

competing vision. And that's what I'm going to talk about.

It's a hopeful speech. It's an optimistic speech. And it's one that I hope assures Israelis that during the Bush administration and the subsequent administrations, they'll have a strong friend and ally in the United States of America.

Q. Mr. President, we wish you a pleasant trip to Israel. Thank you very much.

The President. I'm looking forward to it. Thank you, sir.

Q. Thank you very much for this interview.

The President. Yes, thanks. Good to see you guys.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:30 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Henry Hager, husband of Jenna Bush Hager; and former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. The interviewers referred to President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; former civilian U.S. Navy intelligence analyst Jonathan Pollard, who was convicted of treason and espionage in 1987; and former civilian U.S. Army mechanical engineer Ben-Ami Kadish, who was arrested on April 22. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13.

Interview With Mona Shazli of Egypt's Dream TV May 12, 2008

Ms. Shazli. Mr. President, it's not an easy thing to interview the President of the most powerful state on—in the world. However, what is more difficult is to size down your questions to fit in the minutes.

The President. In the timeframe. [*Laughter*]

Egypt-U.S. Relations

Ms. Shazli. Yes. My first question is, people in Egypt, sometimes they get confused. On one hand, they hear the U.S. statements, speeches that stress on the long-lasting relationships with Egypt, the strategic importance of Egypt to the U.S. and to the Middle East, Egypt as the major player in the peace process. On the other hand, they could see indications that contradicts with this: U.S. depending on other parties in the region, your snatching visit to Sharm el-Sheikh last January, the partial cutting of the U.S. aid. How would you comment on that?

The President. Yes. I would comment this, that from my perspective, the Egyptian-U.S. relationship is a very important

part of our Middle Eastern foreign policy, for these reasons: One, Egypt has got a proud history and a great tradition, and a lot of people look to Egypt for help.

Now, the United States can't solve a lot of problems on our own, has to have allies be a part of it. And so on the Palestinian issue, for example, Egypt can be very constructive and has been constructive and helpful. Egypt has got a society that honors diversity and gives people a chance to realize their talents, like you. I mean, you're a very smart, capable professional woman who has showed the rest of the Middle East what's possible in the Middle East. And Egypt has been on the forefront of modernization. Egypt is a—strategically located.

And so our relationship is strong and good. We've had our differences—on elections, for example. But nevertheless, to answer your question, I would say the relationship is very solid and very important.

Democracy Efforts in Egypt

Ms. Shazli. Then how would you perceive the state of democracy in Egypt?

The President. I would say, fits and starts; good news and bad news. In other words, there's been some moments where it looked like Egypt was going to continue to lead the Middle East on the democracy movement, and there's been some setbacks. But I guess that just reflects the nature of the administration and their—on the one hand, their desire for democracy; on the other hand, their concerns about different movements. My view is, is that democracy is a powerful engine for reform and change and leads to peace.

Ms. Shazli. But the public opinion—sometimes they perceive the U.S. criticism to the development of democracy in Egypt as an unacceptable intervention in the internal affairs.

The President. Yes, I can understand that. Look, nobody wants the big, influential guy to come from the outside and tell them what to do. I'm sensitive to that. On the other hand, I do believe it's important for a leader in a country to adhere to certain values, universal values. I think the idea of giving people a chance to vote and a chance to participate freely in society is a universal value. And so it's—I try to balance, on the one hand, my beliefs, and on the other hand, a friendship with the Government and friendship with President Mubarak.

Middle East Peace Process

Ms. Shazli. It's a matter of hours, and you will be in Tel Aviv celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. This celebration might be perceived by Palestinians and Arabs like—it is criticized, because it's ignoring the flip side, which is the 60 years of agony, pain, and struggle in the area, in the region. What would you tell Palestinians and Arab concerning this?

The President. Well, I am going to talk to the Palestinians face to face when I

come to Sharm el-Sheikh. And I will say that there's been 60 years of struggling on both sides, and it's time that the struggle has got to end. And now for—is the time for the development of a Palestinian state that has got defined borders, that doesn't look like Swiss cheese; in other words, it's contiguous territory, where the refugee issue is dealt with. And that's what my message is, is that I'm going to—I fully recognize the agony and pain that have been lived by everybody in the region, and that here's one way forward. And it's a—and we will continue to work, and hopefully, by the end of my Presidency, we'll get the definition of a state. And so I'll talk to President Mubarak about how we can work together.

Palestinian State

Ms. Shazli. Is this—some people would consider this as getting the ceiling lower and lower. Before, you said this—your administration will witness the declaration of the Palestinian state. Now we are talking about only the definition of the state.

The President. No, no, it's always been the definition, cause I always said that the state won't come into being until certain obligations are met through the roadmap. And so the whole purpose was to define—it's a semantical difference, but I really haven't changed my position.

Middle East Peace Process

Ms. Shazli. Former President Jimmy Carter was in Cairo weeks ago, and he was really trying to tell how he was seeing things. He said with a simple comparison between the victims from the Israeli side and the Palestinian side, you can see who is suffering more.

The President. Yes. Well, everybody has got their opinions. I just happen to believe that I'm in a position to help move the definition of a state, which will help solve the problem in the long run. I'm the first President ever to have articulated a two-state solution, two states living side by side

in peace. And my only thing I want to tell your listeners is that I'm going to drive hard, along with Secretary Rice and other people in my administration, to see if we can't get the Palestinians and Israelis to agree on what that state will look like.

War on Terror

Ms. Shazli. Mr. President, do you still believe that who's not with us is against us?

The President. Yes. Yes, in the war on terror, I do. Yes. When you kill innocent people to achieve political objectives, I think they're against civilized people. We've witnessed this kind of ideological—

Ms. Shazli. But minutes ago, you said we have differences. We have—

The President. Of course, we have differences.

Ms. Shazli. —it's normal to have differences.

The President. It is, but killing people to achieve political objectives is—it's one thing to have differences of opinion, it's another thing to have differences of action. And my comments about that—what—the line you just quoted was in the context of dealing with these extremists, like Al Qaida or Hamas, who just murder innocent people. And, yes, I still feel very strongly about that. Most people don't believe in using murder as a political tool. Most people want to live in peace, and so do I.

President's Image Abroad

Ms. Shazli. I have only just a chance for one question.

The President. Sure.

Ms. Shazli. You will be in the region very soon: Israel, Saudi Arabia, and then Egypt. The question is, maybe there are 250 million Arabs who think that President Bush has added to their sufferings and

problems during his administration. How would you adjudicate this?

The President. I would just ask them to wait for history to answer the question. There's an advent of a young democracy in Iraq. Ask those people what it's like to live under a freer society, rather than the thumb of a tyrant or a dictator; or the people that we're trying to help in Lebanon by getting the Syrians out through a U.N. Security Council resolution; or the Palestinians who—for whom I've articulated a state.

In other words, I understand people's opinions. All I ask is that when history is finally recorded, judge whether or not I've been a contributor to peace or not.

President's Legacy

Ms. Shazli. You think history will be in your side?

The President. I think history will say, George Bush clearly saw the threats that keep the Middle East in turmoil and was willing to do something about it, was willing to lead, and had this great faith in the capacity of democracies and the great faith in the capacity of people to decide the fate of their countries; and that the democracy movement gained impetus and gained movement in the Middle East. Yes, I think people will say, "Well, he had a difficult set of circumstances to deal with, and he dealt with them with a sense of idealism."

Ms. Shazli. Mr. President, thank you for this interview.

The President. Yes, thanks for coming.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:42 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13.

Interview With Lukman Ahmed of BBC Arabic
May 12, 2008

Jenna Bush Hager's Wedding

Mr. Ahmed. Thank you so much, Mr. President, for this. And first, I must congratulate you for your daughter's wedding. And how does it feeling, being a father? I know you are listening to your mom; I know you are a father, and you are having a daughter's wedding. How does it feel?

The President. You know something, I was emotional, and—because I was so happy and proud. And she's marrying a good guy, Lukman. And we were out there on our ranch, which is a part of the world Laura and I love, and it was just a special evening, and it was great. I feel great. Thank you.

Lebanon/Iran

Mr. Ahmed. All right. You have given—we are going to Lebanon. You are giving Hizballah the choice of being terrorist organization or a political party. What do you think would prompt Hizballah to abandon its—[inaudible]? Why Hizballah claim the existence of legitimate concern for these weapons?

The President. Yes. I don't know. I mean, it's hard for me to get inside Hizballah's head. I do know that they are destabilizing Lebanon. I do know that they were viewed at one time as the protectors against Israel, and now, in fact, they're turning against the Lebanese people themselves.

And I do know that Lebanon's success is very important for peace in the Middle East. And so our position—the—my Government's position is to support the Siniora Government, is to beef up his army so that he can have a chance to respond to people who are acting outside the confines of government.

And you know, Hizballah wouldn't be—would be nothing without Iranian support. And Iranian is the crux of many of the problems in the Middle East, whether it

be funding of Hizballah, funding of Hamas, or obviously, actions within the young democracy of Iraq. And so a lot of my trip is going to be to get people to focus not only on Lebanon and remember Lebanon, but also to remember that Iran causes a lot of the problems around the Middle East.

Lebanese Armed Forces

Mr. Ahmed. We are going to touch that Iranian support and Syrian support to Hizballah. Many supporters of the U.S. policy in Lebanon criticize the lack of practical American support to the Siniora Government. That's what we are seeing right now. The USS *Cole* is now heading to the region, in what you call a—or previously mentioned, the support of an American ally. Does this mean the USS *Cole* is willing to offer this practical assistance?

The President. Well, the most practical assistance, really, is to help the Lebanese Armed Forces become effective. And that's what we're doing. A couple years ago, I sent one of our top admirals to Lebanon to assess the needs of the military. And as well as I've been watching very carefully to assess the courage of the leadership, like Prime Minister Siniora. I'm impressed by the Prime Minister. He's a good guy who cares deeply about the future of his country. And he needs a military that has got the practical equipment necessary to deal with elements in this society that are destabilizing. And that's really where our practical help is going to be.

Situation in Lebanon

Mr. Ahmed. And as supporting the Lebanese military, that means they should go, or do you think would go, to disarm Hizballah?

The President. Well, of course, I don't see how you can have a society with