

there at the invitation of the sovereign Government of Iraq.

And I strongly support the agreement because I think it helps send a clear message to the people of Iraq that, you know, that security you're now seeing will continue. And one of the lessons of Iraq is, is that in order for a democracy to develop or in order for an economy to develop, there has to be a measure of security, which is now happening. And so I think we'll get the agreement done.

And as I said clearly in past speeches, this will not involve permanent bases, nor will it bind any future President to troop levels. You know, as to—look, Eggen, you can find any voice you want in the Iraqi political scene and quote them, which is interesting, isn't it, because in the past you could only find one voice, and now you can find a myriad of voices. It's a vibrant democracy; people are debating. There's all kinds of press in the Iraqi scene, of course, to the benefit of the Iraqi society.

And I deal with Prime Minister Maliki. He appreciates our presence there, and he understands that we're returning on success. As the situation merits and the situation improves, we're bringing our troops home. And I'm pleased with the progress. I don't know whether or not it's—the progress has made it here to Germany or not yet, but the progress in Iraq is substantial, and it's going to help change the Middle East for the better. And I love the idea of having—giving people a chance to live in a free society. The blessings of freedom are—shouldn't be just in a regional blessing. I believe freedom is universal, and I believe freedom yields peace.

Madam Chancellor.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, obviously, from the German side too, and the European side for that matter, we have every interest, indeed, a vital interest in seeing Iraq taking a turn for sort of a good kind of development. I invited the Iraqi Prime Minister here to Germany, and I think he will pay us the honor of a visit. We have been trying to have economic relations. We've also, outside of Iraq, also trained security personnel, and we're ready to continue that.

So everything we can do beyond a sort of military presence, everything we can do as

regards civilian building up of the country, assisting them, is something that we're continuing to do. And I would like to very much look forward to the visit of the Prime Minister. We're glad to see progress happening there on the ground, because it's in our vital interest to see to it that this region takes a turn for the better, and it's in the interest of the region too.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:34 a.m. at Schloss Meseberg. In his remarks, he referred to European Union Foreign Minister Javier Solana Madariaga; and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. Chancellor Merkel referred to Outreach 5 (O-5), a group of five important emerging economies that works with the G-8. Chancellor Merkel and a reporter spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Interview With Christian Malard of France 3 TV

June 6, 2008

President's Legacy

Mr. Malard. Mr. President, after 8 years at the White House, how does President George W. Bush judge President George W. Bush? What are your good points, according to you, and your negative points?

The President. Well, you know, I think that people will say he's a decisive person who took action when necessary to protect his country and to address the problems of the world. Bad points are probably sometimes my rhetoric was a little—was misunderstood. I mean, I can remember saying, you know, "dead or alive," which sent—it sent signals that could be easily misinterpreted.

I think people will say that he was tough when he needed to be tough and compassionate when he needed to be compassionate, because our agenda was not only dealing with terror but freeing people is a compassionate act, but freeing people not only from forms of tyranny but from diseases like HIV/AIDS or malaria or hunger. And the United States is proudly in the lead on these issues.

War on Terror/Global Economy

Mr. Malard. Today, the world is struck by economic crisis.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Malard. Instability, terrorism still prevail in Middle East. Don't you feel your successor might face the risk of a major conflict, another September 11?

The President. You know, it's interesting, I think that's always a threat. No question that there's an enemy out there that would still like to harm America and, I believe, other free nations. But, what has changed is, one, we've got the pressure on Al Qaida. The very ones who attacked us are now on the defense. We're dismantling them. We're working hard to find them. Our intelligence is better; our intelligence sharing is better. But no question, it's still a dangerous world when it comes to that, and—but there's tools now in place—that we put in place, that will help the next President deal with the security issue.

And in terms of the economy, yes, look, economies go up and down, and right now it's a difficult period for all of us. Energy prices are high. Food prices are high. In our country, we've got a mortgage issue. But I do believe that we'll come out of this, and we'll come out of it stronger. And it's just that—it's what happens in free markets.

Middle East Peace Process

Mr. Malard. Israel-Palestinian conflict is the cancer of all evils in Middle East. Your predecessors tried to get a solution; you tried to get a solution. But it seems that the two sides don't want to make the necessary concessions and political sacrifices. So does that mean that the tragedy—I don't say "the show"—but the tragedy goes on?

The President. I don't—[laughter]—that's a good way of putting it. I don't think so. I think they'll come to—first of all, I'm the first President to have articulated two states, because I believe it's in the interest of the Palestinians to have a state of their own that is whole, that doesn't look like Swiss cheese. And I firmly believe it's in Israel's interest to have a state, a democratic state, as a neighbor.

I know these leaders well, Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas. I know they're

committed to working out the differences on a variety of issues, such as what the borders look like, the refugee issue, security issues. I was confident when I went to the Middle East last time that there's still that desire to get something done. I feel—still feel good about it.

Obviously, the politics in Israel is a little different right now. But nevertheless, in my visit with Prime Minister Olmert at the Oval Office recently, he understands the importance of reaching an agreement with President Abbas on what the state looks like and how to deal with these very difficult issues.

Condi is going to go during the European trip—is going to go back to the Middle East and continue to work on it. And I'm very hopeful that we can get that vision defined.

Iran

Mr. Malard. Iranian President Ahmadi-nejad is gaining influence in Iraq, in Lebanon with Hizballah, no doubt. He doesn't show any sign of flexibility—

The President. Yes.

Mr. Malard. —on nuclear—on his nuclear program. Mr. President, is there any space left still for discussion with him?

The President. Well, there will be definitely space for discussion when he verifiably suspends his enrichment program. First of all, I disagree with the premise that he is succeeding in Iraq. Quite the contrary. Iraq is becoming a democracy, a functioning democracy. They understand Iranian influence is destabilizing. Obviously, there is some influence inside of Iraq, but—Iranian influence inside Iraq—but it's less than it has been and will continue to lessen, in my judgment, as its economy and as its political society begins to develop.

The—therefore, in speaking with my friend President Sarkozy or any other European leaders, we've still got to continue to send that message to the Iranian leadership that you're isolated; you'll continue to get pressured unless you verifiably suspend your enrichment program. And the reason why that's important to continue the pressure on is that if they can enrich, they could easily transfer that knowledge to a weapons program, which would destabilize the Middle East.

Mr. Malard. There's no military option in the air?

The President. Yes, it's still there. Absolutely it's got to be on the table. But, of course, I've always said to the American people, we want to solve this problem diplomatically, and we're going to work to solve it diplomatically. But the Iranians have got to understand all options are on the table.

U.S. Foreign Policy

Mr. Malard. When you see the big push of China, India, Russia on the international stage today, do you think that in 10 years from now, America will still be the superpower of the world?

The President. You know, I—that's an interesting question. I think that—I would rather define us as a very influential nation that is willing to work with others to achieve common objectives. You mentioned those three nations, and my approach has been to have strong bilateral relations with all three. We've got strong bilateral relations with China, even though we differ on issues. I've had strong bilateral relations with Russia, a lot of it having to do with my personal relationship with Vladimir Putin. We've had our differences, but nevertheless, we found a lot of common ground to work together on, including Iran. And in India, I've changed the relationship between India and the United States in a way that we're partners as opposed to, you know, being antagonistic.

And therefore, if the United States is active diplomatically in maintaining good bilateral relations with these countries, I think we'll still be in a position to use our influence for the common good. And these relationships don't have to be antagonistic. They can be—I've worked hard to get to know these leaders individually so that we can be able to discuss matters, delicate matters, in open and honest ways without rupturing relations. And I hope it serves as a go-by for future Presidents, that you can have disagreements, but you don't have to have this kind of zero-sum attitude about life.

2008 Presidential Elections

Mr. Malard. Last two, short questions. I don't want to put you in trouble, interfering in American elections. But today, do you

have the feeling that the barriers of—and the game is not over, far from being over, I know—but do you think the barriers have fallen down, to have a potential black citizen to become President of the United States?

The President. You know, look, I—my attitude about that is I think it's a good statement about American democracy that a major political party would nominate Senator Obama. Now that that process has ended, the fundamental question is, who can be the best President? That's the question.

And I'm obviously for John McCain. I think he'll be a really good President. And the American people will make that decision. And it's going to be up to each person to be able to describe how they're going to handle the pressures of the job, how they'll be making decisions, what principles they'll be standing on, because this is a job—that I'm sure you can imagine—where there's all kinds of pressures. And if you don't believe something in your soul, if you don't stand on principle and you're on shifting ground, you'll be very unpredictable. And the world doesn't need unpredictability, it needs predictability out of the United States.

France-U.S. Relations

Mr. Malard. Last point, Mr. President. You and President Sarkozy put on the right track the Franco-U.S. relationship. We were a bit of trouble between you and President Jacques Chirac. With your next successor, whoever it is, do you think it will go on very well between France and United States?

The President. I do. Look, France and the United States have had a fabulous history together. And I remind my friends that it was the French that stood strong with the American patriots in the Revolutionary War. It was the French that determined the balance of power when it came to whether or not the United States would even be the United States of America, an independent republic.

And we've had a great relationship. And of course, we've had our differences, but that's okay. There have been differences throughout our history. The fundamental question is, do we understand there are—common values unite us? And we do. The French love freedom and human rights and

human decency, and so do Americans. And so the relationship—and plus, there's a lot of personal relationship, a lot of friendship between individuals here in our country and French citizens that make it—there's no question in my mind, we'll have good relations with the French.

Q. Mr. President, I want to thank you very much, and I wish you the very best.

The President. Well, thank you, sir. I'm looking forward to going to beautiful Paris.

Q. Great to see you again.

The President. Thank you, sir. Good to see you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:39 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; Prime Minister Vladimir Putin of Russia, in his former capacity as the President of Russia; Democratic Presidential candidate Barack Obama; and Republican Presidential candidate John McCain. Mr. Malard referred to former President Jacques Chirac of France. This transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 12.

Remarks in a Discussion on Italy-United States Business Exchanges in Rome, Italy

June 12, 2008

Ambassador Ronald P. Spogli. Mr. President, good morning. Good morning to everyone. First of all, I'd like to welcome you to the American Academy, and thank you for having so graciously agreed to be with us here this morning. I'd like to also welcome all of our fellow roundtable participants.

As you know, we have eight students, five of whom have been to the United States on our BEST program, three of whom will shortly depart. And then we do have a couple of gentlemen who are slightly older than our researchers and scientists who are here—not that old, certainly, but a bit older—Michele and Marco, who have been successful entrepreneurs, have overcome the difficulties that we've talked about for some time in the Italian system, and who have graciously created an NGO that works on helping young

entrepreneurs overcome difficulties. I'd like to also recognize our sponsors and welcome them this morning, and I'll have occasion to come back to you in a second.

[At this point, Ambassador Spogli made brief remarks, concluding as follows.]

Ambassador Spogli. Clearly, economic growth is the key question facing the country today, and so the Partnership for Growth was conceived as a way to make a contribution toward the economic growth of Italy. And we focused on three fundamental areas.

The first was commercializing research. Italy does a tremendous amount of high-quality research in nanotechnology and biotechnology and in other fields, but unfortunately, a relatively small amount of that research ever becomes commercialized. And so we wanted to fundamentally address that question.

Second issue is one of a scarcity of financing for risk-taking capital enterprises. Italy is a country of great savers, has a very high savings rate, yet, unfortunately, very little is channeled into venture capital and private equity. We wanted to address this particular question as well. So we've had over 200 events in the course of almost 3 years focusing on ways that we could share information and enhance not only our bilateral economic relationship but, hopefully, address some of these fundamental questions.

Which brings me to the third and most important element of the Partnership for Growth, and that is our BEST student exchange program. Many companies came to us and said, it's great that you're focusing on technology transfer; it's great that you're focusing on venture capital; but there's one very important element that we'd like you to make a contribution to, and that is helping to change and add to the entrepreneurial culture of our country. You need to send high-quality researchers and scientists and engineers to the United States, give them a full immersion opportunity in a place like Silicon Valley, have them come back, take some of those experiences and then begin to create here in Italy a wonderful, unique entrepreneurial ecosystem.