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President Discusses Freedom and Democracy in Kyoto, Japan

Kyoto Kaikan
Kyoto, Japan

[President's Visit to Asia](#)

3:18 P.M. (Local)



VIDEO Multimedia

President's Remarks

[view](#)

THE PRESIDENT: Konichiwa. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for your kind introduction, and thank you for this invitation. Laura and I are pleased to be back in Japan, and we appreciate the warm welcome that we received here in Kyoto. We were so honored to stay at the Kyoto State Guest House. It's a fantastic facility. I know the folks of this community have great pride in the guest house, and you should. Kyoto served as the capital of Japan for more than a thousand years -- and it is still the cultural heart of this great nation. It's a proud city where ancient teahouses and temples keep this country's traditions alive -- and scientists from its universities win Nobel Prizes. Kyoto is a symbol of Japan's transformation into a nation that values its freedom and respects its traditions.



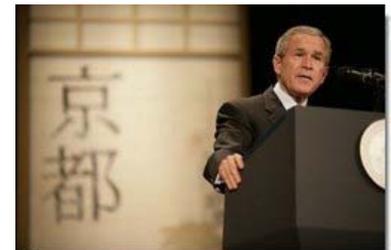
I have experienced this transformation of your country in a highly personal way. During World War II, my father and a Japanese official named Junya Koizumi were on opposite sides of a terrible war. Today, their sons serve as elected leaders of their respected nations. Prime Minister Koizumi is one of my best friends in the international community. We have met many times during my presidency. I know the Prime Minister well. I trust his judgment. I admire his leadership. And America is proud to have him as an ally in the cause of peace and freedom.

The relationship between our countries is much bigger than the friendship between a President and a prime minister. It is an equal partnership based on common values, common interests, and a common commitment to freedom. Freedom has made our two democracies close allies. Freedom is the basis of our growing ties to other nations in the region. And in the 21st century, freedom is the destiny of every man, woman, and child from New Zealand to the Korean Peninsula.

Freedom is the bedrock of our friendship with Japan. At the beginning of World War II, this side of the Pacific had only two democracies: Australia and New Zealand. And at the end of World War II, some did not believe that democracy would work in your country. Fortunately, American leaders like President Harry Truman did not listen to the skeptics -- and the Japanese people proved the skeptics wrong by embracing elections and democracy.

As you embraced democracy, you adapted it to your own needs and your own circumstances. So Japanese democracy is different from American democracy. You have a prime minister -- not a president. Your constitution allows for a monarchy that is a source of national pride. Japan is a good example of how a free society can reflect a country's unique culture and history -- while guaranteeing the universal freedoms that are the foundation of all genuine democracies.

By founding the new Japan on these universal principles of freedom, you have changed the face of Asia. With every step toward freedom, your economy flourished and became a model for others. With every step toward freedom, you showed that democracy helps governments become more accountable to their citizens. And with every step toward freedom, you became a force for peace and stability in this region, a valued member of the world community, and a trusted ally of the United States.



A free Japan has transformed the lives of its citizens. The spread of freedom in Asia started in Japan more than a half century ago -- and today the Japanese people are among the freest in the world. You have a proud democracy. You enjoy a standard of living that is one of the highest in the world. By embracing political and economic liberty, you have improved the lives of all your citizens -- and you have shown others that freedom is the surest path to prosperity and stability.

A free Japan has helped transform the lives of others in the region. The investment you have provided your neighbors helped jump-start many of Asia's economies. The aid that you send helps build critical infrastructure -- and delivers relief to victims of earthquakes, and typhoons, and tsunamis. And the alliance that you have made with the United States is the pillar of stability and security for a region -- and a source of confidence in Asia's future.

A free Japan is helping to transform the world. Japan and the United States send more aid overseas than any other two countries in the world. Today in

Afghanistan, Japanese aid is building a highway that President Karzai says is essential for the economic recovery of this newly democratic nation. In Iraq, Japan has pledged nearly \$5 billion for reconstruction -- and you have sent your self defense forces to serve the cause of freedom in Iraq's al-Muthanna province. At the start of this young century, Japan is using its freedom to advance the cause of peace and prosperity around the world -- and the world is a better place because of Japanese leadership.

Japan has also shown that once people get a taste for freedom, they want more -- because the desire for freedom is written in the hearts of every man and woman on this earth. With each new generation that grows up in freedom, the expectations of citizens rise -- and the demand for accountability grows. Here in Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi has shown leadership by pushing crucial reforms to open your economy and make Japan's institutions more responsive to the needs of its people. The Prime Minister knows that nations grow in wealth and stature when they trust in the wisdom and talents of their people -- and that lesson is now spreading across this great region.

Freedom is the bedrock of America's friendship with Japan -- and it is the bedrock of our engagement with Asia. As a Pacific nation, America is drawn by trade and values and history to be a part of the future of this region. The extraordinary economic growth in the Pacific Rim has opened new possibilities for progress; it has raised new challenges that affect us all. These challenges include working for free and fair trade, protecting our people from new threats like pandemic flu, and ensuring that emerging economies have the supplies of energy they need to continue to grow. We have also learned that as freedom spreads throughout Asia and the world, it has deadly enemies -- terrorists who despise freedom's progress and who want to stop it by killing innocent men, women, and children -- and intimidating their governments. I have come to Asia to discuss these common challenges -- at the bilateral level during visits with leaders like Prime Minister Koizumi, and at the regional level through the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit. These issues are all vital -- and by addressing them now, we will build a freer and better future for all our citizens.

Our best opportunity to spread the freedom that comes from economic prosperity is through free and fair trade. The Doha Round of negotiations in the World Trade Organization gives us a chance to open up markets for goods, and services, and farm products all across the globe. Under Doha, every nation will gain -- and the developing world stands to gain the most. The World Bank projects that the elimination of trade barriers could lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. And the greatest obstacle to a successful Doha Round is the reluctance in many parts of the developed world to dismantle the tariffs, and barriers, and trade-distorting subsidies that isolate the world's poor from the great opportunities of this century.

My administration has offered a bold proposal for Doha that would substantially reduce agricultural tariffs and trade-distorting subsidies in a first stage, and over a period of fifteen years, eliminate them altogether. Pacific Rim leaders who are concerned about the harmful effects of high tariffs and farm subsidies need to come together to move the Doha Round forward on agriculture -- as well as on services and manufactured goods. And this year's Summit in Korea gives APEC a chance to take a leadership role before next month's WTO meeting in Hong Kong.

APEC is the premier forum in the Asia-Pacific region for addressing economic growth, cooperation, trade, and investment. Its 21 member economies account for nearly half of all world trade. By using its influence to push for an ambitious result in the Doha Round, APEC can help create a world trading system that is freer and fairer -- and helps spread prosperity and opportunity throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

As we come together to advance prosperity, we must also come together to ensure the health and safety of our citizens. As economies open up, they create new opportunities -- but this openness also exposes us to new risks. In an age of international travel and commerce, new diseases can spread quickly. We saw the need for international cooperation and transparency three years ago, when a previously unknown virus called SARS appeared in rural China. When an infected doctor carried the virus out of China, it spread to Vietnam and to Singapore and to Canada within a month. Before long, the SARS virus had spread to nearly every continent -- and killed hundreds of people. By one estimate, the SARS outbreak cost the Asian-Pacific region about \$40 billion. The lesson of this experience is clear: We all have a common interest in working together to stop outbreaks of deadly new viruses -- so we can save the lives of people on both sides of the Pacific.

We now face a new and potentially more deadly threat from avian flu, which has infected bird populations across Asia and elsewhere. I am glad to see that governments around the region are already taking steps to prevent avian flu from becoming a pandemic. The World Health Organization is coordinating the global response to this threat -- and the way forward is through greater openness, greater transparency, and greater cooperation. At the forthcoming summit, I look forward to discussing ways to help this region prepare for, and respond to, the threat of a pandemic. Every nation in the world has an interest in helping to detect and contain any outbreak before it can spread. At home, my country is taking important steps so that we are prepared in the event of an outbreak. And as the nations of Asia work to prevent a pandemic and protect their people from the scourge of avian flu, America will stand by their side.

As we address these challenges to public health, we must also confront the challenge of energy security in a tight global market where demand is growing. Asian nations understand that the best way to create opportunity and alleviate poverty is through economic growth. As their economies grow, they are using more energy. Over the last three years, the United States has launched a series of initiatives that will help these countries meet their energy needs -- while easing demand on global markets, reducing pollution, and addressing the long-term challenge of climate change. These initiatives range from cleaner use of coal, to ethanol and biodiesel, to emission-free hydrogen vehicles, to solar and wind power, to clean-burning methane from mines, landfills, and farms.

This summer, we took an important step toward these goals by forming the Asian-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development. Together with Australia, and China, and India, Japan, and South Korea, we will focus on practical ways to make the best practices and latest energy technologies available to all. And as nations across this region adapt these practices and technologies, they will make their factories and power plants cleaner and more efficient. I plan to use my visit to the region to build on the progress we are making. By working together, we will promote economic growth and reduce emissions -- and help build a better and cleaner world.

As we work together to meet these common challenges, we must continue to strengthen the ties of trust between our nations. And the best way to strengthen the ties of trust between nations is by advancing freedom within nations. Free nations are peaceful nations, free nations do not threaten their neighbors, and free nations offer their citizens a hopeful vision for the future. By advancing the cause of liberty throughout this region, we will contribute to the prosperity of all -- and deliver the peace and stability that can only come with freedom.

And so the advance of freedom in Asia has been one of the greatest stories in human history -- and in the young century now before us we will add to that story. Millions in this region now live in thriving democracies, others have just started down the road of liberty, and the few nations whose leaders have refused to take even the first steps to freedom are finding themselves out of step with their neighbors and isolated from the world. Even in these lonely places, the desire for freedom lives -- and one day freedom will reach their shores as well.

Some Asian nations have already built free and open societies. And one of the most dramatic examples is the Republic of Korea -- our host for the APEC Summit. Like many in this part of the world, the South Koreans were for years led by governments that closed their door to political reform but gradually opened up to the global economy. By embracing freedom in the economic realm, South Korea transformed itself into an industrial power at home -- and a trading power abroad.

As South Korea began opening itself up to world markets, it found that economic freedom fed the just demands of its citizens for greater political freedom. The economic wealth that South Korea created at home helped nurture a thriving middle class that eventually demanded free elections and a democratic government that would be accountable to the people. We admire the struggle the South Korean people made to achieve their democratic freedom -- and the modern nation they have built with that freedom. South Korea is now one of the world's most successful economies and one of Asia's most successful democracies. It is also showing leadership in the world, by helping others who are claiming their own freedom. At this hour Korean forces make up the third largest contingent in the multi-national force in Iraq -- and by helping the Iraqis build a free society in the heart of the Middle East, South Korea is contributing to a more peaceful and hopeful world.

Taiwan is another society that has moved from repression to democracy as it liberalized its economy. Like South Korea, the people of Taiwan for years lived under a restrictive political state that gradually opened up its economy. And like South Korea, the opening to world markets transformed the island into one of the world's most important trading partners. And like South Korea, economic liberalization in Taiwan helped fuel its desire for individual political freedom -- because men and women who are allowed to control their own wealth will eventually insist on controlling their own lives and their own future.

Like South Korea, modern Taiwan is free and democratic and prosperous. By embracing freedom at all levels, Taiwan has delivered prosperity to its people and created a free and democratic Chinese society. Our one China policy remains unchanged. It is based on three communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and our belief that there should be no unilateral attempts to change the status by either side -- the status quo by either side. The United States will continue to stress the need for dialogue between China and Taiwan that leads to a peaceful resolution of their differences.

Other Asian societies have taken some steps toward freedom -- but they have not yet completed the journey. When my father served as the head of our nation's diplomatic mission in Beijing thirty years ago, an isolated China was recovering from the turmoil unleashed by the cultural revolution. In the late 1970s, China's leaders took a hard look at their country, and they resolved to change. They opened the door to economic development -- and today the Chinese people are better fed, better housed, and enjoy better opportunities than they ever have had in their history.

As China reforms its economy, its leaders are finding that once the door to freedom is opened even a crack, it can not be closed. As the people of China grow in prosperity, their demands for political freedom will grow as well. President Hu has explained to me his vision of "peaceful development," and he wants his people to be more prosperous. I have pointed out that the people of China want more freedom to express themselves, to worship without state control, to print Bibles and other sacred texts without fear of punishment. The efforts of Chinese people to -- China's people to improve their society should be welcomed as part of China's development. By meeting the legitimate demands of its citizens for freedom and openness, China's leaders can help their country grow into a modern, prosperous, and confident nation.

Access to American markets has played an important role in China's economic development -- and China needs to provide a level playing field for American businesses seeking access to China's market. The United States supported China's entry into the World Trade Organization because a China that abides by the same global rules as everyone else will contribute to a free and fair world trading system. When I met President Hu in New York recently, he said that China would bring more balance in our trade and protect intellectual property. I welcomed those commitments, just as I welcomed China's announcement in July that it would implement a flexible, market-based exchange system for its currency. These statements are a good beginning -- but China needs to take action to ensure these goals are fully implemented. The textile agreement our two nations reached last week shows that with hard work and determination, we can come together to resolve difficult trading issues. The agreement adds certainty and predictability for businesses in both America and China. I look forward to frank discussions with President Hu at APEC and in Beijing about our need to find solutions to our trade differences with China.

China can play a positive role in the world. We welcome the important role China has assumed as host of the six-party talks aimed at bringing peace to the Korean Peninsula. We look forward to resolving our trade differences in a spirit of mutual respect and adherence to global rules and standards. And we encourage China to continue down the road of reform and openness -- because the freer China is at home, the greater the welcome it will receive abroad.

Unlike China, some Asian nations still have not taken even the first steps toward freedom. These regimes understand that economic liberty and political liberty go hand in hand, and they refuse to open up at all. The ruling parties in these countries have managed to hold onto power. The price of their refusal to open up is isolation, backwardness, and brutality. By closing the door to freedom, they create misery at home and sow instability abroad. These nations represent Asia's past, not its future.

We see that lack of freedom in Burma -- a nation that should be one of the most prosperous and successful in Asia but is instead one of the region's poorest. Fifteen years ago, the Burmese people cast their ballots -- and they chose democracy. The government responded by jailing the leader of the pro-democracy majority. The result is that a country rich in human talent and natural resources is a place where millions struggle simply to stay alive. The abuses by the Burmese military are widespread, and include rape, and torture, and execution, and forced relocation. Forced labor, trafficking in persons, and use of child soldiers, and religious discrimination are all too common. The people of Burma live in the darkness of tyranny -- but the light of freedom shines in their hearts. They want their liberty -- and one day, they will have it.

The United States is also concerned with the fate of freedom in Northeast Asia, where great powers have collided in the past. The Korean Peninsula is still caught in the past. An armistice -- a truce -- freezes the battle lines from a war that has never really come to an end. The pursuit of nuclear weapons threatens to destabilize the region. Satellite maps of North Korea show prison camps the size of whole cities, and a country that at night is clothed almost in complete darkness.

In this new century, China, Japan, and Russia have joined with the United States and South Korea to find a way to help bring peace and freedom to this troubled peninsula. The six-party talks have produced commitments to rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons. These commitments must be implemented. That means a comprehensive diplomatic effort from all countries involved -- backed by firm resolve. We will not forget the people of North Korea. The 21st century will be freedom's century for all Koreans -- and one day every citizen of that peninsula will live in dignity and freedom and prosperity at home, and in peace with their neighbors abroad.

In our lifetimes, we have already been given a glimpse of this bright future. The advance of freedom and prosperity across the Asian continent has set a hopeful example for all in the world. And though the democracies that have taken root in Asia are new, the dreams they express are ancient. Thousands of years before Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln, a Chinese poet wrote that, "the people should be cherished the people are the root of a country the root firm, the country is tranquil." Today the people of Asia have made their desire for freedom clear -- and that their countries will only be tranquil when they are led by governments of, by, and for the people.

In the 21st century, freedom is an Asian value -- because it is a universal value. It is freedom that enables the citizens of Asia to live lives of dignity. It is freedom that has unleashed the creative talents of the Asian people. It is freedom that gives the citizens of this continent confidence in the future of peace for their children and grandchildren. And in the work that lies ahead, the people of this region can know: You have a partner in the American government -- and a friend in the American people.

On behalf of my country, thank you all very much. (Applause.)

END 3:47 P.M. (Local)

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