, not because it’s been impactful to me personally, but because of so much what’s happened in these eight months has impacted every one of you and every American.

I was walking over here tonight—we walked from the president’s office over to his home and then over here. I know this place a little bit, Hillsdale. I know its greatness, its importance to America. It’s a place that imparts character. It’s a place that imparts faith and freedom. It sparks memories for me of another great institution, the place that I went to school, the United States Military Academy at West Point. It feels in some ways as they serve these important missions together alongside of each other. That one was founded in 1802, this one in 1844, and they have deep roots in American history.

Dr. Arnn was joking about—I was a good student and most of the generals that you know who led America weren’t. I was deeply mindful of that. As a cadet there, there was just a single standard for excellence from my perspective. It was a general in the army, Douglas MacArthur. I lived in MacArthur Barracks for a short time. He said, “The history fails to record a single precedent in which nations subject to moral decay have not passed into political and economic decline leading to ultimate national disaster.” He believed only that a spiritual awakening could overcome the danger.

You all know this. History leaves its marks. Dr. Arnn was talking a little bit earlier about history. The crisis of the third century brought the Roman Empire to the edge of collapse due to military overextension, immigration without assimilation, plague, inflation, political disunity, and insurgence. Think about those. But our country’s principles remain intact, for their instigation reaches past this world and indeed comes from another. But for the tree of liberty to have roots,

America must be defended against enemies, both foreign and domestic. I spent the last four years working diligently to try and do that. The question for us tonight is, will it? Will we? We're in our third century now, and it must not signify our descent. The world is depending on it. To prevail, we must inscribe faith in a higher power, allegiance to America's founding documents, and a commitment to American exceptionalism. I'll talk about how we tried to do that.

I want to speak tonight about four issues that we confronted, and they touch deeply on our present moment as well. First, the erosion of our foundational principles. You all are teaching this to the next generation here, how to make sure that that doesn't continue to erode. Second, the left's progressive domination of our central institutions. Third, I want to talk about the threat that is imposed upon us all today from the Chinese Communist Party. It is not disconnected from the first two. Then finally, I want to talk about the things that we can all do, each of us can do, to avert this disaster.

You all know this—families will always be the irreplaceable unit of humankind, period, full stop. The expression of faith anchors families through prayer and love. America's churches, its synagogues, its mosques, and temples provide moral and physical sustenance to families in need and character. That which you are trying to instill in students here at Hillsdale is the essence of the United States of America. The proclamation by men and women of faith, that God's relationship was with the individual and not the collective is at the center of this. It is absolutely essential. I saw this as secretary of state. We have to marshal our authority to reach past our broken media and corrupt elites to return America to its moral core.

It reminds me—my son, who's a little bit older, called me and said he'd seen *The Washington Post* had written a piece and it had said "America's worst secretary of state ever." That had followed on a piece in *The New York Times* just the day before said the same thing. These were not disconnected. They were aiming for me. My son, knowing I'm pretty tough, the first one goes, but the second one he says, "I should call and check in with dad." I always tried to take calls from my son, and he says, "Dad, did you see the Post today?" I said, "I saw it." He said, "Look ..." he goes, "I was doing some research, and there's this fellow named Elihu Washburne." I said, "Yes." He said, "He was the secretary of state for only 11 days. Surely you're better than him." We started a club called "We're Number Two."

Our children, our families are what guide us in traversing all of the challenges we face today. Look at the digital landscape, what our kids are suffering from—it is addictive. Cyber immersion technology induced isolation like we've not seen in the United States before. It was an isolation which the pandemic has amplified. The threat posed by this loneliness, the separation from family, and the constriction of perspectives have to be addressed. I was an engineer by training. Algorithms, computers, social media cannot substitute for faith and family. We have to stay connected to that. Tremendous achievements have been made possible through this technology. It's great, but it can never replace a parent comforting a sick child or a person of faith holding the hand of someone in dire need.

When I was a student living in Massachusetts, I had the opportunity to tutor two young kids who were from a pretty tough neighborhood. I taught them that arithmetic mattered. It mattered not

only in the numbers, but the discipline that it would be required for them to master the subject that was in front of them. But I knew too, it would be a gateway for them. But I knew this—I knew our time together mattered even more. Neither of these children had a father. That time with an adult was scarce for them and, I suspect, it was irreplaceable. We each, all of us here, must proclaim the eternal relevance of strong families.

I spent four years serving as America's secretary of state. I get asked, "What's the biggest challenge facing the United States?" In expectations, I'll say, Vladimir Putin, Chairman Kim, or Xi Jinping. All big challenges. The single biggest risk to the United States of America is in our schools and in our families. Our government should never promote policies that disrupt this ideal. But we have lots of programs today, you all know them, that disparage the value of fathers. This has to end. It has to end for the children, it has to end for the fathers, but it has to end for our country, too. We must never tolerate that which is an affront to the basic system, the basis of all humanity.

When the current secretary of Health and Human Services testified for the Senate, he couldn't bring himself to say the word "mother." Go look at the tape. We're in danger of no longer living in a country, but an asylum. When you hear language like this, faith venerates mothers as the bringers of life. But he couldn't bring himself to say it under oath. I don't know what he called his mom. We know these people. These are the people that generate American history.

Church and state are something that the left has tried to separate. In our administration, we tried never to let that happen. Our nation suffers too much for having taken the concept of separation of church and state to mean that we have to tear the two apart. But, of course, the two statements aren't synonymous.

I'll never forget. I was the CIA Director. I climbed off a plane in a pretty dark place. I climbed down the stairs. It was 3:00 in the morning, and a fellow presses into the palm of my hand a small pocket Bible. I was in a hurry. I hopped into my vehicle and I opened the Bible. He said to me, "Mr. Director, you have been a light in my life." I don't tell that story about me, but because it gets to the central thesis of refusing to separate one's own personal faith and one's commitment to America and our Constitution. They're deeply intertwined. Thomas Jefferson wrote that the almighty God had created the mind free. Then, later, he stated that the establishment clause which forbade the inauguration of a state religion but built a wall of separation between the church of state. But he knew better. It was misunderstood. It was interpreted by our courts, I think, intentionally because the wall's purpose was to protect the expression of religion and its infringements from government. We, in our arrogance, have banished religion from our schools and public spaces, and in doing so, have brought enormous havoc. We've forgotten our Founders' intent and done great harm to the Republic as a result of it. John Adams had it right in his inaugural address. He said simply, "patronize every rational effort to encourage ... every institution for propagating knowledge, virtue, and religion among all classes ... as the only means of preserving our Constitution." Later in that same address, he stated that he considered a respect for Christianity among the best recommendations for public service. To that, I say, "amen." It kept me going during my four years as well.

I must say, I gave a speech. It was in Cairo, Egypt. The opening line of the speech—which my speechwriters tried to take out, not once, not twice, but three times—I simply said that I am an evangelical Christian, standing there in Cairo. I must say that I hear about those remarks more than any other. From leaders of every faith who said, “We appreciated you saying that. It showed candor. It showed discipline. It showed a true commitment to something beyond oneself, and we value that. Although our faith is different, we value that too.”

This gets back to what Thomas Jefferson was talking about when he came to an understanding of faith and America and the importance of keeping it in our public sphere. It was never in the intent, nor could it have been at the time of our nation’s creation, for in that age, humanity and its progress were viewed as inseparable from our Judeo-Christian heritage and our belief in God. Our government must never be permitted to cloak God’s word, yet a powerful assemblage of elites disparages it every day. You saw them close churches and leave bars open.

I first had the chance to think about this idea of separating church and state when I was traveling from Washington while I was still in law school. I recall the moment. I was doing a little bit of a history tour with a friend, and we were outside the Capitol at the eastern pediment of the Supreme Court, just around the corner from the Capitol building. It’s not usually seen because visitors don’t come in that way—it’s at the tail end of Capitol Hill.

The pediment’s freeze depicts history’s lawgivers. Seated centrally, Moses holds the two famous massive tablets, and they’re blank in this particular rendition. I couldn’t figure out exactly why there were no words. I thought about it and then I did some reading. I came to understand that it was because the Ten Commandments differ in their wording and in their order from the Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish faiths. Therefore, if the words of the Commandments had been carved into the stone, or so the craftsmen believed, America’s temple to justice would show a preference for one faith as amongst the others. He knew that wasn’t its place. Desiring that the religious wars of Europe would not find refuge in America, our Founders forbade just that preference and the establishment of a state religion.

But make no mistake about it, the wisdom of the eastern pediment continues. There’s another meaning. The essence of this idea of church and state and its separation here in our nation was to make sure that there was no deification of the state. It is not our God. We have bigger callings. The truth was first enunciated by Jesus Christ: “Render therefore to Caesar things which are Caesar’s and to God, the things that are God’s.” Note that he did not say that certain human activities were outside of God’s authority. No, he proclaimed the divine and the physical spheres of humankind to be together. It means to live within both in our earthly constraints and still obey the Father. Our Founders knew this.

When I came to the state department, our human rights doctrine was a mess. We had diplomats across the world talking about human rights that I was deeply unfamiliar with from my study of our Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and America’s history. I sought to do my best to corral it. We created something we called The Commission on Unalienable Rights. It was chaired by a woman named Mary Ann Glendon, who’d been a former ambassador to the Vatican

and is a teacher at Harvard Law School. I asked her to chair this commission. The idea was to re-ground American foreign policy and our human rights in the American tradition.

I was sued by over 300 organizations within 24 hours of the announcement. Then several hundred more times. I wanted to take us back to the tradition that Hillsdale College teaches its students, and the importance of understanding that as we dealt with our friends and our adversaries around the world. I wanted to speak about these fundamental rights. We know them from our Declaration, the pursuit of life and liberty and happiness that are at America's core.

So much of what we talk about in our rights discourse today is so deeply disconnected and, indeed, undermines those central understandings of our nation. Our Founders comprehended the horrific excesses that issued from the deification of emperors in places like Rome. Our Founders understood that the wrath that the Kings and Queens of Europe unleashed when they believed themselves truly to be divine. Never idolize the state. This is the essence of Marxism. It's what General Secretary Xi Jinping wants you to do here in America.

Our government is not God. We must not allow it to impose itself as an object of worship. Climate change shouldn't be worshiped either. The state's bounty is not created by any miracle, but it's seized only to be given up and offered to constituents to whom it has incurred debt. If state and church are conjoined, so are their dominions. This is not America. It's more like Iran, and now, today, Afghanistan. Statists, you know them, you see them, they're now occupying enormous positions of power. Statists pretend that it is heaven on earth, but such a prize never will be realized. If this affront is to be vanquished, each of us must insist that faith never be banished from the public square or from our schools.

The second point is the left domination of our institutions. You all see it every day. Some of you sent your kids here to this place to help teach them that this doesn't have to be. Our nation's present crises have been inculcated by elites who posture beneficence as they practice rapaciousness—woke billionaires ensconced on their superyachts, lecturers about climate change as they flaunt their own admonitions. Dante wrote, a hypocrite's "outward appearance passes for holiness, but under the show lies the terrible weight of this deceit." Such persons cannot be entrusted. They cannot be trusted, but they define the new ruling class here in America. I'm counting on you all to make sure this does not continue. It can't stand, for our country cannot withstand deceit cloaked, feigned concern for the dispossessed.

Our strengths in some ways have been turned against us. Hollywood and America's corporations were critical elements of our nation's soft power. I didn't benefit from that as Secretary of State. It involves global engagement and the sharing of goals to obtain national objectives. America's soft power once seemed completely invincible, but Hollywood, our media, press, and international businesses are no longer the forces that they were for democratic development and for market creation throughout the world.

This has now changed fundamentally. Hollywood, completely infiltrated by China. This is not the first time that malevolent foreign power has tried to influence our media. We all know the history in the '30s where Nazis endeavored to subject American films to censorship, not only in Germany, but around the world. Their plans were in fact stymied by a counterintelligence

network led by a patriot attorney named Leon Lewis, who was the first national secretary of the Anti-Defamation League. Today, these big Hollywood conglomerates dominate. They control American media publishing and news sources. You all are subjected to it day in and day out. Thus, access to Chinese markets creates substantial pressure for them to kowtow and obey Beijing's dictates. Xinjiang's security bureau and propaganda departments, a place and a leadership holding a million people in bondage today—where genocide is taking place—they were thanked by Disney in the closing credits of their film *Mulan*. Where I ask is this company's concern for Xinjiang's Muslims who are subject to this genocide.

You should know this too—Wall Street, it's caved. There are over 250 Chinese companies listed on our exchanges here in the United States. They're capitalized by more than \$21 trillion. Major U.S. companies are now owned or influenced by entities that front for the Chinese Communist Party. But an even greater threat is upon us, too. The world's largest asset managers are pouring into China today billions of your dollars in investment capital, from pension funds in California to Michigan, to my home state of Kansas. This situation is so fraught with risk that George Soros now recommends that Congress pass legislation empowering the SEC to limit the flow of funds to China. That is the first time I've said a nice thing about him in my 57 years—something about blind squirrels and acorns. President Trump and I, working with Congress, did our best. We designed a financial architecture to defend the scores of millions of Americans who, without their knowledge, have had their savings invested in the Chinese Communist Party in Chinese companies.

Beijing's fundraising. Beijing's fundraising is opaque. Its instruments are passive. They're in big assemblages of mutual funds. Money that will flow to China and not to America. They finance the security apparatus, the security architecture in China, and they're erecting a powerful, powerful capability that threatens each of us. This summer, over 500 billion in Chinese stock value was lost gutting American investors overseas because the CCP cracked down on its technology companies and its other businesses. They did that just for political power. But when our woke corporations vehemently disapprove of Georgia's actions to enforce basic election integrity, but are silent on China's rampage, we have to recognize that businesses, as well as Wall Street firms, have been bought or intimidated. Such famed moral rectitude and certitude at home is a fig leaf for moral cowardice abroad.

We can't allow this to continue to happen. We can fix it. We simply must find the will. Chinese companies that abetted genocide, slave labor, and the construction of concentration camps cannot be underwritten by America's pension fund or American investors. We must not fund these Chinese corporations that advance manufacturing in China so that they can build weapons that will one day threaten your children and your grandchildren. I do not intend to rest until the ruinous underwriting of a totalitarian police state is brought to an abrupt trial. This administration, not so much, but the American people get it. We must remove this financial dagger before it destroys us.

Education or indoctrination in our schools is a decision that each of us will have to make. It's connected to the China challenge. The fight we must engage is sustained by a sound education.

This is what I love about this place. To nullify what someone may become so that even they themselves do not know what God intended them to be is absolutely inhuman.

I can't imagine what my life would've been like had I not had the privilege to attend the United States Military Academy. In my freshman year, I went to a place called Los Amigos High School. We were the Lobos, the friendly wolves. Go figure. I had a professor whose name was Darrell Manderscheid. He taught me geometry and advanced algebra. He challenged me every day. He set the bar ever higher. Because of his support and care, I was able to explore logic and the beauty of mathematics. That foundation that he fostered was broad. I grew to understand that to learn, one must truly listen. To solve complex questions, one has to make sure that they have a rigorous analysis. This is obligatory. These ideas that Professor Manderscheid taught me are with me to this day, and I thank God that he blessed me with this. My wife, Susan, and I pray that our son, Nick, got the same kind of learning in his school. We are proud parents of him because we think it mostly stuck. As I describe in smaller circles, he's a good kid most days.

Knowledge around the world is absolutely exploding, but, paradoxically, our capacity to assimilate and employ that knowledge wisely seems more limited than ever to me. I saw this in my time these last four years, and most especially in my time serving in Congress for six years. It's because we can't intelligibly speak or work faster than we can actually think, but the internet and social media demand that we do. Thoughtless responses are rife. I may have given one or two myself from time to time.

We all recognize that school choice and not socialist policies and privatization must happen to reform our schools. Indeed, it is your 1776 curriculum that should be taught each place and everywhere. I get asked from time to time, "Where should I read to get my knowledge?" I say, "A little more of the Constitution, a little less of the 1619 Project is a darn good start."

We fled Washington, D.C. We got as far as Chantilly, Virginia. That's where we live today. That's in Loudoun County. I don't know if you've all seen it in the news. We know the critical race theory that has been taught in those places that parents are not going to have any of. It's glorious. We know it's neither critical nor a theory. It doesn't teach the critical thinking that's required for an unbiased explication of the complex issues that face us. The 1619 Project talks about America as systemically racist and a racist founding. We know that's not true. This creed has been condemned by scholars at Hillsdale and throughout the country, yet you can't imagine how many places that it's still central to what it is we're teaching the next generation.

A theory is an explanation for phenomena that are widely accepted by a reputable scholarly community. Critical race theory was put forward as a political instrument, defined by its propagandistic intent. The prism of race through which the woke demand we see the world is a prism of limitations. It restricts us and we can never accept it. We know this. We know that The New York Times stood behind the 1619 Project because, for them, race is everything. Who believes this? We have too much common sense. We've made too much progress as a nation to return to a time when people were judged by the color of their skin.

Critical race theory throws us back to that day. It's their sole intent. It wants to deface Martin Luther King's central and most monumental contributions to America. Fine—teach American

slavery, teach the history of our Constitution. But this is a noble nation founded on a central understanding that no nation has ever equaled. There is no place in any primary or secondary school, in any college or university for students to be taught that race, color, religion, or economic status determine what they can potentially be or what they can achieve.

We should never deny the terrible chapters in our nation's history, our mistreatment of indigenous nations and peoples, the internment of citizens of Japanese descent by President Roosevelt and his administration's turning away a ship whose Jewish passengers simply fled the Third Reich. But America's greatness, its uniqueness, is our ability to reflect upon that and learn and grow and advance against the steadfast principles that our Founders bequeathed to us. We'll never allow our country to again segregate or deny freedom to any of its citizens. Any curriculum that categorizes school children by the color of their skin, as CRT does, on the basis of their ancestry or religion is an obscenity. Obscenities don't belong in your children's classrooms, and America is not going to tolerate them. We must fight.

China. I've alluded to it already. The United States and the People's Republic of China are fundamentally different because we honor the individual and they venerate the collective, period, full stop. We now have a big decision to make. There is a hivemind in which individualism is an illusion. This must never happen here in the United States. China's past deficit in power suppressed its ambitions, but this constraint has collapsed. The old notion of "hide your time and bide your strength" is gone from China today. Its attainment of wealth has propelled its quest to displace the United States as the world's leading power. The spread of the Wuhan virus, which China facilitated by spurring international flights from that city while limiting internal travel murdered millions of people. Our country's losses are one and a half times the number of Americans killed in World War II. China's deployment of stealth aircraft today, the construction of its first supercarrier, and the expansion of its nuclear arsenal are threats to our homeland. Today, genocidal acts against Muslim minorities are new imperialism. The Belt and Road Initiative, China's effort to commandeer the rest of the world, is in full push and match Xi Jinping's intentions and ambitions to settle loan agreements with developing countries that seek to use national assets as collateral. I told leaders all around the world during my entire four years, they are prepared to call the loan.

China's theft of our intellectual property destroyed millions of jobs here in the United States. Cumulative losses exceed \$2 trillion. That's just the last decade. This sum, if divided, could have made one in every 40 American families instant millionaires. It's staggering. China's business software, if you look at a laptop in China is nearly all pirated from American businesses. The result is that software expenditures in China are a fraction compared to that here in the United States, from American companies. Conveying an enormous unearned competitive advantage to the Chinese firms. This must cease. But for 50 years, Republicans and Democrats alike in Washington just turned away. For, after all, this was China. The Trump administration was the first to confront what will be the great challenge of the next 245 years for the United States of America.

I have only partial answers to this, but we know that part of the answer lies in sanctions and countervailing cyber efforts. But such measures are inadequate. If American jobs and wealth are

to be preserved, we're going to have to take serious action. We know how to do this in the United States.

Here's the closing question. Xi Jinping has said many times to his Polit bureau that America is in decline. I don't believe it for a second. Indeed, I believe that decline is a choice. But will America muster the will to avert this disaster? History teaches "yes," but great men had expectations for every American.

The catastrophe that is Afghanistan is one of the greatest self-inflicted wounds that we've seen at least in recent American history. It was caused by an administration who had a different understanding of American exceptionalism whose words were simply not backed by deeds or by prudent policies derived from an understanding of America. A theocratic monstrosity has now declared itself victorious despite the irreplaceable loss of thousands of American lives, some of whom were my friends, and they killed citizens of our friends and allies, as well.

American military power is the guarantor of our promises. As America's most senior diplomat, I counted on the capacity for American force to back up the things that were in America's interest, and the military counted on me to make sure that we seldom had to deploy it. It remains a force. It remains a force without equal, but it must be properly understood. This strength can be destroyed by politicized military leaders who shun accountability and care more about appearances than the mission that the Constitution lays forth for them. Where are the generals and admirals who will tender their resignations before complying with politically motivated orders which have put our nation at real risk? In 1949, an admirals revolt protested actions that could have crippled the United States Navy. Fleet Admirals Ernest King, Chester Nimitz, and Haley all left active service. Consequential rank testified before Congress against the Truman administration's plans. The Korean War had proved them right. The Pentagon must not be composed of pinstripe diplomats. We have enough of those. It must not be construed of the woke. We have enough of those too. We need generals who understand their mission.

I was criticized often, but I was criticized, too, for getting rid of some of these types at the state department. My sadness was only that I could not have done more. Recouping from a failed strategy of nation-building, the Trump administration was determined to reduce America's commitment in Afghanistan. You only need to read President Trump's Twitter account to know that. But we had the handle on this. We were prepared to do so in a way that reflected the greatness of America. It would've kept our people safe and we would've done so in an orderly and structured manner. For reasons that seemed to hinge on appearances, President Biden picked September 11th as a date certain for American departure rather than understanding the realities and all the planning that me and my team had overseen. They cast it aside.

As Secretary of State, I worked to build upon the work I'd done as CIA director to aid President Trump in thinking concretely about how we would execute on his commitment to the American people, that we would get our young men and women home from that place and execute a withdrawal from Afghanistan while preserving the hard-won progress that we had achieved there. What we'd established was the certainty of action if the Taliban didn't do what we told them they must do. How many of you have seen the picture of me standing there with Mullah

Baradar? Yes. The New York Times likes to make it famous. Mullah Baradar understood Donald Trump and Mike Pompeo. He knew that if they violated the understandings that they had reached with us, that we would deploy overwhelming force to inflict unbearable costs upon them, real losses, leaving the extremists in a terrible situation. I made them know in the meetings with them and by phone, as did President Trump, that if they failed to live up to the promises they made, that just like General Qasem Soleimani, the Iranian leader who killed so many Americans, they too would never kill another American. We understood how to use American power in a way that reduced the frequency with which we would have to do so. The demise of the Quds Force leader, the strike that we took, resounded to the Taliban's consciousness. This administration threw it all away.

I'd created a group—we'd seen what happened—I was a young Congressman, I served on the Benghazi committee. I had seen what happened when the State Department abandons its diplomats abroad and I had worked diligently for my entire time to build what we call the Contingency Crisis and Response Bureau. It was designed to help in crises where there were American diplomats in harm's way. In June of 2021, this administration disbanded that very organization. What the Biden administration never recognized is that our multiple agreements concerning America's conditional departure from Afghanistan were made possible by our administration's vow to use that overwhelming force. Our attainment of energy independence, and our decisive action in destroying the ISIS caliphate, illustrated to all in the world our resolve. When we moved our embassy to Jerusalem, President Trump made clear that we would continue to honor the commitments that he had made, and the Taliban knew this. By removing the ISIS terrorist threat and by changing the status of Jerusalem, we eliminated obstacles to progress. The Abraham Accords—a truly historic set of understandings made possible by great leaders like Prime Minister Netanyahu and the crown prince in the Emirates—they were made possible because of American leadership. Our tenacity caused four Muslim countries to have confidence that they could make peace with the Jewish state.

If we'd have had a second term, there'd be more. I can't prove it, but I know it in my heart. Together, we would have erected prodigious barriers to terrorism. These triumphs, these things about which I played a small part and for which I am intensely proud, were disregarded by this administration because acknowledging our breakthroughs was deemed by the Biden administration as a far greater sin than the abandonment of our allies or our principles. Afghanistan today has lost its progress, nullified, its women dehumanized. It is incomprehensible that we departed from Bagram Air Base while the Taliban attacked. This fortified airfield would've been the only possibility to get every American out. It was protected. It was an avenue for egress and evacuation so that we would not leave any Americans behind. Then we surrendered billions of dollars in equipment. They valued above and beyond by the terrorists and by the Chinese and the Russian engineers who at this very moment are likely duplicating our peerless technologies.

This Taliban effort may think they have won a miraculous victory, but I'm confident that America remains strong. If America is to be harmed, it will only be through our own folly. One day, one day, we will restore and reclaim American greatness. I pray that it is soon. We have to make sure that our enemies understand that we will strike you without pity if you murder

innocents or threaten American interest. We'll strike you. We will know that this is through American honor, just as our Founders had articulated. I and you came out on this night. You all say no to decline. America's path, our future is in our own hands. We must not choose defeat, neglect, or shame.

I went to Cairo to give that speech with a singular purpose. It was a little bit personal to me. President Obama had stood in that place and conducted what has become known as an apology tour. I wanted to go stand in the exact same place. He spoke at Al-Azhar University, and so I was set and determined to go there. About two weeks out, my team came in, including my security team and said, "Sir, you're not going to be able to speak at Al-Azhar University." I said, "Why?" He said, "We're not sure that we can protect you adequately." I said, "The president of the United States spoke from there." They said, "Yes, they liked him."

I grew up in California and spent a lot of my summers in America's heartland in Kansas. Dr. Arnn was talking about all my cousins in Kansas. Everybody thought that'd be a big political advantage, but I know those cousins. If I got half of their votes, I am lucky. I have been at the Thanksgiving dinner table with them. Neither of my parents had the chance to graduate from college. My mother was a clerk. She was employed by the Boeing company in Wichita, Kansas, as part of the war effort in the late 1940s. My father grew up in New Mexico. He was a salesman. He served a short stint in the United States Navy in the Korean War. But they taught me something in the same way I'm confident you taught your kids something. They taught me to respect the importance of hard work. So did rising before dawn to help my uncle Jim on our farm in Winfield, Kansas. I remember being there at 10 years old, I thought I was working. I am confident I was more trouble than I was worth. But by the time I was 14, I was driving trucks and doing my best to lift a bale of hay. I knew what it meant to work hard. I cherish, too, my after-school job in Costa Mesa, California. It paid for my first car, a really old Fiat X1/9. I was a killer good scooper at Baskin-Robbins.

Our purported masters in Washington will soon have added \$10 trillion to the national debt. Think about that. A trillion dollars is a ridiculous amount of money, stacks and stacks. In each and every stack, a million. \$10 trillion is more than \$30,000 for each and every one of you. For a family of four, that's \$120 thousand in new debt that may happen yet this week. Would anyone here trust Speaker Pelosi to mortgage your family's future? I didn't hear a yes. No need for a second on the motion.

We are going to get this right. I'm deeply committed to it. There is an awakening taking place. There's a reclamation. Thanks to the geniuses running our government today, we're seeing significant inflation, too, without wealth creation or substantial growth. This'll hurt everybody in the middle class. By putting government in charge, these leaders have performed their miracle of making this stupendous vanish. We can do much better and I'm confident that we will. But we have to choose this, and I believe that we will. The Taliban think they've got their moment. I know differently, and you know differently. Free will and its exercise are deeply embedded in our Constitution. My time and service these four years in administration that was prepared to defend the important things, the hard things, the things that matter to hardworking men and women all across America, was cut abruptly short.

As I have traveled these last now eight months, I've been to a couple of dozen states and I listen. I'm very confident the choice that the American people are going to make. Don't let Xi Jinping fool you. We are not in decline. Our Declaration of Independence has made a resilient people and our Constitution has provided a framework by which those resilient people will continue to rise.

I spent four years reading the intelligence reports as CIA director and then working on some of the toughest problems that the world faces. There were pretty dark days and pretty dark moments, and so I tend, when I'm in front of groups, to speak about these dark times, these difficult challenges. They're real. We must confront them. But I'm long on America. I believe deeply that we will reclaim our sovereignty and our borders, that we will reclaim these central institutions. That we will push back against the Chinese Communist Party and that this nation will not choose to allow the next 245 years to deny the very opportunities that permitted each of us to be here tonight, to be what our children and grandchildren are living in.

Thank you for supporting this important institution. Thank you all for coming out tonight. I am happy to answer just about any question.