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Barack Obama

Post G20 Economic Summit Remarks and Press Conference



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Good afternoon, or good evening -- we're running a little bit late.

Earlier today, we finished a very productive summit that will be, I believe, a turning point in our pursuit of global economic recovery.

By any measure, the London summit was historic. It was historic because of the size and the scope of the challenges that we face, and because of the timeliness and magnitude of our response.

The challenge is clear. The global economy is contracting. Trade is shrinking. Unemployment is rising. The international finance system is nearly frozen. Even these facts can't fully capture the crisis that we're confronting, because behind them is the pain and uncertainty that so many people are facing. We see it back in the United States. We see it here in London. We see it around the world: families losing their homes, workers losing their jobs and their savings, students who are deferring their dreams. So many have lost so much. Just to underscore this point, back in the United States, jobless claims released today were the highest in 26 years. We owe it to all of our citizens to act, and to act with a sense of urgency.

In an age where our economies are linked more closely than ever before, the whole world has been touched by this devastating downturn. And today, the world's leaders have responded with an unprecedented set of comprehensive and coordinated actions.

Now, just keep in mind some historical context. Faced with similar global challenges in the past, the world was slow to act, and people paid an enormous price. That was true in the Great Depression, when nations prolonged and worsened the crisis by turning inward, waiting for more than a decade to meet the challenge together. Even as recently as the 1980s, the slow global response deepened and widened a debt crisis in Latin America that pushed millions into poverty.



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Today, we've learned the lessons of history. I know that in the days leading up to the summit, some of you in the press, some commentators, confused honest and open debate with irreconcilable differences. But after weeks of preparation, and two days of careful negotiation, we have agreed on a series of unprecedented steps to restore growth and prevent a crisis like this from happening again.

Let me outline what I think has been most significant.

Number one, we are committed to growth and job creation. All G20 nations have acted to stimulate demand, which will total well over \$2 trillion in global fiscal expansion. The United States is also partnering with the private sector to clean out the troubled assets, the legacy assets that are crippling some banks, and using the full force of the government to ensure that our action leads directly to loans to businesses large and small, as well as individuals who depend on credit. And these efforts will be amplified by our G20 partners, who are pursuing similarly comprehensive programs.

And we also agreed on bold action to support developing countries, so that we aren't faced with declining markets that the global economy depends on. Together, the G20 is tripling the IMF's lending capacity and promoting lending by multilateral development banks to increase the purchasing power and expand markets in every country.

We've also rejected the protectionism that could deepen this crisis. History tells us that turning inward can help turn a downturn into a depression. And this cooperation between the world's leading economies signals our support for open markets, as does our multilateral commitment to trade finance that will grow our exports and create new jobs.

That's all on the growth front.

And next we made enormous strides in committing ourselves to comprehensive reform of a failed regulatory system. And together, I believe that we must put an end to the bubble-and-bust economy that has stood in the way of sustained growth and enabled abusive risk-taking that endangers our prosperity.

At home, back in the States, our efforts began with the approach that Secretary Geithner proposed last week, the strongest regulatory reforms any nation has contemplated so far to prevent the massive failure of responsibility that we have already seen. Today, these principles have informed and enabled the coordinated action that we will take with our G20 partners.

To prevent future crises, we agreed to increased transparency and capital protections for financial institutions. We're extending supervision to all systemically important institutions, markets and products, including hedge funds. We'll identify jurisdictions that fail to cooperate, including tax havens, and take action to defend our financial system. We will reestablish the Financial Stability Forum with a stronger mandate. And we will reform and expand the IMF and World Bank so they are more efficient, effective and representative.



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Finally, we are protecting those who don't always have a voice at the G20, but who have suffered greatly in this crisis. And the United States is ready to lead in this endeavor. In the coming days, I intend to work with Congress to provide \$448 million in immediate assistance to vulnerable populations -- from Africa to Latin America -- and to double support for food safety to over \$1 billion so that we are giving people the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty. We will also support the United Nations and World Bank as they coordinate the rapid assistance necessary to prevent humanitarian catastrophe.

I have to say, though, that this is not just charity. These are all future markets for all countries, and future drivers of world economic growth.

Let me also underscore my appreciation to Prime Minister Brown, his entire team, and all my colleagues from around the world who contributed to the summit's success. You know, it's hard for 20 heads of state to bridge their differences. We've all got our own national policies; we all have our own assumptions, our own political cultures. But our citizens are all hurting. They all need us to come together. So I'm pleased that the G20 has agreed to meet again this fall, because I believe that this is just the beginning. Our problems are not going to be solved in one meeting; they're not going to be solved in two meetings. We're going to have to be proactive in shaping events and persistent in monitoring our progress to determine whether further action is needed.

I also want to just make a few remarks about additional meetings I had outside of the G20 context. While here in London I had the opportunity to hold bilateral meetings with leaders of Russia, China, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and India, as well as Great Britain. And these discussions were extraordinarily valuable and productive. Of course, we spoke about additional steps to promote economic recovery and growth. But we also discussed coordinated actions on a range of issues: how we could reduce the nuclear threat; how we could forge a coordinated response to North Korea's planned missile launch; how we can turn back terrorism and stabilize Afghanistan; how we can protect our planet from the scourge of climate change. I'm encouraged that we laid the groundwork for real and lasting progress on a host of these issues.

Ultimately, the challenges of the 21st century can't be met without collective action. Agreement will almost never be easy, and results won't always come quickly. But I am committed to respecting different points of view, and to forging a consensus instead of dictating our terms. That's how we made progress in the last few days. And that's how we will advance and uphold our ideals in the months and years to come.

You know, at home, I've often spoken about a new era of responsibility. And I believe strongly that this era must not end at our borders. In a world that's more and more interconnected, we all have responsibilities to work together to solve common challenges. And although it will take time, I am confident that we will rebuild global prosperity if we act with a common sense of purpose, persistence, and the optimism that the moment demands.

So I appreciate your attention, and I'm going to take a few questions. I've got a list of a few people I'm going to call on and then I will intersperse some folks I'm calling on randomly.

Helene Cooper.

Q Mr. President, -- [inaudible]



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PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, I think we did okay. You know, when I came here, it was with the intention of listening and learning, but also providing American leadership. And I think that the document that has been produced as well as the concrete actions that will follow reflect a range of our priorities.

We wanted to make sure that we had a strong, coordinated response to growth -- and that's reflected in the document and in the actions that will be taken. We thought it was important to make sure that we had a strong, coordinated regulatory response -- and many of the details of the regulatory response draw from principles that we had developed prior to coming here.

We felt that it was very important to strengthen our international financial institutions because developing countries, emerging markets are threatened -- even though they may not have been the cause of this crisis -- they are threatened by capital flight; they're threatened by reduced trade finance; drops in consumer demand in developed countries that were their export markets, and so we knew that it was going to be important to provide those countries with assistance. And we have created as fundamental a reworking of the resources available to these international financial institutions as anything we've done in the last several decades.

So, overall, I'm pleased with the product. And I'll leave it to others to determine whether me and my team had anything to do with that. All right?

Chuck Todd. Chuck.

Q What concrete items that you got out of this G20 can you tell the American people back home who are hurting, the family struggling, seeing their retirement go down, or worrying about losing their job -- what happened here today that helps that family back home in the heartland?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, as I said before, we've got a global economy, and if we're taking actions in isolation in the United States, but those actions are contradicted overseas, then we're only going to be halfway effective -- maybe not even half.

You've seen, for example, a drastic decline in U.S. exports over the last several months. You look at a company like Caterpillar, in my home state of Illinois, which up until last year was doing extraordinarily well; in fact, export growth was what had sustained it even after the recession had begun. As a consequence of the world recession, as a consequence of the contagion from the financial markets debilitating the economies elsewhere, Caterpillar is now in very bad shape. So if we want to get Caterpillar back on its feet, if we want to get all those export companies back on their feet, so that they are hiring, putting people back to work, putting money in people's pockets, we've got to make sure that the global economy as a whole is successful.

And this document, which affirms the need for all countries to take fiscal responses that increase demand, that encourages the openness of markets, those are all going to be helpful in us being able to fix what ails the economy back home.

Let me mix in a -- Justin Webb, BBC. Where's Justin? There he is. Go ahead.



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Q Mr. President, in the spirit of openness, with which you say you're --

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Why don't you get a microphone? See, everybody is complaining. I'm sure that's all your fellow British journalists.

Q They're extraordinarily well behaved, Mr. President. In the spirit of openness, with which you say you're going to run your administration, could you give us an insight into an area or areas where you came to London wanting something and you didn't get it; where you compromised, where you gave something away to achieve the wider breakthrough agreement?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, I think that if you look at the language of the document, there are probably some areas where it wasn't so much of a sacrifice as it might not have been our number-one priority, but it became clear that it was very important to certain other actors.

I'd rather not specify what those precise items would be, because this is a collective document. But there's no doubt that each country has its own quirks and own particular issues that a leader may decide is really, really important; something that is non-negotiable for them. And what we tried to do as much as possible was to accommodate those issues in a way that didn't -- did not hamper the effectiveness of the overall document to address what I think are the core issues related to this crisis.

Now, keep in mind -- I think that this kind of coordination really is historic. I said in the meeting that if you had imagined 10 years ago, or 20 years ago, or 30 years ago, that you'd have the leaders of Germany, France, China, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, a President of the United States named Obama -- former adversaries, in some cases former mortal enemies, negotiating this swiftly on behalf of fixing the global economy, you would have said, that's crazy. And yet it was happening, and it happened with relatively little -- relatively few hiccups. And I think that's a testimony to the great work that Gordon Brown did, and his team, in organizing the summit, the collective work in our teams in doing some good preparation, some good ground work. So I'm very proud of what's been done.

This alone is not enough. And obviously the actions that each of us take in our individual countries are still absolutely vital. So we have a set of principles, for example, around dealing with systemic risk that I think will be very important in preventing the kinds of financial crises that we've seen.

That does not entirely solve the problem of toxic assets that are still in U.S. banks and certain British banks and certain European banks. And how each individual nation acts to deal with that is still going to be vitally important. How well we execute the respective stimulus programs around the world is going to be very important. The quicker they are, the more effective they are at actually boosting demand, the more all of us will benefit. The more encumbered they are by bureaucracy and mismanagement and corruption, that will hamper our development efforts as a whole.

So this is not a panacea, but it is a critical step, and I think it lays the foundation so that, should the actions that we've taken individually and collectively so far not succeed in boosting global demand and growth, should you continue to see a freezing of credit or a hemorrhaging of jobs around the world, I think we've created a good foundation for this leadership to come back together again and take additional steps until we get it right.



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Okay, Michael Shear. Where's Michael?

Q Thank you, Mr. President. I wonder if you view this trip that you're on and the actions that you've taken here at the G20 and with the bilateral meetings that you've had as representing a break from the foreign policy of your predecessor. And if so, could you describe where you see and how you see the principles that guide a different view of the world?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, you know, I didn't accompany President Bush on his various summits, so I don't know how he was operating. And I won't -- I won't warrant a guess on that.

I can tell you that what I've tried to do since I started running for President and since I was sworn in as President, is to communicate the notion that America is a critical actor and leader on the world stage, and that we shouldn't be embarrassed about that, but that we exercise our leadership best when we are listening; when we recognize that the world is a complicated place and that we are going to have to act in partnership with other countries; when we lead by example; when we show some element of humility and recognize that we may not always have the best answer, but we can always encourage the best answer and support the best answer.

So I think that's the -- that's the approach that we've tried to take in our foreign policy since my administration came in. Now, we come in at extraordinarily challenging times, and yet I actually think that that calls for this type of leadership even more. But, ultimately, we won't know how effective we are until we look back a year from now, or two years from now, or three years from now and see if it worked.

And what the American people care about I suspect are the same thing that the British people care about, and that is, are you putting people back to work? Are businesses growing again? Is business -- is credit flowing again? And, you know -- and that's just true with respect to this summit. But when it comes to our Afghanistan policy, the question is going to be, have we made ourselves safer; have we reduced the risks and incidents of terrorism?

And so the proof of the pudding is in the eating. But hopefully, I think at least we've set a tone internationally where people don't -- where they give us the benefit of the doubt. They're still going to have their interests, and we're going to have ours. There are going to be tough negotiations, and sometimes we're going to have to walk away from those negotiations if we can't arrive at a common accord. There are going to be real dangers that can't always be talked through and have to be addressed. But at least we can start with the notion that we're prepared to listen and to work cooperatively with countries around the world.

All right, let me sprinkle in another -- it's got to be an international person. All right, this young lady right there.

Q Mr. President, Emma Alberici from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. At the moment, in the U.S., the U.K., and in Australia, executive salaries and bonuses are decided in the boardrooms of major publicly listed companies. Who will be making those decisions on salaries and bonuses as a result of the agreement you've made here today? And if it is still the boards, will they be guided by principles or legislation?



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PRESIDENT OBAMA: The principles that we outlined I think put in place or move us in the direction of what I consider to be best practices, which is that there is some accountability with respect to executive compensation.

Now, theoretically, that should be the shareholders. But the way that too many corporations have operated for too long is that you have a CEO who basically selects his board; the board, in a fairly cozy relationship oftentimes with the executive, hires a executive compensation firm, which, surprisingly, tends to think that it's necessary to retain the best talent to pay people \$20 or \$30 million a year; and we get into the kinds of habits and practices that I think have not been -- have not served shareholders well, I think ultimately distort the decision-making of many CEOs.

When I was in the United States Senate, I actually worked on a piece of legislation that would -- made the simple proposition that executive compensation should be subject to a shareholder vote, even if it was nonbinding, so that there was transparency and accountability and perhaps a shame function that would take place. And that principle, I think, is reflected in these guidelines.

What it says is, is that if you get shareholders involved and those shareholders are given a set of principles and best practices by which they can judge executive compensation, then you can still have outsized rewards and success for successful business people, but it will be based on not short-term performance, not three-month performance, not your ability to flip quick profits off products like derivatives that don't turn out to be particularly productive to the company, but based on sustained, effective growth. And that's what's embodied in these documents, and I think that you're going to see a lot of countries try to encourage that kind of transparency and accountability.

It doesn't mean the state micromanaging -- [sneezes] -- excuse me -- I've been fighting this all week -- it doesn't mean that we want the state dictating salaries; we don't. We -- I strongly believe in a free-market system, and as I -- as I think people understand in America, at least, people don't resent the rich; they want to be rich. And that's good. But we want to make sure that there's mechanisms in place that holds people accountable and produces results. Okay?

Got to go back to my crew. Jake Tapper.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Two questions. One, can you say with confidence that the steps the G20 nations are taking today -- committing to today will help the world, or will prevent the world to avoid a depression or a deeper recession?

And two, your friend and ally, Prime Minister Brown, said that "The old Washington consensus is over; today we have reached a new consensus." Is he right? And what do you think he meant by that?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: In life there are no guarantees; in economics there are no guarantees. The people who thought they could provide guarantees, many of them worked at AIG and it didn't work out so well. So there are always risks involved.



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I have no doubt, though, that the steps that have been taken are critical to preventing us sliding into a depression. They are bolder and more rapid than any international response that we've seen to a financial crisis in memory. And I think that they will have a concrete effect in our ability, individually, in each nation, to create jobs, save jobs that exist, grow the economy, loosen up credit, restore trust and confidence in the financial markets.

So these steps -- another way of putting it is I think the steps in the communiqué were necessary. Whether they're sufficient, we've got to -- we've got to wait and see. I'm actually confident, though, that given the common commitment in the United States and in the other G20 countries to act rapidly and boldly, that if we see other inklings of panic in the marketplace, or things unwinding, that this group, once again, will respond as needed.

So I guess maybe just to use an analogy that was used several times in this meeting, an analogy that I've used in the past: You got a sick patient; I think we applied the right medicine; I think the patient is stabilized; there's still wounds that have to heal and there's still emergencies that could arise, but I think that you've got some pretty good care being applied.

You had a second, follow-up question?

Q Prime Minister Brown saying --

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Oh, the Washington consensus. Well, the Washington consensus, as I'm sure you're aware, Jake, is sort of a term of art about a certain set of policies surrounding globalization and the application of a cookie-cutter model to economic growth, trade liberalization, deregulation that was popular and did help globalize and grow the economy, and was led by some of our leading economists and policymakers in Washington.

I think that there's always been a spectrum of opinion about how unfettered the free market is. And along that spectrum, I think there have been some who believe in very fierce regulation and are very suspicious of globalization, and there are others who think that it's always -- that the market is always king. And I think what we've learned here, but if anybody had been studying history they would have understood earlier, is that the market is the most effective mechanism for creating wealth and distributing resources to produce goods and services that history has ever known, but that it goes off the rail sometimes; that if it's completely unregulated, that if there are no thoughtful frameworks to channel the creative energy of the market, that it can end up in a very bad place.

And so, in that sense, I think that we just went through a couple of decades where there was an artificial complacency about the dangers of markets going off the rails. And a crisis like this reminds us that we just have to put in some common-sense rules of the road, without throwing out the enormous benefits that globalization have brought in terms of improving living standards, reducing the cost of goods, and bringing the world closer together.

All right, I've got time for just a couple more questions. I'm going to find a journalist here --

Q -- [inaudible]



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Q How about me?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: All right, I'm going to call on this gentleman right here. He's been very persistent.

Q Excuse me. China Central Television. Since the world leaders have been talking about increasing the voice and voting rights of developing countries, I would like to ask two questions instead of just one. First of all, on behalf of China --

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I may choose which one I want to answer.

Q Of course.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: That's always the danger of asking two questions.

Q First of all, you've had a very fruitful meeting with our President. And during the Clinton administration, U.S.-China relationship were characterized, in Clinton's words, "strategic, constructive partnership." During the Bush era, it was -- the catchphrase was "stakeholder." The Bush administration expects China to become a responsible stakeholder in international affairs. Have you come up with a catchphrase of your own? And certainly it is not the G2, is it?

My second question is, on behalf of the world, politics is very local, even though we've been talking about global solution, as indicated by your recent preference over American journalists and British -- which is okay. How can you make sure that you will do whatever you can so that -- that local politics will not trump or negatively affect good international economics? Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, those are excellent questions. On the first question, your American counterparts will tell you I'm terrible with those little catchphrases and sound bites. So I haven't come up with anything catchy yet, but if you have any suggestions, let me know. I'll be happy to use them.

In terms of local politics, look, I'm the President of the United States. I'm not the President of China, I'm not the President of Japan, I'm not the President of the other participants here. And so I have a direct responsibility to my constituents to make their lives better. That's why they put me in there. That accounts for some of the questions here, about how concretely does me being here help them find a job, pay for their home, send their kids to college, live what we call the American Dream. And I will be judged by my effectiveness in meeting their needs and concerns.

But in an era of integration and interdependence, it is also my responsibility to lead America into recognizing that its interests, its fate is tied up with the larger world; that if we neglect or abandon those who are suffering in poverty, that not only are we depriving ourselves of potential opportunities for markets and economic growth, but ultimately that despair may turn to violence that turns on us; that unless we are concerned about the education of all children and not just our children, not only may we be depriving ourselves of the next great scientist who's going to find the next new energy source that saves the planet, but we also may make people around the world much more vulnerable to anti-American propaganda.



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So if I'm effective as America's President right now, part of that effectiveness involves holding a -- providing Americans insight into how their self-interest is tied up with yours. And that's an ongoing project because it's not always obvious.

And there are going to be times where short-term interests are going to differ; there's no doubt about it. And protectionism is the classic example. You can make arguments that if you can get away with protecting your markets, as long as the other folks don't protect theirs, then in the short term you may benefit. And it then becomes important not only for me to try to give people a sense of why, over the long term, that's counterproductive, but also it becomes important for me to put policies in place in the United States that provide a cushion, provide support for those people who may suffer local dislocations because of globalization. And that's something that I think every government has to think about.

There are individuals who will be harmed by a trade deal. There are businesses who will go out of business because of free trade. And to the extent that a government is not there to help them reshape their company or retrain for the new jobs that are being created, over time you're going to get people who see -- who rightly see their personal self-interest in very narrow terms. Okay?

Two more questions. Jonathan Weisman.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. During the campaign you often spoke of a diminished power and authority of the United States over the last decade. This is your first time in an international summit like this, and I'm wondering what evidence you saw of what you spoke of during the campaign. And specifically, is the declaration of the end of the Washington consensus evidence of the diminished authority that you feared was out there?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, first of all, during the campaign I did not say that some of that loss of authority was inevitable. I said it was traced to very specific decisions that the previous administration had made that I believed had lowered our standing in the world. And that wasn't simply my opinion; that was, it turns out, the opinion of many people around the world.

I would like to think that with my election and the early decisions that we've made, that you're starting to see some restoration of America's standing in the world. And although, as you know, I always mistrust polls, international polls seem to indicate that you're seeing people more hopeful about America's leadership.

Now, we remain the largest economy in the world by a pretty significant margin. We remain the most powerful military on Earth. Our production of culture, our politics, our media still have -- I didn't mean to say that with such scorn, guys -- you know I'm teasing -- still has enormous influence. And so I do not buy into the notion that America can't lead in the world. I wouldn't be here if I didn't think that we had important things to contribute.

I just think in a world that is as complex as it is, that it is very important for us to be able to forge partnerships as opposed to simply dictating solutions. Just a -- just to try to crystallize the example, there's been a lot of comparison here about Bretton Woods. "Oh, well, last time you saw the entire international architecture being remade."



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Well, if there's just Roosevelt and Churchill sitting in a room with a brandy, that's a -- that's an easier negotiation. But that's not the world we live in, and it shouldn't be the world that we live in.

And so that's not a loss for America; it's an appreciation that Europe is now rebuilt and a powerhouse. Japan is rebuilt, is a powerhouse. China, India -- these are all countries on the move. And that's good. That means there are millions of people -- billions of people -- who are working their way out of poverty. And over time, that potentially makes this a much more peaceful world.

And that's the kind of leadership we need to show -- one that helps guide that process of orderly integration without taking our eyes off the fact that it's only as good as the benefits of individual families, individual children: Is it giving them more opportunity; is it giving them a better life? If we judge ourselves by those standards, then I think America can continue to show leadership for a very long time.

I'm going to call one foreigner -- actually, I'm the foreigner. That's why I smiled. One correspondent not from America. And then I will -- [vociferous commotion] -- we're not doing bidding here. But I also want to make sure that I'm not showing gender bias. So this young lady right here -- not you, sir, I'm sorry.

Q Hi, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: How are you?

Q Thank you for choosing me. I'm very well. I'm from the Times of India.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Wonderful.

Q You met with our Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. What did you -- what is America doing to help India tackle terrorism emanating from Pakistan?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, first of all, your Prime Minister is a wonderful man.

Q Thank you. I agree.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well --

Q I agree.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Did you have something to do with that, or -- You seem to kind of take -- take credit for it a little bit there.

Q Really proud of him, sir.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Of course. You should be proud of him. I'm teasing you.



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I think he's a very wise and decent man, and has done a wonderful job in guiding India, even prior to being Prime Minister, along a path of extraordinary economic growth that is a marvel, I think, for all the world.

We did discuss the issue of terrorism. And we discussed it not simply in terms of terrorism emanating from Pakistan, although obviously we are very concerned about extremists and terrorists who have made camp in the border regions of Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan. But we spoke about it more broadly in terms of how we can coordinate effectively on issues of counterterrorism.

We also spoke about the fact that in a nuclear age, at a time when perhaps the greatest enemy of both India and Pakistan should be poverty, that it may make sense to create a more effective dialogue between India and Pakistan. But obviously we didn't go in depth into those issues.

We talked about a whole range of other issues related to, for example, energy, and how important it is for the United States to lead by example in reducing our carbon footprint so that we can help to forge agreements with countries like China and India that, on a per-capita basis, have a much smaller footprint and so justifiably chafe at the idea that they should have to sacrifice their development for our efforts to control climate change; but also acknowledging that if China and India, with their populations, had the same energy usage as the average American, then we would have all melted by now.

And so that was a very interesting conversation that I will be pursuing not just with India, but hopefully with China and with other countries around the world. In some ways our European counterparts have moved more quickly than we have on this issue. But I think even the Europeans have recognized that it's not easy. It's even harder during times of economic downturn.

And so we're going to have to combine the low-hanging fruit of energy efficiency with rapid technological advances. And to the extent that in some cases we can get international cooperation and pool our scientific and technical knowledge around things like developing coal sequestration, for example, that can be extremely helpful. Okay?

I'm going to call on my last American correspondent, Chip. And, Chip, my heart goes out to you.

Q Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I appreciate that.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I just heard about that.

Q Certainly there is a lot of sentiment in G20 countries that the United States was a major cause of the global economic meltdown. To what degree did that topic come up in your discussions? Did it make it difficult for some countries to accept advice from the United States when they blame the United States and its economic system for causing this in the first place? And how do you respond to people who do blame America?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, you know, I don't think that -- I think my colleagues in the G20 were extraordinarily gracious about my participation.



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I think that they continue to express the desire to work with America, admiration about many things American. There were occasional comments, usually wedged into some other topic, that indicated from their perspective that this started in America, or this started on Wall Street, or this started with particular banks or companies.

Perhaps what helped was my willingness to acknowledge that -- and it's hard to deny -- that some of this contagion did start on Wall Street. And as I've said back home, as I've said in public and as I would say in private, we had a number of firms that took wild and unjustified risks, we had regulators that were asleep at the switch, and it has taken an enormous toll on the U.S. economy and has spread to the world economy.

Now, I think that part of the reason people didn't give me too hard a time is because if you look at European banks or Asian banks, that they've had their own issues both in the past and in the future. And I think there was a very constructive discussion about the fact that, given global financial flows, that unless we've got much more effective coordinated regulatory strategies, supervision, standards, that these problems will appear again.

Money is -- can move around the globe in a second. And it will seek out the highest returns, and if those highest returns end up being built on a house of cards, then we're going to be seeing another threat to the world financial system wherever that house of cards might be.

And so, overall, I think there was an extraordinarily constructive approach among all the leaders. I was very impressed with them. I'm very grateful to them. And I'm excited about the ability not just to help heal this economy but also to make progress on a sustainable model of economic growth that relies less on a cycle of bubble and bust -- something that I've spoken about back home.

All right? Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.