

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Party Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Committee Yu Zhengsheng in Shanghai, China

November 16, 2009

President Obama. Thank you so much for your hospitality. This is my first visit to Shanghai, and we've been so impressed with the incredible growth in the city and the great warmth of the people who have received us.

Secretary Yu. Shanghai is a city that witnessed the progress of the diplomatic relations between China and the United States over the past three decades. In 1972, Shanghai was a city where the Shanghai Communique was announced, and this has already made a solid foundation for the normalization of diplomatic ties between two countries.

President Obama. Well, obviously, both countries have benefited greatly from the progress that we've made over the last three decades. I know that many U.S. businesses are now located here in Shanghai and they consider it really the center for the region, commercially and financially. And it is very impressive to travel through the city and to see what extraordinary progress has been made.

Secretary Yu. The Shanghai citizens are very pleased because Shanghai is the first stop of your China visit.

President Obama. Well, thank you.

Secretary Yu. For many U.S. companies here in Shanghai, one of the most famous manufacturing companies is the General Motor. The business of GM in Shanghai is pretty good. By the end of October this year, their sales has increased by 40 percent over the same period of last year. I think that the fantastic performance here in Shanghai is definitely a boost to their business in the United States.

President Obama. Absolutely. I think they can learn from their operations here in terms of increasing sales back in the United States.

Secretary Yu. There are other businesses from the United States based here in Shanghai.

[At this point, the public portion of the meeting ended; the meeting continued, however, and no transcript was provided.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:03 a.m. at the Xijiao State Guest Hotel. Secretary Yu spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Shanghai

November 16, 2009

The President. *Nong hao.* Good afternoon. It is a great honor for me to be here in Shanghai and to have this opportunity to speak with all of you. I'd like to thank Fudan University's President Yang for his hospitality and his gracious welcome. I'd also like to thank our outstanding Ambassador, Jon Huntsman, who exemplifies the deep ties and respect between our nations. I don't know what he said, but I hope it was good. [Laughter]

What I'd like to do is to make some opening remarks, and then what I'm really looking forward to doing is taking questions, not only

from students who are in the audience, but also we've received questions online, which will be asked by some of the students who are here in the audience, as well as by Ambassador Huntsman. And I am very sorry that my Chinese is not as good as your English, but I am looking forward to this chance to have a dialogue.

This is my first time traveling to China, and I'm excited to see this majestic country. Here in Shanghai we see the growth that has caught the attention of the world, the soaring skyscrapers, the bustling streets, and entrepreneurial

activity. And just as I'm impressed by these signs of China's journey to the 21st century, I'm eager to see those ancient places that speak to us from China's distant past. Tomorrow and the next day I hope to have a chance when I'm in Beijing to see the majesty of the Forbidden City and the wonder of the Great Wall. Truly, this is a nation that encompasses both a rich history and a belief in the promise of the future.

The same can be said of the relationship between our two countries. Shanghai, of course, is a city that has great meaning in the history of the relationship between the United States and China. It was here, 37 years ago, that the Shanghai Communique opened the door to a new chapter of engagement between our Governments and among our people. However, America's ties to this city, and to this country, stretch back further, to the earliest days of America's independence.

In 1784, our Founding Father, George Washington, commissioned the *Empress of China*, a ship that set sail for these shores so that it could pursue trade with the Qing Dynasty. Washington wanted to see the ship carry the flag around the globe and to forge new ties with nations like China. This is a common American impulse, the desire to reach for new horizons and to forge new partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

Over the two centuries that have followed, the currents of history have steered the relationship between our countries in many directions. And even in the midst of tumultuous winds, our people had opportunities to forge deep and even dramatic ties. For instance, Americans will never forget the hospitality shown to our pilots who were shot down over your soil during World War II and cared for by Chinese civilians who risked all that they had by doing so. And Chinese veterans of that war still warmly greet those American veterans who return to the sites where they fought to help liberate China from occupation.

A different kind of connection was made nearly 40 years ago when the frost between our countries began to thaw through the simple game of table tennis. The very unlikely nature of this engagement contributed to its success, because for all our differences, both our com-

mon humanity and our shared curiosity were revealed. As one American player described his visit to China: "[The] people are just like us . . . The country is very similar to America, but still very different."

Of course this small opening was followed by the achievement of the Shanghai Communique, and the eventual establishment of formal relations between the United States and China in 1979. And in three decades, just look at how far we have come.

In 1979, trade between the United States and China stood at roughly \$5 billion; today it tops over \$400 billion each year. The commerce affects our people's lives in so many ways. America imports from China many of the computer parts we use, the clothes we wear, and we export to China machinery that helps power your industry. This trade could create even more jobs on both sides of the Pacific, while allowing our people to enjoy a better quality of life. And as demand becomes more balanced, it can lead to even broader prosperity.

In 1979, the political cooperation between the United States and China was rooted largely in our shared rivalry with the Soviet Union. Today, we have a positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship that opens the door to partnership on the key global issues of our time: economic recovery and the development of clean energy; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and the scourge of climate change; the promotion of peace and security in Asia and around the globe. All of these issues will be on the agenda tomorrow when I meet with President Hu.

And in 1979, the connections among our people were limited. Today, we see the curiosity of those ping-pong players manifested in the ties that are being forged across many sectors. The second highest number of foreign students in the United States come from China, and we've seen a 50 percent increase in the study of Chinese among our own students. There are nearly 200 friendship cities drawing our communities together. American and Chinese scientists cooperate on new research and discovery. And of course, Yao Ming is just one signal of our shared love of basketball. I'm only sorry

that I won't be able to see a Shanghai Sharks game while I'm visiting.

It is no coincidence that the relationship between our countries has accompanied a period of positive change. China has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, an accomplishment unparalleled in human history, while playing a larger role in global events. And the United States has seen our economy grow along with the standard of living enjoyed by our people, while bringing the cold war to a successful conclusion.

There is a Chinese proverb: "Consider the past, and you shall know the future." Surely, we have known setbacks and challenges over the last 30 years. Our relationship has not been without disagreement and difficulty. But the notion that we must be adversaries is not predestined, not when we consider the past. Indeed, because of our cooperation, both the United States and China are more prosperous and more secure. We have seen what is possible when we build upon our mutual interests and engage on the basis of mutual respect.

And yet the success of that engagement depends upon understanding, on sustaining an open dialogue and learning about one another and from one another. For just as that American table tennis player pointed out, we share much in common as human beings, but our countries are different in certain ways.

I believe that each country must chart its own course. China is an ancient nation with a deeply rooted culture. The United States, by comparison, is a young nation whose culture is determined by the many different immigrants who have come to our shores and by the founding documents that guide our democracy.

Those documents put forward a simple vision of human affairs, and they enshrine several core principles: that all men and women are created equal and possess certain fundamental rights; that Government should reflect the will of the people and respond to their wishes; that commerce should be open, information freely accessible; and that laws, and not simply men, should guarantee the administration of justice.

Of course, the story of our Nation is not without its difficult chapters. In many ways,

over many years, we have struggled to advance the promise of these principles to all of our people and to forge a more perfect Union. We fought a very painful civil war and freed a portion of our population from slavery. It took time for women to be extended the right to vote, for workers to win the right to organize, and for immigrants from different corners of the globe to be fully embraced. Even after they were freed, African Americans persevered through conditions that were separate and not equal before winning full and equal rights.

None of this was easy, but we made progress because of our belief in those core principles, which have served as our compass through the darkest of storms. That is why Lincoln could stand up in the midst of civil war and declare it a struggle to see whether any nation, "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" could "long endure." That is why Dr. Martin Luther King could stand on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and ask that our Nation live out the true meaning of its creed. That's why immigrants from China to Kenya could find a home on our shores, why opportunity is available to all who would work for it, and why someone like me, who less than 50 years ago would have had trouble voting in some parts of America, is now able to serve as its President.

And that is why America will always speak out for these core principles around the world. We do not seek to impose any system of government on any other nation, but we also don't believe that the principles that we stand for are unique to our Nation. These freedoms of expression and worship, of access to information and political participation, we believe are universal rights. They should be available to all people, including ethnic and religious minorities, whether they are in the United States, China, or any nation. Indeed, it is that respect for universal rights that guides America's openness to other countries, our respect for different cultures, our commitment to international law, and our faith in the future.

These are all things that you should know about America. I also know that we have much

to learn about China. Looking around at this magnificent city and looking around this room, I do believe that our nations hold something important in common, and that is a belief in the future. Neither the United States nor China is content to rest on our achievements. For while China is an ancient nation, you are also clearly looking ahead with confidence, ambition, and a commitment to see that tomorrow's generation can do better than today's.

In addition to your growing economy, we admire China's extraordinary commitment to science and research, a commitment borne out in everything from the infrastructure you build to the technology you use. China is now the world's largest Internet user, which is why we were so pleased to include the Internet as a part of today's event. This country now has the world's largest mobile phone network, and it is investing in the new forms of energy that can both sustain growth and combat climate change. And I'm looking forward to deepening the partnership between the United States and China in this critical area tomorrow. But above all, I see China's future in you, young people whose talent and dedication and dreams will do so much to help shape the 21st century.

I've said many times that I believe that our world is now fundamentally interconnected. The jobs we do, the prosperity we build, the environment we protect, the security that we seek, all of these things are shared. And given that interconnection, power in the 21st century is no longer a zero-sum game; one country's success need not come at the expense of another. And that is why the United States insists we do not seek to contain China's rise. On the contrary, we welcome China as a strong and prosperous and successful member of the community of nations, a China that draws on the rights, strengths, and creativity of individual Chinese like you.

To return to the proverb, consider the past. We know that more is to be gained when great powers cooperate than when they collide. That is a lesson that human beings have learned time and again, and that is the example of the history between our nations. And I believe strongly that cooperation must go beyond our Government. It must be rooted in our people, in the studies

we share, the business that we do, the knowledge that we gain, and even in the sports that we play. And these bridges must be built by young men and women just like you and your counterparts in America.

That's why I'm pleased to announce that the United States will dramatically expand the number of our students who study in China to 100,000. And these exchanges mark a clear commitment to build ties among our people, as surely as you will help determine the destiny of the 21st century. And I'm absolutely confident that America has no better ambassadors to offer than our young people. For they, just like you, are filled with talent and energy and optimism about the history that is yet to be written.

So let this be the next step in the steady pursuit of cooperation that will serve our nations and the world. And if there's one thing that we can take from today's dialogue, I hope that it is a commitment to continue this dialogue going forward.

So thank you very much, and I look forward now to taking some questions from all of you. Thank you very much.

So the—I just want to make sure this works. This is a tradition, by the way, that is very common in the United States at these town hall meetings. And what we're going to do is I will just—if you are interested in asking a question, you can raise your hands. I will call on you, and then I will alternate between a question from the audience and an Internet question from one of the students who prepared the questions, as well as, I think, Ambassador Huntsman may have a question that we were able to obtain from the web site of our Embassy.

So let me begin, though, by seeing—and then what I'll do is I'll call on a boy and then a girl and then—so we'll go back and forth, so that you know it's fair. All right? So I'll start with this young lady right in the front. Here, why don't we wait for this microphone so everyone can hear you? And what's your name?

China-U.S. Relations/World Exposition in Shanghai

Q. My name is—[inaudible]—and I am a student from Fudan University. Shanghai and Chicago have been sister cities since 1985, and

these two cities have conducted a wide range of economic, political, and cultural exchanges. So what measures will you take to deepen this close relationship between cities of the United States and China? And Shanghai will hold the World Exposition next year. Will you bring your family to visit the Expo? Thank you.

The President. Well, thank you very much for the question. I was just having lunch before I came here with the mayor of Shanghai, and he told me that he has had an excellent relationship with the city of Chicago—my hometown—that he's visited there twice. And I think it's wonderful to have these exchanges between cities.

One of the things that I discussed with the mayor is how both cities can learn from each other on strategies around clean energy, because one of the issues that ties China and America together is how, with an expanding population and a concern for climate change, that we're able to reduce our carbon footprint. And obviously, in the United States and many developed countries, per capita, per individual, they are already using much more energy than each individual here in China. But as China grows and expands, it's going to be using more energy as well. So both countries have a great interest in finding new strategies.

We talked about mass transit and the excellent rail lines that are being developed in Shanghai. I think we can learn in Chicago some of the—and the United States some of the fine work that's being done on high-speed rail.

In the United States, I think we are learning how to develop buildings that use much less energy, that are much more energy efficient. And I know that with Shanghai, as I traveled and I saw all the cranes and all the new buildings that are going up, it's very important for us to start incorporating these new technologies so that each building is energy efficient when it comes to lighting, when it comes to heating. And so it's a terrific opportunity, I think, for us to learn from each other.

I know this is going to be a major focus of the Shanghai World Expo, is the issue of clean energy, as I learned from the mayor. And so I would love to attend. I'm not sure yet what my

schedule is going to be, but I'm very pleased that we're going to have an excellent U.S. pavilion at the Expo, and I understand that we expect as many as 70 million visitors here. So it's going to be very crowded, and it's going to be very exciting.

Chicago has had two world expos in its history, and both of those expos ended up being tremendous boosts for the city. So I'm sure the same thing will happen here in Shanghai.

Thank you.

Why don't we get one of the questions from the Internet? And introduce yourself, in case—

Importance of the President's Visit to China

Q. Hello? That's amazing. So shall I say it in Chinese and then repeat it English at the end, okay?

The President. Yes.

[At this point, a student asked a question in Chinese, and it was translated as follows.]

Q. I am—[inaudible]—from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. I want to pose a question from the Internet. I want to thank you, Mr. President, for visiting China in your first year in office and exchange views with us in China. I want to know what are you bringing to China, your visit to China this time, and what will you bring back to the United States?

[The student continued in English.]

Q. —and I represent, I am—the honor about to be here to represent one of the friends from Internet, to ask you one question. Firstly, I thank—thanks for visiting China at the first year of your Presidency. And my question is, what have you—in this Chinese trip, what have you brought to China and what do you want from China? Thank you.

The President. The main purpose of my trip is to deepen my understanding of China and its vision for the future. I have had several meetings now with President Hu. We participated together in the G-20 that was dealing with the economic financial crisis. We have had consultations about a wide range of issues.

But I think it's very important for the United States to continually deepen its understanding of China, just as it's important for China to continually deepen its understanding of the United States.

In terms of what I'd like to get out of this meeting, or this visit, in addition to having the wonderful opportunity to see the Forbidden City and the Great Wall and to meet with all of you—these are all highlights—but in addition to that, the discussions that I intend to have with President Hu speak to the point that Ambassador Huntsman made earlier, which is there are very few global challenges that can be solved unless the United States and China agree.

So let me give you a specific example, and that is the issue we were just discussing of climate change. The United States and China are the world's two largest emitters of greenhouse gases, of carbon that is causing the planet to warm. Now, the United States, as a highly developed country, as I said before, per capita, consumes much more energy and emits much more greenhouse gases for each individual than does China. On the other hand, China is growing at a much faster pace, and it has a much larger population. So unless both of our countries are willing to take critical steps in dealing with this issue, we will not be able to resolve it.

There's going to be a Copenhagen conference in December in which world leaders are trying to find a recipe so that we can all make commitments that are differentiated so each country would not have the same obligations. Obviously, China, which has much more poverty, should not have to do exactly the same thing as the United States, but all of us should have these certain obligations in terms of what our plan will be to reduce these greenhouse gases.

So that's an example of what I hope to get out of this meeting, a meeting of the minds between myself and President Hu about how together the United States and China can show leadership. Because I will tell you, other countries around the world will be waiting for us. They will watch to see what we do. And if they say, "Ah, you know, the United States and China, they're not serious about this," then they won't be serious either. That is the burden of

leadership that both of our countries now carry. And my hope is, is that the more discussion and dialogue that we have the more we are able to show this leadership to the world on these many critical issues. Okay?

All right, it's a—I think it must be a boy's turn now. Right? So I'll call on this young man right here.

[*The student began speaking in Chinese.*]

The President. Hold on, let me get my—

[*The President put on his translation headset.*]

Benefits of Diversity/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Mr. President, good afternoon. I'm from Tongji University. I want to cite a saying from Confucius: "It is always good to have a friend coming from afar." In Confucius' books, there is a great saying which says that harmony is good, but also we uphold differences. China advocates a harmonious world. We know that the United States develops a culture that features diversity. I want to know, what will your Government do to build a diversified world with different cultures? What would you do to respect the different cultures and histories of other countries? And what kinds of cooperation we can conduct in the future?

The President. This is an excellent point. The United States, one of our strengths is that we are a very diverse culture. We have people coming from all around the world. And so there's no one definition of what an American looks like. In my own family, I have a father who was from Kenya; I have a mother who was from Kansas, in the Midwest of the United States; my sister is half Indonesian; she's married to a Chinese person from Canada. So when you see family gatherings in the Obama household, it looks like the United Nations. [*Laughter*]

And that is a great strength of the United States, because it means that we learn from different cultures and different foods and different ideas, and that has made us a much more dynamic society.

Now, what is also true is that each country in this interconnected world has its own culture and its own history and its own traditions. And I

think it's very important for the United States not to assume that what is good for us is automatically good for somebody else. And we have to have some modesty about our attitudes towards other countries.

I have to say, though, as I said in my opening remarks, that we do believe that there are certain fundamental principles that are common to all people, regardless of culture. So, for example, in the United Nations, we are very active in trying to make sure that children all around the world are treated with certain basic rights; that if children are being exploited, if there's forced labor for children, that despite the fact that that may have taken place in the past in many different countries, including the United States, that all countries of the world now should have developed to the point where we are treating children better than we did in the past. That's a universal value.

I believe, for example, the same thing holds true when it comes to the treatment of women. I had a very interesting discussion with the mayor of Shanghai during lunch right before I came, and he informed me that in many professions now here in China, there are actually more women enrolled in college than there are men, and that they are doing very well. I think that is an excellent indicator of progress, because it turns out that if you look at development around the world, one of the best indicators of whether or not a country does well is how well it educates its girls and how it treats its women. And countries that are tapping into the talents and the energy of women and giving them educations typically do better economically than countries that don't.

So now, obviously, difficult cultures may have different attitudes about the relationship between men and women, but I think it is the view of the United States that it is important for us to affirm the rights of women all around the world. And if we see certain societies in which women are oppressed or they are not getting opportunities or there is violence towards women, we will speak out.

Now, there may be some people who disagree with us, and we can have a dialogue about that. But we think it's important, nevertheless, to be true to our ideals and our values.

And we—and when we do so, though, we will always do so with the humility and understanding that we are not perfect and that we still have much progress to make. If you talk to women in America, they will tell you that there are still men who have a lot of old-fashioned ideas about the role of women in society. And so we don't claim that we have solved all these problems, but we do think that it's important for us to speak out on behalf of these universal ideals and these universal values. Okay?

All right. We're going to take a question from the Internet.

China and Taiwan

Q. Hello, Mr. President. It's a great honor to be here and meet you in person.

The President. Thank you.

Q. My name is—[inaudible]. I'm from Shanghai International Studies University. I will be reading a question selected on the Internet to you, and this question is from somebody from Taiwan. In his question, he said: I come from Taiwan. Now I am doing business on the mainland, and due to improved cross-straits relations in recent years, my business in China is doing quite well. So when I heard the news that some people in America would like to propose continued selling arms and weapons to Taiwan, I begin to get pretty worried. I worry that this may make our cross-straits relations suffer. So I would like to know if, Mr. President, are you supportive of improved cross-straits relations? And although this question is from a businessman, actually, it's a question of keen concern to all of us young Chinese students, so we'd really like to know your position on this question. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. Well, I have been clear in the past that my administration fully supports a "one China" policy, as reflected in the three joint communiques that date back several decades, in terms of our relations with Taiwan as well as our relations with the People's Republic of China. We don't want to change that policy and that approach.

I am very pleased with the reduction of tensions and the improvement in cross-straits relations, and it is my deep desire and hope that we will continue to see great improvement

between Taiwan and the rest of—and the People's Republic in resolving many of these issues.

One of the things that I think that the United States, in terms of its foreign policy and its policy with respect to China, is always seeking is ways that through dialogue and negotiations, problems can be solved. We always think that's the better course. And I think that economic ties and commercial ties that are taking place in this region are helping to lower a lot of the tensions that date back before you were born or even before I was born.

Now, there are some people who still look towards the past when it comes to these issues, as opposed to looking towards the future. I prefer to look towards the future. And as I said, I think the commercial ties that are taking place—there's something about when people think that they can do business and make money that makes them think very clearly and not worry as much about ideology. And I think that that's starting to happen in this region, and we are very supportive of that process. Okay?

Let's see, it's a girl's turn now, right? Yes, right there. Yes. Hold on, let's get a—whoops, I'm sorry, they took the mike back here. I'll call on you next.

Go ahead, and then I'll go up here later. Go ahead. No, no, please.

Nobel Peace Prize

Q. Thank you.

The President. I'll call on you later. But I'll call on her first, and then I'll call on you afterwards. Go ahead.

Q. Okay, thank you. Mr. President, I'm a student from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. I have a question concerning the Nobel Prize for Peace. In your opinion, what's the main reason that you were honored the Nobel Prize for Peace? And will it give you more responsibility and pressure to—more pressure and the responsibility to promote the world peace? And will it bring you—will it influence your ideas while dealing with the international affairs? Thank you very much.

The President. Thank you. That was an excellent question. I have to say that nobody was more surprised than me about winning the Nobel Prize for Peace. Obviously, it's a great hon-

or. I don't believe necessarily that it's an honor I deserve, given the extraordinary history of people who have won the prize. All I can do is to, with great humility, accept the fact that I think the committee was inspired by the American people and the possibilities of changing not only America, but also America's approach to the world. And so in some ways I think they gave me the prize but I was more just a symbol of the shift in our approach to world affairs that we are trying to promote.

In terms of the burden that I feel, I am extraordinarily honored to be put in the position of President. And as my wife always reminds me when I complain that I'm working too hard, she says, "You volunteered for this job." [Laughter] And so you—there's a saying—I don't know if there's a similar saying in China—we have a saying: "You made your bed, now you have to sleep in it." And it basically means, you have to be careful what you ask for because you might get it.

I think that all of us have obligations for trying to promote peace in the world. It's not always easy to do. There are still a lot of conflicts in the world that are—date back for centuries. If you look at the Middle East, there are wars and conflict that are rooted in arguments going back a thousand years. In many parts of the world—let's say, in the continent of Africa—there are ethnic and tribal conflicts that are very hard to resolve.

And obviously, right now, as President of the United States, part of my job is to serve as Commander in Chief, and my first priority is to protect the American people. And because of the attacks on 9/11 and the terrorism that has been taking place around the world where innocent people are being killed, it is my obligation to make sure that we root out these terrorist organizations and that we cooperate with other countries in terms of dealing with this kind of violence.

Nevertheless, although I don't think that we can ever completely eliminate violence between nations or between peoples, I think that we can definitely reduce the violence between peoples through dialogue, through the exchange of ideas, through greater understanding between peoples and between cultures.

And particularly now when just one individual can detonate a bomb that causes so much destruction, it is more important than ever that we pursue these strategies for peace. Technology is a powerful instrument for good, but it has also given the possibility for just a few people to cause enormous damage. And that's why I'm hopeful that in my meetings with President Hu and on an ongoing basis, both the United States and China can work together to try to reduce conflicts that are taking place.

We have to do so, though, also keeping in mind that when we use our military, because we're such big and strong countries, that we have to be self-reflective about what we do, that we have to examine our own motives and our own interests to make sure that we are not simply using our military forces because nobody can stop us. That's a burden that great countries, great powers, have, is to act responsibly in the community of nations. And my hope is, is that the United States and China together can help to create an international norms that reduce conflict around the world. Okay?

All right? Jon? I'm going to call on my Ambassador because I think he has a question that was generated through the web site of our Embassy. This was selected, though, by, I think, one of the members of our U.S. press corps so that—

Freedom of Speech/State Censorship of Internet Content

U.S. Ambassador to China Jon M. Huntsman, Jr. That's right. And not surprisingly: In a country with 350 million Internet users and 60 million bloggers, do you know of the firewall? And second: Should we be able to use Twitter freely?—is the question.

The President. Well, first of all, let me say that I have never used Twitter. I notice that young people, they're very busy with all these electronics. My thumbs are too clumsy to type in things on the phone. But I am a big believer in technology, and I'm a big believer in openness when it comes to the flow of information. I think that the more freely information flows, the stronger the society becomes, because

then citizens of countries around the world can hold their own governments accountable. They can begin to think for themselves. That generates new ideas. It encourages creativity.

And so I've always been a strong supporter of open Internet use. I'm a big supporter of noncensorship. This is part of the tradition of the United States that I discussed before, and I recognize that different countries have different traditions. I can tell you that in the United States, the fact that we have free Internet—or unrestricted Internet access is a source of strength and, I think, should be encouraged.

Now, I should tell you, I should be honest, as President of the United States, there are times where I wish information didn't flow so freely because then I wouldn't have to listen to people criticizing me all the time. I think people naturally are—when they're in positions of power, sometimes thinks, oh, how could that person say that about me, or that's irresponsible, or—but the truth is that because in the United States information is free, and I have a lot of critics in the United States who can say all kinds of things about me, I actually think that that makes our democracy stronger and it makes me a better leader because it forces me to hear opinions that I don't want to hear. It forces me to examine what I'm doing on a day-to-day basis to see, am I really doing the very best that I could be doing for the people of the United States.

And I think the Internet has become an even more powerful tool for that kind of citizen participation. In fact, one of the reasons that I won the Presidency was because we were able to mobilize young people like yourself to get involved through the Internet. Initially, nobody thought we could win because we didn't have necessarily the most wealthy supporters, we didn't have the most powerful political brokers. But through the Internet, people became excited about our campaign and they started to organize and meet and set up campaign activities and events and rallies. And it really ended up creating the kind of bottom-up movement that allowed us to do very well.

Now, that's not just true in—for government and politics, it's also true for business. You think about a company like Google that only 20 years ago was—less than 20 years ago was the idea of a couple of people not much older than you. It was a science project, and suddenly because of the Internet, they were able to create an industry that has revolutionized commerce all around the world. So if it had not been for the freedom and the openness that the Internet allows, Google wouldn't exist.

So I'm a big supporter of not restricting Internet use, Internet access, other information technologies like Twitter. The more open we are, the more we can communicate. And it also helps to draw the world together.

Think about—when I think about my daughters, Malia and Sasha—one is 11, one is 8—from their room, they can get on the Internet and they can travel to Shanghai. They can go anywhere in the world, and they can learn about anything they want to learn about. And that's just an enormous power that they have. And that helps, I think, promote the kind of understanding that we talked about.

Now, as I said before, there's always a downside to technology. It also means that terrorists are able to organize on the Internet in ways that they might not have been able to do before; extremists can mobilize. And so there's some price that you pay for openness, there's no denying that. But I think that the good outweighs the bad so much that it's better to maintain that openness. And that's part of why I'm so glad that the Internet was part of this forum. Okay?

I'm going to take two more questions. And the next one is from a gentleman, I think. Right? Right here, yes. Here's the microphone.

The President's Advice to Youth/Importance of Contributing to Society

Q. First, I would like to say that it is a great honor for me to stand here to ask you the questions. I think I am so lucky and just appreciate that your speech is so clear that I really do not need such kind of headset. [Laughter]

And here comes the question. My name is—[inaudible]—from Fudan University School of Management. And I would like to ask you the question—is that, now that someone has asked

you something about the Nobel Peace Prize, but I will not ask you in the same aspect. I want to ask you in the other aspect that since it is very hard for you to get such kind of an honorable prize, and I wonder and we all wonder that—how you struggled to get it. And what's your university/college education that brings you to get such kind of prizes? And we are very curious about it, and we would like to invite you to share with us your campus education experiences so as to go on the road of success.

The President. Well, first of all, let me tell you that I don't know if there's a curriculum or course of study that leads you to win the Nobel Peace Prize. [Laughter] So I can't guarantee that. But I think the recipe for success is the one that you are already following. Obviously, all of you are working very hard; you're studying very hard. You're curious. You're willing to think about new ideas and think for yourself. You know, the people who I meet now that I find most inspiring who are successful, I think, are people who are not only willing to work very hard, but are constantly trying to improve themselves and to think in new ways and not just accept the conventional wisdom.

Obviously, there are many different paths to success, and some of you are going to be going into government service, some of you might want to be teachers or professors, some of you might want to be businesspeople. But I think that whatever field you go into, if you're constantly trying to improve and never satisfied with not having done your best and constantly asking new questions—"Are there things that I could be doing differently? Are there new approaches to problems that nobody has thought of before, whether it's in science or technology or in the arts?"—those are usually the people who I think are able to rise about the rest.

The one last piece of advice, though, that I would have that has been useful for me is the people who I admire the most and are most successful, they're not just thinking only about themselves, but they're also thinking about something larger than themselves. So they want to make a contribution to society. They want to make a contribution to their country, their nation, their city. They are interested in having an impact beyond their own immediate lives.

I think so many of us, we get caught up with wanting to make money for ourselves and have a nice car and have a nice house—and all those things are important—but the people who really make their mark on the world is because they have a bigger ambition. They say, “How can I help feed hungry people?” Or, “How can I help to teach children who don’t have an education?” Or, “How can I bring about peaceful resolution of conflicts?” Those are the people, I think, who end up making such a big difference in the world. And I’m sure that young people like you are going to be able to make that kind of difference as long as you keep working the way you’ve been working. All right?

All right, this is going to be the last question, unfortunately. We’ve run out of time so quickly. Our last Internet question, because I want to make sure that we got all three of our fine students here.

Terrorism/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. So, Mr. President, it’s a great honor for the last question. And I’m a college student from Fudan University, and today I’m also the representative of China’s youth netizens. And this question, I think, is from Beijing: Paid great attention to your Afghanistan policies, and he would like to know whether terrorism is still the greatest security concern for the United States? And how do you assess the military actions in Afghanistan, or whether it will turn into another Iraqi war? Thank you very much.

The President. I think that’s an excellent question. Well, first of all, I do continue to believe that the greatest threat to United States security are the terrorist networks like Al Qaida. And the reason is, is because even though they are small in number, what they have shown is, is that they have no conscience when it comes to the destruction of innocent civilians. And because of technology today, if an organization like that got a weapon of mass destruction on its hands—a nuclear or a chemical or a biological weapon—and they used it in a city, whether it’s in Shanghai or New York, just a few individuals could potentially kill tens of thousands of people, maybe hundreds of thou-

sands. So it really does pose an extraordinary threat.

Now, the reason we originally went into Afghanistan was because Al Qaida was in Afghanistan, being hosted by the Taliban. They have now moved over the border of Afghanistan, and they are in Pakistan now, but they continue to have networks with other extremist organizations in that region. And I do believe that it is important for us to stabilize Afghanistan so that the people of Afghanistan can protect themselves, but they can also be a partner in reducing the power of these extremist networks.

Now, obviously, it is a very difficult thing—one of the hardest things about my job is ordering young men and women into the battlefield. I often have to meet with the mothers and fathers of the fallen, those who do not come home. And it is a great weight on me. It gives me a heavy heart.

Fortunately, our Armed Services is—the young men and women who participate, they believe so strongly in their service to their country that they are willing to go. And I think that it is possible, working in a broader coalition with our allies in NATO and others that are contributing, like Australia, to help train the Afghans so that they have a functioning government, that they have their own security forces, and then slowly we can begin to pull our troops out because there’s no longer that vacuum that existed after the Taliban left.

But it’s a difficult task. It’s not easy. And ultimately, I think, in trying to defeat these terrorist extremists, it’s important to understand it’s not just a military exercise. We also have to think about what motivates young people to become terrorists, why would they become suicide bombers. And although there are, obviously, a lot of different reasons, including, I think, the perversion of religion, in thinking that somehow these kinds of violent acts are appropriate, part of what’s happened in places like Pakistan and Afghanistan is these young people have no education, they have no opportunities, and so they see no way for them to move forward in life, and that leads them into thinking that this is their only option.

And so part of what we want to do in Afghanistan is to find ways that we can train teachers and create schools and improve agriculture so that people have a greater sense of hope. That won't change the ideas of a Usama bin Laden who are very ideologically fixed on trying to strike at the West, but it will change the pool of young people who they can recruit from. And that is at least as important, if not more important over time, as whatever military actions that we can take. Okay?

All right, I have had a wonderful time. I am so grateful to all of you. First of all, let me say I'm very impressed with all of your English. Clearly, you've been studying very hard. And having a chance to meet with all of you, I think, has given me great hope for the future of U.S.-China relations.

I hope that many of you have the opportunity to come and travel and visit the United States. You will be welcomed. I think you will find that

the American people feel very warmly towards the people of China. And I am very confident that, with young people like yourselves and the young people that I know in the United States, that our two great countries will continue to prosper and help to bring about a more peaceful and secure world.

So thank you very much everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. at the Museum of Science and Technology. In his remarks, he referred to Yang Yuliang, president, Fudan University; Yao Ming, center, National Basketball Association's Houston Rockets; Mayor Han Zheng of Shanghai; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng and her husband Konrad Ng. Some participants spoke in Chinese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Release of the 2008 Household Food Security Report *November 16, 2009*

As American families prepare to gather for Thanksgiving, we received an unsettling report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that found that hunger rose significantly last year. This trend was already painfully clear in many communities across our Nation, where food stamp applications are surging and food pantry shelves are emptying.

It is particularly troubling that there were more than 500,000 families in which a child experienced hunger multiple times over the course of the year. Our children's ability to grow, learn, and meet their full potential, and therefore, our future competitiveness as a nation, depends on regular access to healthy meals.

My administration is committed to reversing the trend of rising hunger. The first task is to restore job growth, which will help relieve the

economic pressures that make it difficult for parents to put a square meal on the table each day. But we are also taking targeted steps to prevent Americans from experiencing hunger. Earlier this year, we extended help to those hit hardest by this economic downturn by boosting SNAP benefits. And Secretary Vilsack is working hard to make sure eligible families are able to access those benefits as well as the School Lunch and Breakfast Program. In addition, a bill I signed into law last month invests \$85 million in new strategies to prevent children from experiencing hunger in the summer.

Hunger is a problem that we can solve together, and I look forward to working with Congress to pass a strong child nutrition bill that will help children get the healthy meals they need to grow and succeed and help keep America competitive in the decades to come.