

notes our exports. It gives our people new skills and creates good jobs—but not only for us, for our trading partners as well. And it plays another very important role: It gives us a dividend by helping the nations with which we trade, and especially the nations in Central Europe, to consolidate their hard-won democracy on a foundation of free enterprise and political freedom.

In all of our countries, we stand at the start of a new era, an era of breathtaking change and expanding opportunities. The explosion of trade and technology has produced a new global economy in which people and ideas and capital come together more quickly, more easily, more creatively than ever before. It is literally true that the end of the cold war has liberated millions of Europeans and introduced both free markets and democracy to countries not only there but on every continent of the globe.

But this promise is also clouded by fear and uncertainty. Economic uncertainty, the breakdown of the old rules of the social contract is a problem in every advanced Western democracy and in wealthy countries in the East, like Japan. And beyond that and even deeper, aggression by malicious states, transnational threats like overpopulation and environmental degradation, terrible ethnic conflicts, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, all these problems beyond our own borders make it tempting to many Americans to retrench behind our borders, to say, “Look, we’ve got a lot of possibilities, and we’ve got more problems than we can handle here at home, so let’s just forget about the rest of the world for a while. We did our job in the cold war. We spent our money to keep the world free from communism. And we are tired, and we’ve got plenty to do here.” There are many people who believe exactly that in this country and in our Congress.

But the very fact of democracy’s triumph in the cold war, while it has led some to argue that we ought to confine our focus to challenges here at home and to say we cannot afford to lead anymore, in fact imposes on us new responsibilities and new opportunities. And I would argue that we cannot benefit the American people here at home unless we assume those responsibilities and seize those opportunities.

Those who say we can just walk away have views that are shortsighted. We must reach out, not retrench. I will continue to work in this new Congress with both the Republicans and

the Democrats to forge a bipartisan coalition of internationalists who share those same convictions. The agreement we reached yesterday with congressional leaders from both sides of the aisle to help Mexico restore full confidence in its economy demonstrates the potential of a coalition committed to America’s interests in the world of tomorrow. And I will do everything in my power, as I have done for 2 years now, to keep our country engaged in the world. I won’t let anyone or anything divert the United States from this course. The whole future of the world and the future of our children here in the United States depend on our continued involvement and leadership in the world.

History teaches us, after all, that security and prosperity here at home require that we maintain a focus abroad. Remember that after World War I the United States refused the leadership role. We withdrew behind our borders, behind our big trade barriers. We left a huge vacuum that was filled with the forces of hatred and tyranny. The resulting struggle to preserve our freedom in World War II cost millions of lives and required all the energy and resources we could muster to forestall an awful result.

After the Second World War, a wise generation of Americans refused to let history repeat itself. So in the face of the Communist challenge, they helped to shape NATO, the Marshall plan, GATT, and the other structures that ensured 50 years of building prosperity and security for America, for Western Europe, and Japan.

Ultimately, the strength of those structures, the force of democracy, and the heroic determination of peoples to be free produced victory in the cold war. Now, in the aftermath of that victory, it is our common responsibility not to squander the peace. We must realize the full potential of that victory. Now that freedom has been won, all our people deserve to reap the tangible rewards of their sacrifice, people in the United States and people in Central Europe. Now that freedom has been won, our nations must be determined that it will never be lost again.

The United States is seizing this moment. History has given us a gift, and the results are there to prove it. Because of the agreements we reached with Russia, with Belarus, with Kazakhstan, with Ukraine, for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age, Americans can go to bed at night knowing that nuclear