

**Remarks at a Reception for United States Chiefs of Mission and an Exchange With Reporters**

*June 13, 2023*

*The President.* Hello, hello, hello! Please. I look around this room and think, "What the hell happened to my administration? Why aren't you here permanently in Washington?" [*Laughter*] I need help.

All kidding aside, you are—I don't know if you fully understand how much you've done. Seriously, think about it. I've got to tell you one story before I begin.

The first meeting I had—and some of you know this—was at the G-7 in England right after I was elected. And I sat down, and—I guess I can tell this. [*Laughter*] I sat down with the other heads of state, and I turned to Macron—who was on my left, I believe it was—and said, "Well, America is back." Know what the response was? He wasn't being facetious either. "For how long? For how long?"

And then the Chancellor of Germany said, "What would you think, Mr. President, if tomorrow you picked up the paper here in England, and the London paper had a headline, 'A Thousand People Storm the Parliament, Break Down the Doors of the House of Commons To Protest the Investiture of the Next Secretary'—or 'the Next Prime Minister of England'? What would you think?"

And I started to think about it. Imagine what we would have thought here in America. And imagine what the rest of the world thought. It's not a political statement, just a factual statement. What the rest of the world thought when, as Madeleine Albright used to say, "the essential nation" had something even more consequential happen.

And so you are incredibly consequential to everything—everything—everything that this nation is able to do or not do to rebuild our confidence around the world.

And you know, I was talking to this with our Ambassador to Mexico when I—we talked about this being an inflection point. Remember? And I said that: "You know, we have enormous opportunity. We're at a real inflection point in American history."

An inflection point, my physics professor would say, was a point where you're going down the highway at 60 miles an hour, and you take a rapid turn at a right angle or at a 30-degree angle going in an opposite direction. You can never get back on the track. And your destiny has changed, at least for a couple of generations. And we're at one of those inflection points.

And so it's important. We really did, Tony and I and others, and some of you in this room sat with me during the period. We had to put things back together. And I'm not talking about an individual man, I'm talking about the state of the world at the time. We're at one of those inflection points.

And what we do over the next couple years and the last several years are going to determine what the country looks like. And it's presumptuous to say, and it's going to sound like an egotistical thing for an American President to say, but what America does, how well we do our job, is going to determine what the next four or five generations are going to look like. I really mean that. The postwar period is over. We're building a whole new international system in effect, in terms of relationships with one another.

And so, Secretary Blinken, thank you for your incredible—and I mean it sincerely—leadership and your dedication to the women—men and women of the State Department. It's real. This guy feels it in his bones. And our Ambassadors and Chargés, welcome to the White House—a second time in 2 days. *[Laughter]* Thanks for coming back.

I said I had a root canal, and the press said, "Well, is he—well, was he unconscious?" *[Laughter]* Unfortunately, no, I was wide awake. *[Laughter]* I'm sorry to push this reception back by a day, but I'm glad to be able to host all of you. I really mean it.

Usually, it's the other way around. I know the worst phrase in the English language is, for all of you, "The President is coming." *[Laughter]* You're all shaking your heads. You know I'm telling the truth. *[Laughter]* Because when I show up, it's all hands on deck. It's like, "Oh, God, where are we going?" But we're going to create a lot of work here along the way.

And every country I've visited, with the single exception of Ireland—I mean, Ireland is different. *[Laughter]* That was even a more difficult job for Claire. *[Laughter]* "What the hell are we going to do with all these people, Mr. President?"

But at any rate, I wanted to take this chance to say, from the bottom of my heart: Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. You're not only changing America's image, you're in the process of changing the world, moving in the right direction. Think of the fundamental things that have already—you've already accomplished.

Thank you for the work representing our country overseas, protecting America's interest all around the world. And thank you for the leadership you provide to the Foreign Service Officers, to the Civil Service, to the developmental professionals, to locally employed people you have in your mission, and for everyone at your mission who bring diplomacy to life. And you really do.

You'd be amazed—parenthetically—you'd be amazed how many heads of state—Tony has been in the meetings and so have our folks here in the foreign—and who do foreign policy in the White House. The number of heads of state who come and say "thank you," for you, not to me—"thank you" for you. And thank him for the persons that he sent. I picked a couple of you, but you know. *[Laughter]*

But all kidding aside, thank you for helping put diplomacy back at the center—the center—of American foreign policy. It used to be that, and then once it just seemed to start to evaporate a little bit.

Each time—and each of you and each of the teams of the—each of the teams of diplomats you lead have made a promise a reality. We've begun to rebuild the global network of alliances, for real so that today they're stronger than ever. We formed innovative ways to partnership like AUKUS, elevated the Quad, taking on the challenges of what will be a—define our—literally define our future.

We're building a more stable, integrated, more peaceful, Middle East. Long haul, but it's hard, but we're making some progress.

We've strengthened our leadership at the United Nations, in no small part to our gifted Ambassador. Thank you, Ambassador.

And other international organizations—even, you know, Gitenstein. *[Laughter]* Everybody knows how everything—everybody thinks we're brothers. You'd better keep doing a good job. You're going to reflect on me a lot. You know what I mean? *[Laughter]*

But all kidding aside, we've elevated our regional engagement across the board, from our work with NATO and the EU, to the ASEAN and Pacific Islands Forum, to the Gulf Cooperation Council, to the U.S. African Leaders—excuse me—Leaders' Summit, to the Summit of the

Americas. Because of all the work you've put in, we've been able to rally the world to take on the greatest challenges of our time.

What are they? I've been standing against the brutal war that Putin is waging against the people of Ukraine, helping them defend themselves. Because if we didn't, imagine what happens. Think about it. Not a joke.

If I told any of you—and I would have been mildly prophetic if I had said it—before we were elected, when we were running, that there would be 138- to 140,000 people in Europe invading another country, I think you would have looked at me like I was crazy. Maybe some of you wouldn't, but most would.

Managing the competition with China so that it doesn't turn into conflict—tip into a conflict. It need not do that.

Addressing the existential threat of climate change in a real way for the first time. It is the existential threat to humanity. It is the existential threat to humanity. I hope I have no climate doubters out there, because it's real.

Investing in global health to address today's challenges and to ensure we're better prepared for the next pandemic, for there will be another pandemic. There will be another pandemic.

Tracking food insecurity for people around the world to feed their children. The Global South is in real trouble because of what Russia is doing and what's happening in terms of exports from Ukraine.

Driving inclusive economic growth so no one is left behind. That's a bold statement, saying "no one is left behind." But that should be our goal: that no one is left behind.

Advancing democracy and human rights so that we can live in freedom. I just met with the President of—anyway, I won't get into that. I guess I shouldn't start down the line. *[Laughter]* I'll leave somebody out.

But I'm grateful for the work you and your teams do every single day and your incredible skill and your professionalism. And that includes our Ambassador to Japan. Where is he? *[Laughter]*

*Audience member.* He's hosting Jake.

*The President.* He's hosting Jake? Oh, that's right. *[Laughter]* Oh, my God. Jake and—oh. *[Laughter]*

He's doing a hell of a job, and he's liking it. *[Laughter]* And guess what? I had the Prime Minister pull me aside, "I like your Ambassador." *[Laughter]* I said, "You ain't seen nothing yet." *[Laughter]*

No, all kidding aside—but all—look, we're in a situation where, you know, the combination of political appointees and the professional State Department personnel, you know, you've got to take a message of thanks back to your teams. I really mean it. I mean it sincerely. I visited some of your Embassies. You know I mean it when I speak to them.

And by the way, I might add, to your spouses and their spouses—if they have a significant other with them. Because when you appoint someone Ambassador, you appoint two people Ambassador if they're married, if they have a significant other with them.

The second part of my message is this: We've got to keep it up. We've got to double down right now. It's only going to get harder from here. But it's closer, but it's going to get harder.

The word is, as I said again, the inflection point. The decisions we made today—I used to have a physics professor talk about: An inflection point, you're going down the highway at 60 miles an hour, and all of a sudden, you take a hard right turn. You're never going to get back on the path you were for at least another couple decades. That's where we are.

But we have such an opportunity to make things even better than you've begun to make them. We can't pick and choose between addressing geopolitical crises and transnational threats. We've got to sustain America's core advantage to outcompete China, to defend the principles of the U.N. Charter against Russia's brazen attacks, while also leading the world to address the issues that impact all nations.

*[At this point, the President cleared his throat.]*

Excuse me.

We've got to work with our partners to shape and update the rules of the road on issues like trade and technology and, shortly, artificial intelligence, which is going to become a gigantic issue for all of us to be better informed on. So the international system is equipped to meet the challenge of this new age. And it is a new age.

And to do this work, we need to harness the strength and talents of our country's full diversity. We have to protect the values and ideals we hold most dear, and drive 21st-century diplomacy and effectively pursue our interests abroad. That's where y'all come in, as you know.

You're on the frontlines of this effort, literally—not joking, literally—leading intense diplomacy alongside intense competition. They're not easy to do at the same time. We need to make sure people around the world know the United States stands for not just what we're against, but American values. The way we do business has always been a part of our world, what we—what we think.

You know, again, parenthetically, I—and the press has heard me say this before, so I apologize for the repetition. You know, I've, allegedly, met more face to face with Xi Jinping than any world leader has. They keep—as you guys who are in the intelligence side, you know they keep meticulous hours and times. And I think we're up to 85 hours, just he and I—68 of them alone over a 10-year period. Because when he was Vice President and Barack was President, he knew who—who was going to succeed, but it wasn't appropriate for the President to be with him a lot. So we traveled 17-, 18-, 17- to 18,000 miles together in China and the United States.

And I had a lot of personal—just one-on-one conversations. And we had—each had a simultaneous interpreter. I turned all my notes in. *[Laughter]* But—and that's not a reference to the President—the former President. But look—*[laughter]*—no, it really isn't. *[Laughter]*

Because, look—so we want to share a positive vision of the future. We want to build with our partners—not against anybody, but with people. Engage with them in the interests that we share and help developing nations deliver the biggest priorities for their people.

That's why the new appointee to the World Bank is someone who is—one who's going to try like hell to make sure that middle income countries can qualify for concessional aid. We have to—we have an opportunity not only to help our diplomacy, but to help people around the world.

When we were at the G-7, we talked about—one of the meetings was—they used to call the Build Back Better World. It's not that now. It's the PIII [PGII; White House correction]—P-triple-I. And what it is is—you know, you have an awful lot of African nation—well, the Belt and Road Initiative of the Chinese—it's ended up being a noose and debt instead of belt and road, because it's not working very well for them. And so there's a hell of a lot of debt and a lot of demands that are being made.

We have an opportunity to take everything from—moving back to debt relief, moving back to making sure we have—we deal with the climate issues.

We—you know, our investments in Africa, for example—there are going to be a billion people in Africa very shortly. And the idea—I know our infrastructure people are working on the possibility of a railroad from the Atlantic all the way across the continent so they have a means of transporting goods and materials all the way to the Indian Ocean. We're in a situation where we're talking about Angola having one of the largest solar facilities in the world. It's in our interest that that happen, in addition to helping other countries.

How are we going to deal with climate change as we engage the rest of the world and it's beneficial to everybody? Nations around the world choose to work with us not because of our force or threats of coercion, but because we understand what they can do better and what we can do better as well.

We know when our partners are stronger and more capable, and when there's an opportunity to make America—it's an opportunity to make the American people safer and better, when everybody does better. For real.

Make no mistake: The challenges we face are great. But our capacity to meet the moment is real.

And I've heard—they've heard me say this before, and I mean it: I've been around—I know I don't—I know I look like I'm only still 29, but—[laughter]—I've been around a long time. And as one of my friends said, "Just try to connect age and wisdom."

But I've been around a long time. And I've—but I've never been more optimistic—not because I'm President. I've never been more optimistic about America's future. The opportunities are immense in this moment of change.

And we're investing in our strengths at home. We're investing in our strengths abroad. The alliances and partnerships that you maintain and deepen every day are the heart of our strategic advantage in the world. And that's truth. No other nation comes close to matching us, not because I'm President, because of you and the policies you're pursuing.

So thank you again. I mean it from the bottom of my heart. Thank you again for all you do to ensure the future we're building is no—no one that will be more prosperous and more securer than our children. That's what this gets down to.

So let me close. I've probably already gone on too long.

But may God protect our troops, our diplomats, and all those who serve our Nation. And that's what you're doing: You're serving our Nation.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

*[The President stepped away from the podium and spoke briefly to the audience using a hand-held microphone. His remarks were inaudible because the microphone was turned off; no transcript was provided. He then concluded as follows.]*

Thank you! [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President, are you surprised that Republicans are defending Trump despite his arrest and indictment?

Q. Are there tapes that you accepted bribes, President Biden? Is that true?

*Former President Donald J. Trump*

*Q.* Would you comment on the arrest of the former President, sir?

*The President.* No.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:17 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Emmanuel Macron of France; U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Kenneth L. Salazar; U.S. Ambassador to Ireland Claire D. Cronin; U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield; U.S. Ambassador to the European Union Mark Gitenstein; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm I. Emanuel; National Security Adviser Jacob J. Sullivan; Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan; President Xi Jinping of China; former President Barack Obama; and President Ajay Banga of the World Bank Group.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : U.S. Chiefs of Mission reception; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Banga, Ajay; Blinken, Antony J.; Cronin, Claire D.; Emanuel, Rahm I.; Gitenstein, Marc; Kishida, Fumio; Macron, Emmanuel; Obama, Barack; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Salazar, Kenneth L.; Sullivan, Jacob J.; Thomas-Greenfield, Linda; Xi Jinping.

*Subjects:* Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies; Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); AUKUS trilateral security partnership; China, President; China, relations with U.S.; Climate change; European Union, U.S. Ambassador; Food shortages due to conflict in Ukraine, mitigation efforts; France, President; Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Gulf Cooperation Council; Infrastructure development, international assistance for developing countries; Ireland, U.S. Ambassador; Japan, Prime Minister; Japan, U.S. Ambassador; Mexico, U.S. Ambassador; National Security Adviser; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Pacific Islands Forum; Pandemic disease prevention, international cooperation; Quadrilateral Security Dialogue; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Secretary of State; Solar and wind energy, promotion efforts; Summit of the Americas; U.S. Chiefs of Mission, White House reception; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion; U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; United Nations, U.S. Permanent Representative; World Bank.

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