

Donald Wilson Bush - President of The Woodrow Wilson Legacy Foundation Concluding speech at the Global Forum "Against the Crime of Genocide" in Yerevan, April 22-24, 2015

Good Afternoon Your Excellency- President Sargsyan, Government leaders, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Donald Wilson Bush and I have the unique distinction of being related to at least three US Presidents representing two, seemingly irreconcilable, ideological approaches to executing American foreign policy, namely: political IDEALISM and political REALISM.

After hearing today's presentations, I am convinced now, more than ever that only one of these ideological traditions, namely: IDEALISM, is capable of inspiring the kind of effective leadership necessary to mobilize the international will to intervene in the case of genocide and to hold its perpetrators accountable. But, if we can ever hope to eliminate the consequences of genocide and it causes, we must not go to the other extreme and throw away realism in the process.

The only answer is to educate and train up a new generation of political leaders capable of striking a crucial balance between these two approaches.

As Henry David Thoreau said, "if you have built your dream up in the sky, you are not lost. Now take your time to build the stairs up to meet it."

While in purely philosophical terms these two words IDEALISM and REALISM are quite flexible and can be molded to fit nearly any conversation free of consequence, it is widely held in some elite political, economic and military circles that idealism, and any appeal to the way things “ought to be,” is a dangerous way to approach foreign affairs because idealism clouds the minds of leaders to the probability of political outcomes that don’t fit the circumstances facing them. Idealism can also render political leaders ineffective in diplomatic negotiations, they say, because it makes them appear inflexible and arrogant like Woodrow Wilson was portrayed to have appeared at the Paris Peace Conference after WWI.

As a consequence of this caricature, many formidable scholars and respected professionals fault Wilson for his idealism. Furthermore, they cite his failed efforts to repatriate the Armenian people back to their ancestral homeland after the Genocide, and his failure to fully restore their cultural and economic viability, as evidence of this shortcoming.

Realism, by contrast, is seen by many among the political, governmental and policy elite to be a much more straightforward and pragmatic approach to dealing with critical issues of foreign affairs because leaders of this persuasion are able to see things “as they really are” as opposed to the way they “wish them to be.” Their only challenge is to choose the right response to circumstances, unfettered by any idealistic restraints.

An equal number of scholars and professionals, perhaps on the other side of the debate, fault Neo-conservatives since the end of the Cold War for retooling President Eisenhower's military industrial complex into a perpetual military industrial war machine.

Whereas, it is clearly beyond the scope of this short speech to fully develop an adequate presentation of these two traditions, it is my pleasure, nevertheless, to be here with you today in this historic venue to briefly discuss the importance of educating and raising up a new generation of young world leaders from every nation - especially from the United States and Russia - who can achieve a necessary equilibrium between the idealism and realism as they begin to weigh the implications of both these approaches to executing foreign policy specifically as it pertains to their own sense of free moral agency and personality development as leaders.

The title of my address to you this morning is: Reviving Wilsonian Idealism in a Realistic World: Fair Compensation for Victims of Genocide in the Western Civic Tradition.

Although this is a lengthy title, I have deliberately chosen it to reintroduce political idealism in the Wilsonian tradition as a necessary counterbalance to the “runaway realism” that has come to define American foreign policy ever since Henry Kissinger threw that balance away during the Cold War. This is also my starting point for discussing the unique role that I believe the young and independent Republic of Armenia has suddenly found itself playing on the world’s stage relative to the unsettled claims she still holds against the Turkish state for ignoring the causes and consequences of the Armenian Genocide planned and executed by their predecessors.

Ignored for the last 100 years and overlooked mainly because of its relatively limited economic options for effecting growth in the region, The Republic of Armenia has nevertheless emerged as a global symbol of persistence and existential will on the part of a transnationally defined

people group, numbering more than 10 million souls scattered across six continents, who have suddenly awakened the conscience of the world.

In no small way, Woodrow Wilson's life, legacy and idealism influenced this outcome in their present state of affairs.

But, I am here to say that it could have gone better for Armenia— and the world —had Woodrow Wilson actually achieved that crucial balance between these two approaches to American foreign policy.

As we all know, President Wilson began advocating for their survival in 1915, predicating his decision to support their cause on idealistic higher principles of justice and good will. But as history clearly shows, the realists in congress beat him soundly, and his magnanimous effort to satisfy the Armenian claims against the Modern Turkish state lost out to economic interests and geopolitical positioning of larger nation states that eventually led to the cold war and Armenia's downsizing and regional marginalization.

To this day, the small Republic of Armenia still finds herself landlocked and dependent upon negotiated settlements with surrounding nation states for her very survival, yet she persists in the faith that justice will eventually be served.

Today I want to commend President Sargsyan for honoring the rich heritage of his people's past while simultaneously providing the energy and focus necessary for leading them into a future that keeps this faith alive.

I also want to commend President Sargsyan for maintaining the crucial balance between idealism and realism that is required to implement best practices in education in Armenia that can raise up a new generation of leaders who will keep this faith alive.

This faith in a just future for all minor nations with major grievances against those who would try to dominate them, I contend, is grounded in an IDEALISM that sustains the Western Civic Tradition.

This faith, I contend, is grounded in an IDEALISM that binds a democratic people to its Constitution.

This faith, I contend, is grounded in an IDEALISM that sustains the self-restraint of every citizen in a democracy with the promise that an appropriate court exists somewhere with the adequate and legitimate jurisdiction to settle every claim against injustice to the satisfaction of aggrieved parties. Yet, when perpetrators of a crime are never summoned before a neutral court to show cause for their actions, victims to the crime are robbed of their rights to satisfaction under the law offered in the spirit of this ideal assumption; and the faith that justice will eventually be served is broken.

Specifically addressing the crime of genocide, satisfaction under the law can only be realized by the victims when perpetrators of the act are confronted with the evidence of their crime in a recognized court of law. Following this, judgment of their guilt must be rendered in each case, and restitution then must be made on an itemized basis to each victim. The size of the restitution may be large or it may be small, but without receiving

restitution in the predictable course of due process, justice cannot be served. Accordingly, victims to a crime need not to declare themselves satisfied when, in fact, they are not.

The question is: how do we finish the task of forging a real path to legal redress on behalf the million and a half Armenian victims to the Genocide and their heirs with outstanding claims against the Turkish state for a list crimes including, unlawful detainer, aggravated assault, theft, rape, murder, starvation, deportation and, yes, GENOCIDE.

Modern history is a record of the world's community of nations slowly orienting themselves and their relevant judicial systems towards achieving the ideal goal of adjudicating every crime. How does the old saying go? "No crime should ever go unpunished?"

At this time, however, in the real world of foreign affairs, questions of jurisdiction and prosecutorial authority are still being raised in relation to the transnational institutions that have already been created to hear the Armenian case and bear witness to their loss. Sadly, the Republic of Turkey and the United States of America are two nations among others still resisting any obligation to achieve this ideal. But this was not always the case.

Last week, my U.S. Congressman, The Honorable Adam Schiff, attended an event in the St. Leon Armenian Cathedral in Burbank, California. Congressman Schiff had this to say about the present position of the United States in advocating for the Armenian Cause:

(and I quote): "Although it was once a witness to this crime of Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks against 1.5 million Armenians, our

country [the United States of America] is today a bystander. I am working to move our government from being a bystander back to being a witness again." (end quote)

When referring to the United States as a witness to the crime of Armenian Genocide, he is, of course, referring to the time period during and immediately following WW1 when Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the United States, for all of his faults, advocated for the lives of the surviving Armenians.

Although he failed to mobilize the international will to intervene in the case of the Armenian Genocide and to hold its perpetrators accountable, Woodrow Wilson did not fail to inspire a new generation of leaders to carry on with this noble and ideal cause.

In the end, this is a clear testimony to the power of IDEALISM in foreign affairs.

After 100 years of a swinging imbalance in favor of political realism that leaves us still wanting that clear path to legal redress on behalf of Armenians as the aggrieved party, I am prepared to spend my time, efforts and resources to train a new generation of leaders who can finally achieve it.

In no uncertain terms, and in no small measure, the rich history of the Armenian people as the cradle of human civilization compels us to hold this course until the ideal manifestation of an unbiased, comprehensive and universal justice is achieved on behalf of the 1.5 million lives that we will commemorate on Friday, April 24th.

However, beginning with breakfast and coffee on the morning of April 25th, I am recommitting my energies and the rest of my life to championing the Armenian cause on behalf of all humanity, and I invite you to do the same. This centennial commemoration is the end of nothing — rather it marks the new beginning of a renewed effort to remind ourselves, and the world, that Armenia matters because HUMANITY matters. Armenia matters because JUSTICE matters.

Please stand with me, as I endeavor to stand with the Armenian people as Woodrow Wilson did in a committed effort to leave our children and grandchildren with a more peaceful world.

Your commitment is not only desired, it is necessary to achieve this goal.

In words of Johan Wolfgang Goethe,

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. However, concerning all matters of initiative and creativity, there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: [and that idea is this]- that the moment one commits himself or herself to act, then Providence follows too, and all manner of incidents and meetings and financial assistance comes your way to help that might never have occurred. So, whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it now. Because boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.”

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