

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Op-ed by President Obama in USA Today: Let's reclaim the post-9/11 unity

The full text of the op-ed by President Barack Obama is printed below. The piece, published in today's USA Today.

Let's reclaim the post-9/11 unity

By President Obama

Ten Septembers have come and gone since that awful morning. But on this 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, we are summoned once more to honor those we lost by keeping our country strong and true to their memory.

Over the coming days, we will remember nearly 3,000 innocent victims — fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters who were simply going about their daily lives on a beautiful Tuesday morning. And we'll talk to our children about what happened on that day, and what's happened since.

Like every American, I'll never forget how I heard the terrible news, on the car radio on my way to work in Chicago. Yet like a lot of younger Americans, our daughters have no memory of that day. Malia was just 3; Sasha was an infant. As they've grown, Michelle and I faced the same challenge as other parents in deciding how to talk with our children about 9/11.

One of the things we've told them is that the worst terrorist attack in American history also brought out the best in our country. Firefighters, police and first responders rushed into danger to save others. Americans came together in candlelight vigils, in our houses of worship and on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. Volunteers lined up to give blood and drove across the country to lend a hand. Schoolchildren donated their savings. Communities, faith groups and businesses collected food and clothing. We were united, as Americans.

This is the true spirit of America we must reclaim this anniversary — the ordinary goodness and patriotism of the American people and the unity that we needed to move forward together, as one nation.

Indeed, the last decade has been a challenging one for our country. But we have also seen the strength of the United States— in cities that have refused to give in to fear; in communities that have persevered through hard economic times; and, above all, in our men and women in uniform and their families who have borne an extraordinary burden for our security and our values.

The perpetrators of those attacks wanted to terrorize us, but they are no match for our resilience. Today, our

country is more secure and our enemies are weaker. Yet while we have delivered justice to Osama bin Laden and put al-Qaeda on the path to defeat, we must never waver in the task of protecting our nation.

On a day when others sought to destroy, we choose to build. Once again, Sept. 11 will be a National Day of Service and Remembrance, and at Serve.gov every American can make a commitment to honor the victims and heroes of 9/11 by serving our neighbors and communities.

Finally, on a day when others tried to divide us, we can regain the sense of common purpose that stirred in our hearts 10 years ago. As a nation, we face difficult challenges, and as citizens in a democratic society we engage in vigorous debates about the future. But as we do, let's never forget the lesson we learned anew 10 years ago — that our differences pale beside what unites us and that when we choose to move forward together, as one American family, the United States doesn't just endure, we can emerge from our tests and trials stronger than before.

That's the America we were on 9/11 and in the days that followed.

That's the America we can and must always be.

Vice President Biden on China's Rise

Vice President Biden authored this commentary, published by The New York Times on September 8. The full text is below and on www.nytimes.com.

China's Rise Isn't Our Demise

By Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.

I first visited China in 1979, a few months after our countries normalized relations. China was just beginning to remake its economy, and I was in the first Senate delegation to witness this evolution. Traveling through the country last month, I could see how much China had changed in 32 years — and yet the debate about its remarkable rise remains familiar.

Then, as now, there were concerns about what a growing China meant to America and the world. Some here and in the region see China's growth as a threat, entertaining visions of a cold-war-style rivalry or great-power confrontation. Some Chinese worry that our aim in the Asia-Pacific is to contain China's rise.

I reject these views. We are clear-eyed about concerns like China's growing military abilities and intentions; that is why we are engaging with the Chinese military to understand and shape their thinking. It is why the

president has directed the United States, with our allies, to keep a strong presence in the region. As I told China's leaders and people, America is a Pacific power and will remain one.

But, I remain convinced that a successful China can make our country more prosperous, not less.

As trade and investment bind us together, we have a stake in each other's success. On issues from global security to global economic growth, we share common challenges and responsibilities – and we have incentives to work together. That is why our administration has worked to put our relationship on a stable footing. I am convinced, from nearly a dozen hours spent with Vice President Xi Jinping, that China's leadership agrees.

We often focus on Chinese exports to America, but last year American companies exported more than \$100 billion worth of goods and services to China, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs here. In fact, our exports to China have been growing much faster than our exports to the rest of the world.

The Chinese leaders I met with know their country must shift from an economy driven by exports, investment and heavy industry to one driven more by consumption and services. This includes continued steps to revalue their currency and to provide fair access to their markets. As Americans save more and Chinese buy more, this transition will accelerate, opening opportunities for us.

Even as the United States and China cooperate, we also compete. I strongly believe that the United States can and will flourish from this competition.

First, we need to keep China's rising economic power in perspective. According to the International Monetary Fund, America's gross domestic product, almost \$15 trillion, is still more than twice as large as China's; our per-capita G.D.P., above \$47,000, is 11 times China's.

And while there is a lot of talk about China's "owning" America's debt, the truth is that Americans own America's debt. China holds just 8 percent of outstanding Treasury securities. By comparison, Americans hold nearly 70 percent. Our unshakable commitment to honoring our financial obligations is for the sake of Americans, as well as for those overseas. It is why the United States has never defaulted on its obligations and never will.

Maybe more important, the nature of 21st-century competition favors the United States. In the 20th century, we measured a nation's wealth primarily by its natural resources, its land mass, its population and its army. In the 21st century, the true wealth of a nation is found in

the creative minds of its people and their ability to innovate.

As I told students in Chengdu, the United States is hard-wired for innovation. Competition is in the very fabric of our society. It has enabled each generation of Americans to give life to world-changing ideas – from the cotton gin to the airplane, the microchip, the Internet.

We owe our strength to our political and economic system and to the way we educate our children – not merely to accept established orthodoxy but to challenge and improve it. We not only tolerate but celebrate free expression and vigorous debate. The rule of law protects private property, lends predictability to investments, and ensures accountability for poor and wealthy alike. Our universities remain the ultimate destination for the world's students and scholars. And we welcome immigrants with skill, ambition and the desire to better their lives.

America's strengths are, for now, China's weaknesses. In China, I argued that for it to make the transition to an innovation economy, it will have to open its system, not least to human rights. Fundamental rights are universal, and China's people aspire to them. Liberty unlocks a people's full potential, while its absence breeds unrest. Open and free societies are best at promoting long-term growth, stability, prosperity and innovation.

We have our own work to do. We need to ensure that any American willing to work can find a good job. We need to keep attracting the world's top talent. We must continue to invest in the fundamental sources of our strength: education, infrastructure and innovation. But our future is in our own hands. If we take bold steps, there is no reason America won't emerge stronger than ever.

As vice president, I've traveled half a million miles around the world. I always come home feeling the same confidence in our future. Some may warn of America's demise, but I'm not among them. And let me reassure you: based on my time in China, neither are the Chinese.

Confidence Key to Taliban Reintegration, Commander Says

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington – The Afghan-led reintegration program for former Taliban fighters has enrolled nearly 10 percent of the group's estimated force in the year since the program began, and a commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) says more are expected to participate as trust and confidence build between them and Afghan officials, as well as their desire to peacefully return to their homes after years of fighting.

Speaking to reporters in a September 8 teleconference from Kabul, Afghanistan, British Army Major General Phil Jones, who directs ISAF's Force Reintegration Cell, said that nearly one year after Afghanistan's High Peace Council met in October 2010 to launch the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program, it has successfully established peace committees in 32 Afghan provinces and enrolled 2,418 former Taliban fighters in the reintegration program.

"These are 2,418 men who are no longer shooting at the coalition and Afghan soldiers, no longer laying roadside bombs that kill innocent women and children," Jones said, and they account for roughly 10 percent of the estimated 25,000 active professional Taliban fighters and others who have been fighting the government for many years.

Jones said Afghanistan's 30 years of conflict has resulted in wariness, skepticism and caution among its people for the program, and added the process is dependent on a steady increase of confidence among all sides.

"This requires courageous Afghan leaders to make bold decisions to reject the cycle of violence and work to build local and national peace. It requires huge energy to overcome the inertia of war, and great persistence to build the confidence and trust necessary to achieve momentum," he said.

He said the program is gaining traction, and through their participation, both the fighters and the local communities are making "brave decisions" to reject the insurgency and violence despite facing continued threats and intimidation. "I have a great deal of respect for those that are doing this," Jones said.

Jones said that even though reintegration is an Afghan-led and -designed process, ISAF has been supporting Afghan leaders in the creation and execution of the initiative.

"ISAF's part in all of this is to work with all of our Afghan military and civil partners to bring increasing synergies between security, political outreach, governance, the rule of law and development," he said. "We're keen supporters, able and willing to do whatever we can to support the Afghan peace and reintegration program."

U.S. FUNDING FOCUSES ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The program includes a stipend of \$120 per fighter per month for three months to help ease them back into their communities, but Jones said they are returning "as a consequence of peacebuilding, not as a result of material or financial incentives."

He said the \$142 million donated to the program by the United States and other countries is "almost exclusively focused on community development projects in response to peace."

The fighters themselves "have the greatest incentive of all" to participate so they can "step off the battlefield with their honor and dignity intact and return to Afghanistan and live in peace," he said.

"We try to give them some sense of security guarantees that if they join the peace process and remain in the peace process, they can live in peace at home," Jones said.

He said that in their direct contacts with Taliban leaders, ISAF personnel have told them: "If you join the peace process, we will support you going back to your communities. We'll work with your communities; we'll work with the local Afghan security forces ... [and] we'll lift targeting off you."

As an example, Jones mentioned Noor-ul-Aziz Agha, a significant local Taliban leader from Kandahar, who was successfully reintegrated five months ago and is now the minister of hajj and religious affairs in Kandahar.

"I think this is remarkable, and it sends a very strong message of inclusion," he said. Through political stabilization and political inclusion, the security gains from a surge in U.S. troops announced by President Obama in December 2009 are being better consolidated. Those additional U.S. troops are now beginning to transition out of Afghanistan, with 33,000 troops set to depart by summer 2012.

Both the civilian surge and improvements in Afghan security capability as a result of the campaign are also helping the reintegration process by reshaping the mood of the Afghan people "from a profound gloom to people who are starting to grapple with a more orderly future and starting to grapple with a sense of transition, allowing them to achieve sovereignty in so many domains with a structured process around it," he said.

Jones said the reintegration program constitutes a "key supporting element of transition" as ISAF forces prepare to turn over security for the whole country to the Afghan government by 2014.

"You don't make peace between your friends; you make peace with your enemies," he said. "We have to bring complicated and controversial ... people together and set the example and move on from there."

U.S., Canada Explore Oceans' Changing Chemistry

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington – U.S. and Canadian scientists are working together to understand the oceans' changing chemistry through floats that monitor the acidity and total carbon dioxide content of seawater, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Argo floats, which measure 1.5 meters tall, drift with deep ocean currents and transmit the gathered data via satellite back to scientists, NOAA said in an August 2 press release.

"Most observations have been taken by scientists aboard specialized research ships, so this represents a major step forward in the ability to monitor ocean chemistry at higher frequency and lower cost," said Lauren Juranek, an oceanographer with the University of Washington's Joint Institute for the Study of the Atmosphere and Ocean (JISAO).

Juranek was the lead author in a study of the new method, which was published in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters* August 2.

According to NOAA, this new method shows how readings of ocean acidity and carbon dioxide levels can help scientists understand changes in the chemistry of the world's oceans.

The method was developed by researchers from NOAA's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory in Seattle, JISAO and colleagues from the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans in British Columbia and Quebec.

The scientists established the method by determining the relationships among seawater temperature, oxygen, acidity and carbon dioxide through observations on ship-based expeditions during the last five years. These relationships were then applied to high-resolution observations collected by an Argo float deployed in the North Pacific in early 2010.

The Argo floats used in the study are part of the international Argo observing network, which combines about 3,000 active floats deployed throughout the world's oceans by researchers in more than 30 countries. The floats regularly collect temperature, salinity and other data that are used to determine how the oceans' chemistry is changing over time.

"These measurements can be used to complement traditional ship-based observations, not replace them. Because we can't sample as frequently as we would like to, this approach allows us to provide repeat data on 10-day intervals," said Richard Feely, a NOAA senior

scientist and co-author of the study. He said that even though some ship-based work remains essential, the Argo floats give scientists a "new perspective on ocean physics and chemistry" and a more complete view of the ocean carbon system.

He said absorption of carbon dioxide causes the level of acidity in seawater to rise in a process called acidification, which can have adverse effects on organisms such as corals, mussels and oysters.

The floats are critical to understanding and predicting these changes in both the atmosphere and the ocean, and the information they provide helps to guide international actions, optimize governmental policies and shape industrial strategies, according to the International Argo Project website.

NOAA said the scientists involved in the study will continue working across national borders to learn about the Earth's environment and better conserve and manage coastal and marine resources.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)