

## Presidential Lecture

With

**Madeleine K. Albright**

**February 5, 2020**

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright commented on many aspects of preparing for and conducting foreign policy in conversation with UNF President David Szymanski.

Dr. Albright drew upon her rich personal history and high-level experience to shape her views. She left Czechoslovakia as a girl with her family in 1948 on the brink of the Nazi invasion. She witnessed the *fascism* of the Axis Powers first-hand.

- She quoted Italian dictator Mussolini as saying that akin to plucking a bird's feathers one by one, you can undermine democracy without anyone noticing.
- She said that she is currently worried about the path being followed by Turkey, Hungary, the Philippines, and Venezuela, remarking that like Hitler, these countries' leaders were constitutionally elected.

Dr. Albright and President Szymanski then went on a *tour d'horizon* of many of today's top foreign policy challenges.

- Regarding **Russia** today, Albright said that it is being driven by a mix of embarrassment, pining for lost influence, and jealousy of the U.S.; and that Putin is trying to restore national pride. She said that Putin has played a weak hand brilliantly – he is smart, but mean.
- She characterized **North Korea** as dangerous, referring in particular to its nuclear weapons programs. She said that American officials have tried many times to talk to members of the Kim family, but are at a disadvantage in that we have not officially recognized the Pyongyang regime.
  - Diplomacy is not a gift, it is a way to talk – a point she made more than once.
- On **China**, Albright said that problems of spying and theft of intellectual property were terrible. But as totally interconnected as we are, we must have a functioning relationship.
- On the **Israeli –Palestinian** conflict, Albright thought that they were close to a solution during the Clinton Administration, but that Palestinian leader Arafat did not have moderate Arab support. Today the Israel-Palestine problem has become dwarfed by the rest of the Middle East, which is in complete disarray.

Since leaving government service Albright has remained incredibly busy – authoring bestselling books, teaching, consulting, Chairing the National Democratic Institute, and running forums for the Aspen Institute.

- One such forum is made up of former Foreign Ministers of major West European countries. This group is known informally as *Madeleine and her Exes*.

As an educator, Dr. Albright had a good deal of pointed advice for today's young people.

- She in particular had advice for *fearless women*. She said that if you are in a group and have a comment, don't raise your hand expecting a male to call on you – *you need to interrupt*.
- In general, she told young people that they need to be prepared to *strive*. Thinking about her parents, she said that even difficulties can shape your character and ultimate success.

**Paul F. Herman, Jr.**