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Remarks to the parliament in Canberra. (Bill Clinton speech)(Transcript)
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Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, Madame President of the Senate,to the leader of the opposition and all the members of the Senate and House and ladies and gentlemen here assembled. Let me begin, Prime Minister, by thanking you, the people of Canberra, and all of Australia for the absolutely tremendous welcome that Hillary and I and the entire American delegation have received. I know this is called the Land Down Under, but after only a day, we all feel like we're on top of the world, and I thank you for that. [Laughter]

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you in this great hall of democracy. Your Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, was one of the very few world leaders to address our United States Congress twice. Now, I give you that fact as a point of interest, not a pitch for a return engagement here. [Laughter] Forty-one years ago today - not today, 41 years ago this year - here is what he said to our people: "We have, with your great country, as a result of war as well as of peace, a tie which I believe to be unbreakable and a degree of affectionate, simple understanding which I do not believe can be surpassed between any two countries of the world."

Today, 41 years later, the Prime Minister's insight still holds. The ties between us span more than 200 years. In 1792, an American ship named for brotherhood, the Philadelphia, arrived at Port Jackson with supplies that helped to save the colonists from starvation. Former Prime Minister Frasier noted that the beef that the Philadelphia carried had been on board for 9 months, "well-cured" he called it. [Laughter]

Well, my friends, two centuries later, our friendship, tested in war and seasoned in peace, has also become well-cured. Our people have built bridges of commerce and culture, friendship and trust, reaching over the greatest expanse of ocean on Earth. The United States is proud to be Australia's largest foreign investor and largest trading partner. We are also proud of the wars we have fought together and the peace we have fought to sustain together.

The great diversity of our ties was born of shared experience and common values. Our pioneers both settled vast frontiers and built free nations across entire continents. In one another, I really believe we see a distant mirror of our better selves, reflections of liberty and decency, of openness and vitality. In this century, our bonds have truly been forged in the fires of wars, war after war after war. Together we carried liberty's torch in the darkest nights of the 20th century.

My message to you today is that together we must embrace the dawn of this new century together, and we must make the most of it together. We carried a torch through the night; now we can create the dawn our children deserve.

For Australia's strength and sacrifice through these many struggles, for your fierce love of liberty and your unfailing friendship to the United States, the American people thank you. And the American people look forward with you to this new era of freedom and possibilities. After all, our nations are at peace; our economies are strong. The ideas we have struggled for, freedom of religion, speech and assembly, open markets, tolerance, they're more and more the habits of all humanity. For the first time in all history, two-thirds of all the nations on this Earth and more than half the people alive today are ruled by governments picked by their own people. The rigid blocs and barriers that too long defined the world are giving way to an era of breathtaking expansion of information technology and information.

And because of these things, we now have a chance, greater than any generation of people who ever lived before us, to give more and more people the opportunity to realize their God-given potential, to live their own dreams, not someone else's plan.

But this chance we have is nothing more than that. It is a chance, not a guarantee. For all its promise, we know this new century will not be free of peril, and therefore, we know that our freedom still requires our responsibility. Nations and people still will be tempted to fight wars for territory or out of ethnic, religious, or racial hatred. As I told the American people over and over again during the recent election campaign, it was literally heartbreaking to me to think of how much of their time I had to spend dealing with people who still believe it's all right to murder each other and each other's children because of their racial, their religious, their ethnic, their tribal differences. We must stand against that, and the example of how we live together must be a rebuke to that in the 21st century.

And make no mistake about it, there is a nexus of new threats: terrorists, rogue states, international criminals, drug traffickers. They, too, menace our security, and they will do more of it in the new century. They will be all the more lethal if they gain access to weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical, or biological.

Because of our size, our strength, our prosperity, and the power of our example, Australia and the United States have a special responsibility, not only to seize the opportunities but to move against the new threats of the 21st century. Together we can reduce even more the danger of weapons of mass destruction. We can take the fight to the terrorists and the drug traffickers. We can extend the reach of free and fair trade. We can advance democracy around the world. And yes, we can prove that free societies can embrace the economic and social changes,

and the ethnic, racial, and religious diversity this new era brings and come out stronger and freer than ever.

The threat of nuclear weapons born a half century ago finally is diminishing as a new century begins. The United States and Russia are reducing our arsenals, pointing our weapons away from one another, working to safeguard nuclear materials and facilities. Every single Australian should be very proud of the role your country has played in guiding the world toward a more secure future. You helped lead the fight to extend the nonproliferation treaty. Your determined diplomacy brought the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to reality and the world to the verge of banning all nuclear testing for all time. Every nation is in your debt for that achievement. And on behalf, again, of the people of the United States, I say thank you.

Now we must pursue together our remaining arms control agenda: further reductions in Russia's and America's arsenals once Russia ratifies START II; a chemical weapons convention, so that our troops never face poison gas in the battlefield and our people never fall victim to it in a terrorist attack; a stronger biological weapons convention, so that disease is never used as a weapon of war; a worldwide ban on landmines, so that all our children can walk with confidence on the earth beneath them.

As we deal with these challenges to our security, we must recognize the new ones which are emerging and the new approaches they require. Terrorism, international crime, and drug trafficking are forces of destruction that have no tolerance for national borders. Together we must show zero tolerance for them. That means putting pressure on rogue states, not doing business with them. It's very difficult to do business by day with people who kill innocent civilians by night.

It means giving no aid and quarter to terrorists who slaughter the innocent and drug traffickers who poison our children. It means, in short, pursuing a concerted strategy: intelligence and police cooperation worldwide; coordinated legal action in every country to stop money laundering; shut down gray markets for guns and false documents; and increase of extraditions. It means security coordination in our airports and airplanes, in giving each in our own nations our law enforcement officials the tools they need to cooperate and to succeed.

The measure of our people's security includes not only their physical safety, however, but as we all know, their economic well-being. Our two countries have led in opening markets around the world, and we can be pleased with our progress. Through GATT, the WTO, APEC, and literally hundreds of smaller accords, we are moving to extend the reach of free and fair trade. But we can do more, issue by issue, agreement by agreement.

I am determined to work with Congress in my second term to move ahead boldly on market opening initiatives around the world. Decades from now

I want people to say that our generation rose to the challenge of creating a new, open trading system for the 21st century. If we do, more people will have good jobs and better lives as they share in humanity's genius for progress. Over the long term, we can best advance the security and prosperity we seek by expanding and strengthening not only trade but the community of free nations.

The tide of democracy is now running strong and deep. Consider this: In just the past few weeks the people of Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Nicaragua, and Thailand have freely elected their leaders, a prospect literally unimaginable not very long ago. In my own hemisphere, every nation but one has raised freedom's flag. In Central Europe and in Russia, Ukraine, and the other New Independent States the forces of reform have earned our respect and deserve our continued support.

For the first time since the rise of nation-states on the continent of Europe, it is literally conceivable that we have an opportunity, a real and tangible opportunity, to build a continent that is democratic, undivided, and at peace. It has never been possible before, and together we can achieve it now.

Now, I know that some people on both sides of the Pacific are concerned that America's continuing involvement with Europe and our intense renewed involvement with our neighbors in Latin America will lead to dis-engagement from the Asia-Pacific region. They are wrong. Mr. Prime Minister, if I could borrow your eloquent phrase - at least I'm giving you credit, as we politicians don't often do - [laughter] - the United States does not need to choose between our history and our geography. We need not choose between Europe and Asia. In a global economy with global security challenges, America must look to the East no less than to the West. Our security demands it. After all, we fought three wars here in living memory. The cold war's last frontier lies now on the Korean Peninsula. The region as a whole is in the midst of profound change, so our security demands it. Our prosperity requires it. One-third of our exports and more than 2 million American jobs depend upon our trade with Asia. Over the next decade, Asia's remarkable growth will mean ever-expanding markets for those who can compete in them. Our future cannot be secure if Asia's future is in doubt.

As we enter the 21st century, therefore, I say to you that America not only has been, she is and will remain a Pacific power. We want America's involvement and influence to provide the stability among nations which is necessary for the people of the Asia-Pacific region to make the routines of normal life a reality and to spur the economic progress that will benefit all of us.

To meet those challenges of stability, we are now pursuing three objectives: stronger alliances, deeper engagement with China, and a larger community of democracies. First, we share the view of almost every nation in Asia that a strong American security presence remains the bedrock for regional stability. We will maintain about 100,000 troops across the Pacific, just as we maintain about 100,000 troops in

Europe. We will keep them well-trained, well-equipped, and well-prepared. We will continue to revitalize our core alliances both bilaterally and regionally.

These efforts, let me say clearly, are not directed against any nation. They are intended to advance security and stability for everyone so thatwe can grow together and work together, all of us in the new century.

Our alliance with a democratic, prosperous Japan has been one of the great achievements of the postwar period. Last spring, after more than a year's hard study and work, Prime Minister Hashimoto and I signed a new security charter. Japan's continued support for our military presence and even closer links between our armed forces will enable us to deepen our cooperation on behalf of peace and stability in this region and beyond.

With our close ally in South Korea, we're working to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula that threaten all of northeast Asia. We must give new momentum now to the four-party peace talks President Kim and I proposed last spring. And we must continue our work to dismantle North Korea's frozen nuclear program.

We are reinforcing our security ties with the Philippines and Thailand, while multiplying the power of our troops through greater access to regional military facilities.

And finally and simply put, the defense links between the United States and Australia have never been stronger in peacetime. Mr. Prime Minister and members of Parliament, the agreements our foreign and defense ministers signed this summer in Sydney authorized the largest exercises involving our troops since World War II. American marines will soon begin training in northern Australia. And we are deepening our already strong security cooperation. Today I say, again, with utter confidence, our alliance is not just for this time, it is for all time.

As we work nation to nation, let us continue to build a new architecture for regional security as well, an architecture through ASEAN that will strengthen our ability to confront common challenges. Already this effort is helping to defuse tensions in the South China Sea and to dispel distrust across the region. We must pursue it to its full potential.

Our second stabilizing objective is deeper engagement with China. The direction China takes in the years to come, the way it defines its greatness in the future, will help to decide whether the next century is one of conflict or cooperation. The emergence of a stable, an open, a prosperous China, a strong China confident of its place in the world and willing to assume its responsibilities as a great nation is in our deepest interest.

True cooperation is both possible and plainly productive. We worked closely with China to extend the nuclear nonproliferation treaty and to secure the passage of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. We joined to shore up peace in Cambodia and increase stability on the Korean Peninsula. We're making progress together on some tough issues, from nuclear technology to intellectual property rights.

The United States and China will continue to have important differences, especially in the area of human rights, and we will continue to discuss them candidly. But by working together where possible and dealing with our differences openly and respectfully where necessary, we can deepen our dialog and add to Asia's stability. I look forward to doing just that when I meet for the fourth time with President Jiang in the Philippines next week.

The third part of our work for stability is support for the advance of democracy. Our two nations know that democracy comes in many forms. Neither of us seeks to impose our own vision on others, but we also share the conviction that some basic rights are universal. We have to decide whether we believe that. I believe everywhere people aspire to be treated with dignity, to give voice to their opinions, to choose their own leaders. We have seen these dreams realized in the democratic odyssey of the Asia-Pacific, from Japan to South Korea to Thailand and Mongolia.

In this century we have sacrificed many of our sons and daughters, your nation and ours, for the cause of freedom. And so we must continue to speak for the cause of freedom in this new age of commerce and trade and technology. We must push repressive regimes in places like Burma to pursue reconciliation and genuine political dialog. We must assist new democracies like Cambodia by encouraging the development of political parties and institutions.

We know that the freer and better educated people are, the more creative they become, the better able they are to compete, the more able they are to satisfy each other's deepest wants and needs. We can look at the economic vitality of the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea to see the proof of this assertion.

As stability extends its reach and strengthens its grip, the Pacific may finally be able to live up to its name. In Cambodia, farmers once again till the land that had become horrific killing fields. In Vietnam, schoolchildren can worry more about their exams than about the war. From Bangkok to Manila, power is no longer used against the people, it is in the hands of the people.

A generation ago, it was hard to imagine how rapidly freedom could come to these nations, how rapidly their economies could grow. But freed from the threat of war, unleashed by their newfound freedoms, the people

of this region have built among the greatest success stories the world has ever seen. They have transformed economic wastelands into powerful engines for growth, enriched the lives of millions by harnessing the technology of change. Today, the economies of the Asia-Pacific are clearly the most dynamic on Earth.

More than 7 million Americans trace their roots to Asia. Five of our States touch the Pacific. We are inexorably linked to the promise of the Asia-Pacific region. That's why in the first year of my term I sought to elevate the APEC forum, that began right here in Canberra, into the first-ever meeting of Asian-Pacific leaders. At our inaugural summit in Seattle, working closely with your former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, we agreed to give this extraordinarily diverse region a common goal, to work as a community of nations committed to economic integration.

A year later in Jakarta, we made a historic commitment, free trade and investment in the region by 2020. Some said that was an illusory vision. But already that vision is becoming a blueprint, a blueprint taking shape as concrete commitments. At next week's leaders' meeting, Prime Minister Howard and I hope and expect that APEC will give a boost to specific market-opening initiatives. For me, I hope that means unshackling trade in computers, semiconductors, and telecommunications, the high-tech sectors of the future. We have an opportunity to set an example for the rest of the world, and we ought to seize it. If we do, the nations of the region will benefit, those who provide the services and those who receive them.

Progress, after all, is not yet everyone's partner, and we have a responsibility to open the doors of opportunity to those who remain outside the global economy. For example, some two-thirds of the people on our planet have no access to a telephone. I found that hard to believe when I saw so many of your fellow citizens with their cell phones in their hands as I drove up and down your streets. [Laughter]

More than half the people of the world are 2 days' walk from a telephone. They are totally disconnected from the communications and information revolution that is the present vehicle for human progress and possibility. If we add their creative energies to the mix which now exists, of course, they will gain skills and jobs and greater wealth, but we also will benefit from the higher growth rates, from the expanded markets, and from the increasing likelihood that those people will find peaceful, rather than warlike ways to release their energies. We can do this if we have the courage not to retreat but, instead, to compete.

At this year's meeting at APEC and everywhere I go, I will also deliver again a simple, loud and clear message: The United States is more determined than ever to create an Asian-Pacific community of shared efforts, shared benefits, and shared destiny. The interests that compel our engagement have grown, not shrunk, and so has our commitment to a Pacific future.

We know from our past that we can succeed, that we are equal to the difficulties ahead. I began today by quoting Prime Minister Menzies, so let me conclude by returning to his words. He said, "The world needs every scrap of democratic strength that can be found in it because nobody, however optimistic, need underestimate the measure or the character of danger that always confronts us. It is not merely our privilege to be strong, it is our duty to be strong.

The world needs Australia. The world needs the United States. It needs us together as partners and friends and allies. We have stood together in the hard times as partners and friends. Let us stand together and work together now for a new future of peace and possibility that extends to our children and our grandchildren and to all the children of the world.

May God bless Australia, the United States, and the great friendship between our nations. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. at Parliament House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto of Japan; President Jiang Zemin of China; and President Kim Yong-sam of South Korea.