

Ford vows no politicking over defense, foreign policy

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INDEPENDENCE, Mo. — President Ford pledged yesterday to keep issues of national security and international relations freed from election-year politics.

Ford endorsed a bipartisan foreign policy in the tradition of Harry S. Truman in remarks at a ceremony honoring the 33rd president at Independence Square.

"Nobody expects consensus or conformity in a democracy, but it is not too much to expect of a mature, 200-year-old nation that its free political debates be conducted responsibly and rationally in the sensitive areas of national security and our relations with other countries," the President said.

Ford flew here from Lincoln, Neb., where he received an honorary degree from the University of Nebraska. He told a commencement-day audience of 15,000 that there is a new spirit of optimism abroad in America after four years that have been "among the most traumatic and trying" in the nation's history.

"Many times in the 1960s and

the early 1970s, as the skies grew dark and cloudy, there was a temptation to give up, to yield to the voice of defeat or the voices of hysteria," Ford said.

"But the American people never did. They never gave up."

Ford said the nation persevered over the past four years while the Vietnam war wound to "a tragic conclusion," the economy was hit by inflation and recession, "and scandal in high office has cast a shadow over the presidency itself."

"Today," he said, "the economy is mending rapidly" at home, and the United States has strengthened its alliances with its friends in Europe and Asia and is forging "new, more creative relationships" with the developing nations.

"Because we are strong, because we are prepared, because our will is undiminished and our purpose is clear, America has gained new respect," he said. "The free world once more looks to us for leadership and inspiration."

Ford's appearance here ended a two-day trip to the Midwest. He hoped his visit to Nebraska would

persuade the state's Republicans to stop Ronald Reagan's primary winning streak at four next Tuesday.

The President said Reagan would be "a babe in the woods" in dealing with Congress if the former California governor were elected president.

He told the editorial board of the Omaha World-Herald how the Senate failed to override his veto of a child-care bill last week.

Ford said his personal knowledge of congressmen and senators, and "their faith and trust in me," enabled him to win a three-vote victory.

"Reagan just couldn't do that," the newspaper quoted him as saying. "He's just a babe in the woods."

Ford said he would not select Reagan as a vice-presidential candidate, because Reagan has said he wouldn't want the post.

"Nelson Rockefeller has taken himself out" and "the field is pretty wide open after that," Ford told the editors.