

The White House

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President's Radio Address

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. I'm speaking to you from Beijing, where I've come to support American athletes participating in the Olympic Games. This is a moment of pride for our Olympians and the great Nation they represent, and Laura and I are honored to share it with them.

In addition to attending the Olympics, my schedule includes meeting with China's President, dedicating a new U.S. embassy in Beijing, and worshipping at a local church. During my time here, I'm expressing America's deep concerns about freedom and human rights in China. This trip has reaffirmed my belief that men and women who aspire to speak their conscience and worship their God are no threat to the future of China. They are the people who will make China a great nation in the 21st century.

One of the most striking parts of this trip is seeing how much China has changed. I first visited the country more than three decades ago, when my dad was America's representative in Beijing. Poverty was rampant, and the streets swarmed with bicycles. Today, China is sprinting into the modern era. Beijing is covered in skyscrapers and filled with cars. And the people of China have more connections to the world than ever before.

These changes present the Chinese people, the American people, and the world with tremendous opportunities. So over the past eight years, America has sought to put our relationship with China on a more solid and principled footing. We've advanced both our nations' interests by expanding free and fair trade and encouraging the rise of a Chinese middle class -- which can be an enormous market for American exports. We have also cooperated on other shared challenges, from fighting pandemic disease to opposing North Korea's nuclear weapons programs.

At the same time, America has spoken candidly and consistently about our concerns over the Chinese government's behavior. We have made it clear that trusting their people with greater freedom is necessary for China to reach its full potential. We've emphasized that being a global economic leader carries with it the duty to act responsibly on matters from energy to the environment to development in Africa.

Only China can decide what course it will follow, but I'm optimistic about the prospects. Young people who grow up with freedom in one area of their lives will ultimately demand freedom in other areas. The China of the future will reflect its own culture and traditions, but it will also reflect the universal aspirations of mankind -- and there's no deeper human desire than liberty.

America's relationship with China is one element of our broader strategy for the region. When I took office, I brought a clear conviction that America is a Pacific Nation, and our engagement with Asia should be stronger than ever before. We've acted on that conviction by pursuing four broad objectives: We bolstered all five of our treaty alliances in the Asia Pacific region -- Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and two countries I visited this week, South Korea and Thailand.

We have strengthened our relationships with other free societies in Asia -- including India, the world's largest democracy, and Indonesia, a democratic nation that is home to more Muslims than any other nation on Earth. We have seized opportunities for prosperity by negotiating new free trade agreements, including an historic agreement with South Korea -- an agreement which our United States Congress must pass. And we helped bring together nations throughout the Asia Pacific to fight terrorism, seek an end to tyranny in Burma, respond to natural disasters, and address other challenges to our people and our prosperity.

My trips to Asia as President have brought many uplifting moments. One of the most moving came this week in Seoul, when I spoke to American troops at the Yongsan Garrison. These men and women are carrying the burdens of military life far from home. Yet in their faces you can see a quiet pride that comes from having an important job, and doing it right. These brave Americans are preserving peace, and they're sending a broader message about our approach toward Asia. Now, and always, the United States will keep our word to our friends. We will stand confidently for liberty. And we will advance our Nation's interests and ideals by staying engaged in this pivotal part of the world.

Thank you for listening.