



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
August 31, 2007

Roundtable Interview of the President by Foreign Print Media

Roosevelt Room

August 30, 2007

11:30 A.M. EDT

 [White House News](#)

THE PRESIDENT: So, like, what are the rules?

MR. WILDER: On the record.

THE PRESIDENT: I'm talking about for these people back here.

MR. JOHNDROE: It's all on the record. It's embargoed until these fine people have a chance to run their stories.

THE PRESIDENT: Good. Thanks. I'm looking forward to my trip. This is the 7th APEC summit that I've been to. I find them to be important for the United States in the following ways: One, it's an opportunity to stress the importance that we place upon basic values; basic value of liberty, basic value of open markets in order to enhance prosperity. It's a chance to remind people that we are linked together. It's an interesting setting, when you have people from different cultures, different languages come together for a common purpose. I think that's important.

It's also a chance for me to remind our country how important it is to have constructive ties in Asia. Asia is a place where we've spilt a lot of blood in the past, and now it's a place of peace. Asia is a place where the United States was engaged militarily, and now we're engaged culturally and socially and economically in a way that is constructive for our peoples.

It will be an opportunity for -- remind me that it's possible for enemies to be allies and for enemies to be friends. It's a lesson for a lot of us to think about when we think about the Middle East, that forms of government matter, and hopeful societies yield peace.

I'm looking forward to the discussions about trade. The first priority for trade for me at the meeting will be on Doha. I'm a firm believer in free trade. I believe the Doha Round is the best opportunity for us to accomplish a couple of objectives. One is to fight off protectionism and trade freely, and secondly is to help eliminate poverty. This will be an opportunity for the leaders of the APEC summit to express their desire to see the Doha Round succeed. We'll take the lead in that, along with other nations.

There's also an opportunity for us to start talking about a free trade agreement of the Pacific region. And I'm looking forward to having that dialogue, begin the dialogue. It would just be kind of an interesting opportunity to have the dialogue on this aspect of our strategic partnership there, and to move forward. We've got a lot of -- we've got some free trade agreements with people, and that will be at the table. I'd like to see those free trade agreements become regionalized.

Opportunity for me to continue to talk about the struggle between radicalism and reasonableness, between extremism and people that want to live in peace. I happen to believe -- I'm sure you've heard me say this -- that we're in a major ideological struggle -- a struggle we will win, by the way. But it's going to require resolve and dedication. And this will be an opportunity for me to remind our friends at the table that this is the call of our time, and that we have an opportunity to write a hopeful chapter here in the beginning of the 21st century, and to thank people around the table for understanding this is the call of the time, because there's been a lot of constructive

engagement and good work all aimed at protecting ourselves from short-term attack -- in the short-term from attack, and recognizing that changing conditions of life in the long-term will enable us to live in peace.

And finally, I'm looking forward to reminding people that I take the climate change issue seriously; that we recognize that there needs to be international -- an international accord to get people at the table who are the major emitters to set a goal. Step one to solving a problem is to set the goal on what we ought to achieve. If you want somebody to be a part of the problem -- a part of the solution, you need to let them be a part of defining what the goal ought to be. That's the strategy.

So many of the people at the APEC table are going to come to the major economy conference that -- those of us who are emitters will be there, including China, which will be at the table. I don't want to single China out, but China has got a major role to play. Any agreement without China is not going to be an effective agreement. So my strategy has been to get China at the table. We will further the dialogue. John Howard has got some very interesting ways to further the dialogue in a constructive way, particularly talking about energy usage. So we'll be looking forward to his leadership on the issue. When I told him I was looking forward to coming, we discussed this issue. He's concerned about greenhouse gases. And so he'll take the lead here at the conference, and the United States will play a constructive role.

Anyway, that's why I'm looking forward to going. We've got a big agenda. It's my second trip to Australia. I remind people that Australia -- parts of Australia reminds me of Texas -- (laughter) -- and there's no higher compliment. (Laughter.)

So, given that, Geoff, why don't you start off? We'll do two rounds, then I've got to go.

Q Thanks, Mr. President. I think on behalf of all of us, I can say thank you very much for this opportunity today.

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks.

Q As you've just analyzed, Mr. President, obviously Iraq and the Middle East, the war on terror is an overarching policy issue for the Bush administration. Nonetheless, there has been a perception in the region that this has distracted Washington from engagement in Asia. There's been some criticism on that score. Some people are calling this the Pacific century. You're cutting short your trip to Sydney because of the Iraq issue. I'm just wondering, do you think that's warranted, that criticism, and do you see China, for instance, playing the role -- the driver in the Pacific century, not the U.S.?

THE PRESIDENT: No, it's interesting -- first of all, this administration has got good bilateral relations with Japan, good bilateral relations with China, good bilateral relations with Korea. Our relationship with the ASEAN countries are as strong as America has ever been, and of course our ties with Australia are tight, really tight.

And the reason I say that is, is that this just doesn't happen without work. And I have worked hard to develop bilateral relations in such a way that we can achieve strategic objectives. I believe the relations with the United States and the Asian Pacific region have never been better, and as a result we're addressing problems and creating opportunities.

One problem, of course, is North Korea. When I came into office the world was expecting the United States to solve the North Korea issue alone. To me -- and the North Korean leader had basically not honored the bilateral agreement that had been struck, and therefore felt like we needed to put this issue in a position in which others were speaking besides the United States, and have started the six-party talks. Five countries were convinced to come to the table on one side to convince the North Korean leader to give up his nuclear weapons ambitions. It's working. That wouldn't have happened without engagement and good, solid relations.

Another issue, obviously, is our bilateral relations with China. It's the same -- you're in a little different position in that you've got a nice trade surplus with China. We've got a trade deficit with China. And it's important for us to have a -- given the complexity of our relationship, that we've got a strategic relationship that allows for engagement and for us to help deal with a major trade deficit, for example, and/or product safety, or a SARS outbreak. Secretary Paulson -- I empowered Secretary Paulson to develop this special working relationship with China. And it requires a lot of engagement. It requires engagement at the top, with President Hu Jintao, who I respect, as well as people in my Cabinet. So there's a lot of interchange. For those who argue that, they really

haven't -- frankly haven't followed how engaged we have been.

Is China an issue for the world? Absolutely. But I don't view it as a negative issue, I view it as an opportunity to work with a -- one of the really significantly growing economies in the world.

Here's the way I view it: First, I view that a growing middle class in China is good for U.S. exporters; it provides opportunity. And it's, by the way, it's not only good for U.S. exports, it's good for Australian exporters, and it's good for Japanese exporters, and it's good for Singaporean, Malaysian -- anybody who is making a product somebody wants, it's just a good opportunity.

And so as a part of our engagement with China, we have worked with Hu Jintao to convince him to help convert his economy from one of savers to one of consumers, which means -- and, by the way, that takes a lot of effort and work to get in a position where you can even make those kind of constructive suggestions, which means the development of a pension system, or health care, so that people don't feel like they have to hoard their money to save for a rainy day, but in fact there's some kind of safety net that is predictable, which then would convert a Chinese person who is beginning to realize better income into a consumer. And then all of a sudden you've got consumers, which provide opportunity.

Now, Hu Jintao actually gave these remarks at the White House along these lines, at the East Room there. It took a lot of trust and work to get -- to enable him to make that statement, but that's the kind of statement which people around the region ought to say, thankfully -- I'm thankful that he was able to say that, because it takes what some view as a problem and converts it into a great opportunity for all of us to grow our respective economies.

Q Huge economic opportunity. You see China as the big grower of the economy in the Asia Pacific?

THE PRESIDENT: No, I see the United States as the big driver for trade. We're a significant economy. At APEC people ought to be wondering whether or not George Bush is going to keep taxes low, to make sure our economy continues to grow, because we're a significant trading partner. I view China as an opportunity.

I think the United States is going to drive a lot of the trade. That's why we conducted -- now, having said that, I think China will provide opportunity for Australian producers, but we also provide the same opportunity. I don't view it as a zero-sum game. Let me put it to you that way. I view it as an -- I view all of us contribute, so long as the world doesn't slip into protectionism. And part of the reason one goes to APEC is to promote trade and opportunity.

Tia.

Q Just following up about China. Do you consider actually China is a friend or an enemy, and how do you plan to win the hearts and win the markets in the world, including in Southeast Asian countries, like Indonesia?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think, first of all, we have a complex relationship with China. It is one that -- where it is growing, it's changing. The United States strongly supports markets. China is a market that's developing. On the other hand, we also support open societies, transparency, where people are allowed to express themselves in a free society. I believe in freedom of religion. I believe in basic freedoms.

So our relationship with China is, on the one hand we welcome trading opportunities; we want there to be free trade and fair trade; we want the currency to float. These are complex issues. And what makes the relationship even more complex is at the same time we believe in human rights and human dignity. And we worked with the Chinese leadership to promote human rights and human dignity.

So it's not -- it's hard to define the relationship in kind of a simple, one-sentence structure. And so "complex" is probably the best way to say -- but positive. As I told you, I view China as a positive opportunity. And from a personal perspective, have got warm and cordial relationships with President Hu Jintao. I like him; I like to talk to him. He's a smart man. We can share issues together. I can say, what are your biggest problems, and he can say to me, what are your problems. In other words, we've got a personal relationship.

And that's the way I try to do with all leaders, because the best diplomacy is when you can sit down with

somebody one-on-one and speak candidly about issues and problems. We're problem solvers. See, that's what leaders do. You see problems, and you anticipate problems and work together to accomplish something. And therefore there has to be a personal relationship.

I've also got a very good relationship with your leader. And so bilateral relations -- first of all, in the Muslim world, it's very important for people to understand that the war on terror is not a war against Muslims, it's a war against murderers. I don't believe religious people, truly religious people kill the innocent. At least that's not the religion I believe in. And therefore it's important for leaders and countries to work together to prevent the murder of the innocent, and at the same time, make sure that we respect -- America, in my case, respects religion, values the right for people to worship, and, in the case of Islam, values Islam as an important part of the international scene in the world we live in.

Otsuka.

Q Thank you very much, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: How are you?

Q Good.

THE PRESIDENT: Have we met before?

Q No, first time.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, well, I'm better for it. (Laughter.)

Q I have a question on North Korea.

THE PRESIDENT: North Korea, sure.

Q Is it possible that North Korea will give up nuclear weapons program by the end of your term? And to help achieve it, are you ready to remove North Korea from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list, even without the resolution of Japanese abductee issue?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, thank you. As to the first part of your question, I certainly hope that North Korea honors its agreements. They -- in September of 2006, they made a substantial agreement to disclose and dismantle all aspects of a nuclear weapons program. Is that right, September 6th?

MR. HADLEY: 2005.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, 2005, excuse me. And here we are in 2007, nearly two years later, where we're still reminding them of that agreement. On the other hand, a lot has happened in the last couple of months that would lead me to believe that we're on -- we're making progress. And we will continue to push toward the full disclosure and dismantlement.

Secondly, we have -- different aspects of our relationship are on the table, but it's performance based. In other words, we expect people to honor their agreements.

Finally, as I assured Prime Minister Abe, that we're not going to forget the abductee issue. He and the Japanese people are very concerned that once certain aspects of the agreement are achieved that we will forget the fact that Japanese citizens have been abducted.

Well, let me tell you something, Otsuka -- Ryuichi.

Q Ryuichi.

THE PRESIDENT: Ryuichi. I'll never forget the meeting I had with the mother -- it's very important for your readers to know that that had a deep impression on me, the mother whose daughter was abducted by North Koreans. I can't imagine what that would mean. I guess I can imagine what it would mean; I just can't understand, fully understand the pain that she felt -- still feels. And I'll never forget her coming to the Oval Office with the picture of that little girl -- picture of her daughter who got abducted. She sat right there in the Oval Office. And my point to you is, is that I'm not going to forget the mother, or forget the fact.

And so we'll work with the -- continue to work with the Japanese to make it clear to the North Koreans that we also expect there to be resolution to this issue. In other words, I understand, as well as I possibly can, the emotion that people attach to this issue.

Salmy.

Q Yes, sir. Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: By the way, happy 50th.

Q Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: I remember when I turned 50, I felt old. (Laughter.) But now that I'm over 60, it's not that old.

Q Not that bad.

THE PRESIDENT: No, it really isn't. You're not even close, you wouldn't even know.

Q You look very young, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: You are young. Oh, I look young? (Laughter.) Good. I'm feeling pretty young, thanks. It's all in your mind.

Q Sir, your administration has indicated interest to appoint a special envoy to the Organization of Islamic Conference, or the OIC. Have you identified the person? And what will he or she do to bridge relations with the Islamic countries in the Muslim world, in light of the war in Iraq and in light of the detention of extremists from Muslim countries?

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, we have not identified the person yet; we're working toward that end. As a matter of fact, I spoke to the Secretary of State about this this morning, coincidentally enough. And she's coming in, I think tomorrow. Anyway, we're working the issue.

Secondly, the reason why I suggested -- or announced that we're going to do this is because I am concerned about the perceptions in the Muslim world that the United States views the war on terror as a war against a particular religion. And I just explained to you that this is a war of extremists and radicals, ideologues driven by a vision that is not -- that hijacks religion in order to justify their position. And any chance we have to dispel false notion and to reinforce the realities is helpful to the United States, and frankly others, as well. And so that's the reason to name the envoy.

It also is a clear signal that we respect nations and that we treat the Islamic world seriously. And you can do that all different kinds of ways. It's just another statement. It's another moment for people to see the seriousness of intent.

In terms of -- murder is murder, and murder to achieve political objectives is -- needs to be stopped. People murdered Americans to achieve a political objective. There's a debate in our country whether that's true or not. I've made up my mind. I believe it's absolutely fundamentally true, because I'm listening to what the enemy says, the enemy of freedom, what they're saying. They say, we want a caliphate; we want to spread our vision.

It took a military action, by the way, to liberate people from that vision in Afghanistan. This wasn't an attack on

Islam; this was an attack for liberty. Think about a society in which you two could not function in what you're doing because of your gender. Why? Because the vision of these people who murder the innocent, by the way, to achieve their vision is that women aren't equal. And it just so happened that, given the way the world is today, that that kind of ideologue provided safe haven for people who plotted and killed people in our country. One, I'm not going to stand for it; I'm going to protect America, just like any other leader would protect their own country. And two, one way to achieve long-term peace is to help people realize forms of government that give hope. And so whether it be in Afghanistan and Iraq, we're helping people realize the blessings of freedom. And frankly, the world ought to be in there helping. And they are, many are.

Freedom yields peace. Asia is peaceful. Why? Because freedom is prevailing, that's why. Forms of government matter. And so the ambassador to the OIC, or the President, or any other representative of America will be expressing this deep desire to work together to achieve peace.

Derwin.

Q Mr. President, what do you think you have achieved with regards to U.S. ties with Asia during your time in office? And what do you consider to be unfinished business?

THE PRESIDENT: Unfinished business is North Korea. It's -- let me just say, it is finishing. In other words, we're making progress. The six-party talks is working. The first step was to get people to the table, to remind people that it's just not the United States with responsibility. The purpose of the -- getting all five of us to the table is so that if North Korea tried to say, well, I'm really -- I said I was going to do it but I'm not going to do it, then there is somebody else also saying, and here are the consequences.

And so that's a major step forward. And now it's beginning to work, because they're verifiably beginning to shut down the reactor. And so we've got more to do.

So it's finishing but unfinished. Unfinished is kind of a loaded word, in a way. Sort of like -- the question is, can it happen before I'm through? Yes, it can. I hope so. But I'm not -- we're not in control of -- we're in control of putting the process in place and making sure it's consequential if somebody doesn't go forward. But it's the leader of North Korea who gets to make the decision. It's his choice to make. I've made my choice. It's his choice to make.

Let me reiterate a little bit of what I said earlier. The definition of successful foreign policy is to be in a position to work with others to solve problems. And this administration has worked hard to be in a position to convince others to work together to solve problems.

I've just outlined some of the problems, some of the problems -- whether or not trade is open and people are treated fairly. One classic example of this is intellectual property rights. I know that's a deep concern to your government, just like it is to all our governments, that if you're trading with a country, you want to make sure that those intellectual property rights are treated respectfully.

And in some societies, it's difficult, and therefore we have to be in a position to work collaboratively and bilaterally to convince countries that in order to be a part of the international world, you have to honor contract, and one contract is you don't steal somebody else's intellectual property. That's hard work. But nevertheless, those kind of relationships exist now; we're able to have those kind of dialogues.

There's been a lot of cooperation on the security front in remarkable ways since I've been President. The leadership of your country knows full well the dangers of extremism prevailing, and have been very strong in working, for example, on the Proliferation Security Initiative. This is an initiative where many APEC nations have agreed to help find and stop the shipment of materials which could end up in the hands of extremists and radicals that could harm us.

And it took a while to get this relationship in place. But it's a relationship that is necessary to help prevent weapons of mass destruction from being moved. And it's been a very effective relationship. And here's a classic case of a successful collaborative effort.

The biggest danger we have, it seems like to me, is isolationism and protectionism becoming prevalent philosophies. One of the things that this administration has done in working with our friends is to work hard to explain to people the beneficial nature of trading together. And therefore -- and that's manifested, by the way, in, for example, the free trade agreement with Australia, which wasn't a given. And there were some difficulties to overcome in Australia and in the United States, but nevertheless we got it done. And entering into free trade agreements with other nations such as Singapore has been good ways of making sure that we codify the benefits of open trading relationships.

And so there's been a lot of progress made, and the North Korean issue is the issue that we're spending a lot of time on, and hopefully we can get completed.

One more round. Geoff.

Q Okay. Mr. President, thank you. Just to the domestic scene. We've got federal elections, as you know, coming up in Australia. Last time around you had some comments with regards to the then opposition leader's policies on Iraq. You described his policy of withdrawal from Iraq as disastrous. You have a one-on-one meeting with the opposition leader, Kevin Rudd, he's ahead in the polls. He's also got a policy in Iraq which talks about withdrawal, albeit with caveats. I'm just wondering, what's your view of the opposition leader Kevin Rudd? What will you discuss in the meeting? And what do you make of his Iraq policy?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, first of all, I think it makes sense for me to reach out to leading political figures when I go to other countries. And so I'm looking forward to this meeting. I don't know much about him, frankly. Obviously I haven't -- maybe I met him, I don't remember meeting him. When I spoke to the Parliament --

Q He was an opposition member then.

THE PRESIDENT: Could have been shaking hands. I'm going to remind him that, one, the stakes in Iraq are very high for peace; that the liberation of a country -- that country was important for peace and that a democracy -- Iraqi-style democracy in the heart of the Middle East is part of winning this ideological struggle. So the first thing I'm going to do is explain to him my views about this -- the world in which we live. And I'll remind him that, as far as I'm concerned, that leaving Iraq before the job is done will cause an enemy that attacked us before to become emboldened. And as John Abizaid put it, to think the enemy will stay there and not follow us here is -- in other words, we leave before the job is done, they will follow us home.

That -- I will remind him that the best way to conduct policy is based upon conditions on the ground; that success is important, that conditions ought to be driving troop deployments. And that's how -- I'll tell him how -- what I would hope all our coalition partners would view the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Having said that, I do appreciate very much the fact that the Australians have sacrificed and have served. And I'm looking forward to seeing some Australian troops with Prime Minister Howard to thank them, and as importantly, thank their families for joining America and a lot of other countries in the great cause of liberation and peace.

It's going to be an interesting trip, and what's interesting about these trips is that the time around the table with leaders is important, but also the time sitting down with individuals is important, as well. It's a good opportunity to conduct foreign policy. And as I told you, a lot of foreign policy for me is the capacity to just look at somebody in the eye and tell them what I think, and listen to what they think. It's finding that common ground, if possible, to solve problems. Leaders are problem-solvers. And sometimes you can solve problems by anticipating them and putting the conditions in place so that they won't arise in the first place. And sometimes they just show up and you better be in a position to deal with them.

Q Can I just clarify something?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q Mr. Rudd is -- his theater -- he's talked about the importance of Afghanistan, talking about withdrawing our troops from Iraq. But do you support that they stay, that view?

THE PRESIDENT: Support what view?

Q That he is determined to -- he has determined that the issue on Afghanistan, to keep troops in Afghanistan?

THE PRESIDENT: I view both Iraq and Afghanistan as theaters of the same war against radicals and extremists - and look forward to sharing my views with Mr. Rudd, of course, and continue our discussions -- strategic discussions with John Howard. I mean -- all right.

Tia -- back to you again.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. My next question would touch on Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Bashir.

THE PRESIDENT: About what?

Q Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Bashir.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, right, right.

Q As you might know, since he was released from jail, has been exercising activities like any other citizens, including recently -- last weekend he inaugurated a long march participated by about 1,000 of his followers, in connection with that commemoration, or welcoming the Ramadan, Islamic fasting month. Actually, how close has your government monitored the activities of Abu Bakar Bashir? And my main question is do you think Bashir is still dangerous?

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I didn't know he led a parade of a thousand people. So that may answer your first question. I'm sure our embassy is aware of the activities that take place in your country. I mean, you are a free country where people are allowed to express themselves in the public square, which is a sign of a healthy society.

I am concerned, however, about anybody who preaches violence and extremism and radicalism in a world in which innocent people just get simply murdered for ideological purposes. There were some terrible murders in your country, as you know, just like in mine, and I'm confident that by far the vast majority -- all of Indonesia rejects that kind of behavior. Innocent people were killed in Bali for no other reason than they just happened to be vacationing, and because somebody wanted to send a political message because they're involved with this ideological struggle. And those of us who want there to be peace have got to reject this kind of behavior.

And so your government is a government of law; your government will conduct itself according to your laws. But anybody who preaches that kind of violence in the name of what I would call a dark political vision needs to be taken seriously.

Q My next question is about the U.S.-Japan relationship and the war on terror.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, sir.

Q The opposition party in Japan is threatening to cut the extension of Japanese participation in the antiterrorism operations in the Indian Ocean.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q What do you -- question: Are you concerned about that? And will you be -- will you raise this issue when you will meet Prime Minister Abe in Australia?

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, Japan has been a positive contributor to dealing with the extremists in this ideological war. And I thank the Japanese government and the people of Japan for their contributions. And I would hope that they would continue to maintain this -- their positive influence.

And of course, my conversations with Prime Minister Abe, whom I respect a great deal, will center on the war on

terror, as well as a lot of other key issues. Japan has played a significant role in many of the things we've discussed here, like Proliferation Security Initiative, six-party talks. They've been a constructive partner in peace, and I will -- we will talk about all aspects of our relationship.

Q Mr. President, tomorrow, August 31st, Malaysia celebrates its 50th --

THE PRESIDENT: Fiftieth. Make sure my congratulatory remarks get in your article. Headline: Bush congratulates Malaysia. (Laughter.) Do you think that's what it will say?

Q Something like that.

THE PRESIDENT: Upbeat, optimistic George Bush -- (laughter.)

Q War on terrorism.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, sure.

Q It also marks the 50th relations between the U.S. and Malaysia --

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q So what are your outlook and hopes for U.S.-Malaysia relations, and especially with Malaysia being the 10th largest trading partner?

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I do believe we ought to have -- take this notion of trade and have meaningful discussions with a potential free trade agreement with Malaysia. Secondly, I respect Prime Minister Badawi, admire his leadership. When his wife died I tried to call him early just to let him know I cared about him.

Q He has remarried.

THE PRESIDENT: Has he? Good. I'll congratulate him. Thanks for giving me that heads-up. Don't put that in the article that you had to tell me that. You can put it in there if you want. (Laughter.) I'll be glad to -- I'm going to congratulate him. That's neat.

MR. WILDER: You did, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: What?

MR. WILDER: You did congratulate him.

THE PRESIDENT: Exactly. I'm going to congratulate him again. (Laughter.) I'll double the congratulations. (Laughter.) That's right, I did write him a note. I forgot. Did I call him or write him a note?

MR. WILDER: You wrote him a note.

THE PRESIDENT: That's right, yes. Sent him a couple flowers. Anyway, Malaysia is an interesting example of how a free society can deal with movements that could conceivably change and alter the nature of the free society. And I respect the way the Prime Minister has used freedom and used the openness of society to kind of deal with frustration. I mean, all societies have frustrated people, and the question is will the outlet of that frustration lead to violence or lead to peace. And Malaysia is an example of a country where frustrations have been channeled in a constructive way. And therefore, he's a leader, as far as I'm concerned, and a very constructive force for Southeast Asia.

By the way, I am going to meet with the ASEAN leaders, which is an important meeting, as well. It's an opportunity for the United States to stay very much engaged with ASEAN. I unfortunately will not be there for the

60th, but look forward to having an event that would kind of recognize the importance of ASEAN as far as the United States is concerned.

Q So this is a side meeting with the ASEAN leaders after APEC meeting, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, a side meeting with the ASEAN leaders at APEC. I try to do that every time. So they'll have somebody like -- I'll sit down and meet with the ASEAN nations, as well.

The other thing that's interesting about Malaysia is they're going to be one of the leaders on alternative fuels.

Q Biofuel.

THE PRESIDENT: Biofuels -- absolutely. And that's another area where we can work together. As you know, I'm an alternative fuels person. I believe that it's in our interests that we develop the technologies necessary to deal with energy dependence, as well as greenhouse gases. Back to the climate changes. The way -- if you're truly interested in dealing with greenhouse gases, people need to focus on the development of technologies that will enable us to, on the one hand, grow our economies, on the other hand, be good stewards of the environment.

Just for the record -- and this probably won't be a headline, although I've tried to make it one a lot -- when it comes time to climate change, there's one major industrialized nation that actually grew its economy and reduced greenhouse gases; that would be the United States of America -- that actually had greenhouse gases go down and the economy go up. So something is working here, and it's technologies, use of technologies. And so I'm going to be reminding people about -- that we can come up with a strategy that doesn't impoverish our people and, at the same time, takes advantage of technologies. And we're going to need to share some technologies with newly emerging economies in order to achieve this objective.

Anyway, I forgot to make that point.

Q Mr. President, there appears to be --

THE PRESIDENT: I'm not making the point to you, as you can tell. That's why I'm kind of looking over your shoulder. (Laughter.)

Q There appears to be a perception in Southeast Asia that this administration has neglected the region. How do you plan to convince them otherwise when you meet in APEC?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I -- do you want to ask another question? Because I already answered it. I'll be glad to answer it again -- which is we've got strong bilateral -- first of all, the number of trips I've taken. I've gone to every APEC meeting. I've spent a lot of time with leaders both here and in your respective countries; that we've got relations to a point where we can work together to solve common problems -- PSI is one such example of a strategy we've implemented to deal with the realities of the world. North Korea is another example.

And so it's -- the truth of the matter is I spend a lot of time working on Asian matters. And all I'll ask you to do is look at the results of the individual relationships and the ability to put processes in place to deal with the threats we live in, and the capacity to work together to solve problems and to create opportunities. And to me, that's a sign of a healthy, robust relationship with an important part of the world.

Okay. Thank you all. Enjoyed it. Looking forward to making the trip.

END 12:15 P.M. EDT

Return to this article at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/08/20070831.html>

 [CLICK HERE TO PRINT](#)