

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

The President's News Conference in Lima, Peru

November 20, 2016

The President. Good evening, everybody. Let me begin by thanking President Kuczynski and the wonderful people of Peru for hosting us and for their outstanding hospitality. Peru is one of the United States strongest partners in the Americas, from standing up for democracy to promoting jobs and growth, to fighting climate change. And this summit has been a success thanks to the great work of our Peruvian friends. So on behalf of us all, *muchas gracias*.

This summit, and my trip over the past week, has obviously occurred against a backdrop of the broader debate over globalization and trade. As I've said, over the decades, our global, integrated economy has helped to improve the lives of billions of people around the world with historic gains in prosperity, education, and health. At the same time, when jobs and capital can move across borders, when workers have less leverage, when wealthy corporations and global elites too often seem to be playing by a different set of rules, then workers and communities can be hit especially hard. The gaps between the rich and everyone else grow wider. And that can reverberate through our politics.

That's why I firmly believe that one of our greatest challenges in the years ahead—across our nations and within them—will be to make sure that the benefits of the global economy are shared by more people and that the negative impacts, such as economic inequalities, are addressed by all nations. When it comes to trade, I believe that the answer is not to pull back or try to erect barriers to trade. Given our integrated economies and global supply chains, that would hurt us all. But rather, the answer is to do trade right, making sure that it has strong labor standards, strong environmental standards, that it addresses ways in which workers and ordinary people can benefit rather than be harmed by global trade. All of this is the central work of APEC.

As this debate moves forward in the United States, it's important to remember how vital the Asia-Pacific is to America's prosperity. The 21 Asia-Pacific economies here represent nearly 3 billion people, a majority of the global middle class, 6 of America's top 10 trading partners, more than half of the global economy, and the world's fastest growing region. In other words, these 21 countries represent tremendous opportunity for the United States to sell our goods and support U.S. jobs. And that's why, as part of the rebalance of our foreign policy to the Asia Pacific, we've boosted U.S. exports to the region by some 50 percent. Nearly 60 percent of our exports go to the region.

And this is part of broader progress. With 95 percent of the world's customers beyond America's borders, I've made it a priority to open up new markets overseas. And during my administration, we've increased U.S. exports to the world by more than 40 percent—to record levels—and these exports support more than 11 million American jobs. Moreover, we know that companies that export tend to grow faster and hire more employees and pay their workers more than companies that do not export. All of which is why exports have helped to drive our economic recovery. It's one of the reasons that U.S. businesses have created more than 15 million new jobs.

So that's the kind of progress that trade—when done right—can deliver. And that's the kind of work that we've tried to do here at this summit. We're continuing our work to make it easier to do business between our countries so we're creating even more jobs. In the United

States, we're simplifying the process of starting a new business, increasing access to credit, all of which will help more ventures, especially small businesses, get up and running, and helping them to be able to export as well so that they can access a global market even if they can't afford fancy lawyers and accountants and foreign offices.

We agreed to increase our collective effort against corruption by targeting the bribery that enriches elites at the expense of people. And we committed to making it easier to trade in services as well as goods.

We also discussed the excess capacity that exists in certain sectors, like steel and aluminum, that distorts markets and hurts business and workers, including American workers. And even as I've argued that we cannot engage in protectionist measures, my administration has been at the forefront of really cracking down hard on unfair trade practices and brought consistently cases against the—cases under the WTO against those who are engaging in unfair trading practices, and we've had a great track record of trade enforcement that has to be a part of this process.

I've been very clear that excess capacity is not the result of market forces. It's the result of specific government policies and it needs to be fixed. And here at APEC, we've been taking steps—as we were at the G-20 in Hangzhou—to start addressing these issues in a systematic way.

With regard to the digital economy, we endorsed rules to protect the privacy of personal information as it crosses borders. We discussed the importance of maintaining the current moratorium on customs duties for digital goods and innovation. And giving—given growing cyber threats, our 21 APEC economies affirmed that no one should conduct or support cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property, including trade secrets, with the intent to providing a competitive advantage to companies or commercial sectors.

We're also moving ahead with making our economies more inclusive. And one particular area of focus is making sure that women have fair access to economic growth: expanding education; expanding access to careers in science, technology, engineering, and math; helping more women entrepreneurs to access finance and integrate their businesses into the global supply chain. According to one study, if women around the world participated in the labor force, it could add up to \$28 trillion of additional output for the global economy—\$28 trillion. When women are more prosperous, then families, communities, and countries are all more prosperous as well.

My meeting yesterday with my fellow leaders of the Trans-Pacific Partnership was a chance to reaffirm our commitment to the TPP, with its high standards, strong protections for workers, the environment, intellectual property, and human rights. Our partners made very clear during the meeting that they want to move forward with TPP. Preferably, they'd like to move forward with the United States. A number of countries are already starting to ratify TPP.

At the same time, we're already hearing calls for a less ambitious trade agreement in the region with lower standards, lower protections for workers, lower protections for the environment. That kind of agreement would obviously exclude U.S. workers and businesses and access to those markets. So, for all those reasons, I believe that TPP is a plus for America's economy, America's workers, American jobs. I think not moving forward would undermine our position across the region and our ability to shape the rules of global trade in a way that reflects our interests and our values.

Finally, our cooperation with APEC has been critical to our historic progress in fighting climate change: bringing the Paris Agreement into force, agreeing to limit aviation emissions, phasing out dangerous HFCs. Here in Lima, we continue our work to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, and countries made new commitments toward our goal of doubling our renewable energy over the next two decades.

So, as I wrap up my last summit and likely my last foreign trip as President, I could not be more proud of the progress that we've made together. Obviously, the work is never done. And given the prosperity and security we seek for not only the United States, but our allies and our partners, I continue to believe that America will have a vital role to play in creating and sustaining a strong, enduring leadership role in the Asia Pacific.

So, with that, let me take some questions. And I'll start with Darlene Superville of AP.

President-Elect Donald J. Trump/President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Cybersecurity/2016 Presidential Election

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've been telling world leaders this week that President-elect Trump is unlikely to govern in the divisive way that he campaigned. But I'm wondering, how can you be so certain of that given that the first group of people he's chosen for top national security and law enforcement positions hold the same views that he espoused as a candidate? And second, to follow up on your meeting earlier today with President Putin, did you discuss with him Russia's alleged meddling in the U.S. election? And are you concerned that the kind of involvement that we saw in this year's campaign will be the new normal going forward in future U.S. elections?

The President. Good. Well, what I have said to world leaders is the same thing that I've said in a number of press conferences, which is the President-elect now has to put together a team and put forward specifics about how he intends to govern. And he hasn't had a full opportunity to do that yet. And so people should take a wait-and-see approach in how much his policy proposals once in the White House, once he is sworn in, matches up with some of the rhetoric of his campaign.

My simple point is, is that you can't assume that the language of campaigning matches up with the specifics of governing, legislation, regulations, and foreign policy.

I can't be sure of anything. I think, like everyone else, we'll have to wait and see. But as I've said before, once you're in the Oval Office, once you begin interacting with world leaders, once you see the complexities of the issues, that has a way of shaping your thinking and, in some cases, modifying your thinking, because you recognize this solemn responsibility not only to the American people, but the solemn responsibility that America has as the largest, most powerful country in the world.

And I can't guarantee that the President-elect won't pursue some of the positions that he's taken. But what I can guarantee is, is that reality will force him to adjust how he approaches many of these issues. That's just the way this office works.

And I've said before, if these issues were easy—if ensuring prosperity, jobs, security, good foreign relations with other countries—if all that was simple, then it would have been done by every previous President. And I'm a pretty good Presidential historian. I've looked at my 43 predecessors, and it seems like for all of them—even the best ones—that you end up confronting realities that you didn't anticipate. I think the same will happen here. And that's a good thing. That's an important thing.

With respect to President Putin, I didn't have a meeting. We talked briefly while we were in between sessions. And the conversation that I had with him was consistent with the conversations I've had with him over the previous several months, indicating to him that we are still deeply concerned about the bloodshed and chaos that's being sown by constant bombing attacks by Asad and the Russian military against populations in Aleppo and the need for us to arrive first at some sort of humanitarian cease-fire and begin moving towards a political transition of some sort.

And I talked to him about Ukraine and the need for us to get Minsk done. I urged him to instruct his negotiators to work with ourselves, with France, with Germany, with Ukraine to see if we can get that done before my term is up. As usual, it was a candid and courteous meeting, but very clear about the strong differences that we have on policy.

The issue of the elections did not come up because that's behind us and I was focused in this brief discussion on moving forward. I had already made very clear to him our concerns around cyber attacks, generally, as well as specific concerns we had surrounding the DNC hack.

I don't think this will be the norm, but as I've said before, the concern I have has less to do with any particular misinformation or propaganda that's being put out by any particular party, and a greater concern about the general misinformation from all kinds of sources—both domestic, foreign, on social media—that make it very difficult to voters—for voters to figure out what's true and what's not. And let me put it this way. I think if we have a strong, accurate, and responsible press, and we have a strong, civic culture and an engaged citizenry, then various attempts to meddle in our elections won't mean much.

If, generally, we've got elections that aren't focused on issues and are full of fake news and false information and distractions, then the issue is not going to be what's happening from the outside. The issue is going to be what are we doing to ourselves from the inside. The good news is that's something that we have control over. All right?

Gardiner Harris [New York Times].

The President's Personal Finances/Government Ethics/President-Elect Donald J. Trump/National Security Agency/Cybersecurity

Q. Mr. President, thank you so much for holding this press conference. If you had had hotels, real estate, and other businesses distributed around the world prior to becoming President, would you have thought it appropriate to sell them off and put the cash proceeds in a blind trust? Or is it okay for the President of the United States to be personally vulnerable to the policy decisions of the foreign leaders he meets and in the foreign policy decisions he makes as President? And also, just briefly, what's your complaint about how the NSA and Cyber Command have done their job? And are you considering firing Admiral Mike Rogers?

The President. That was a rhetorical question, that first one. [Laughter]

Q. I'm hoping that you give us some sense of your beliefs.

The President. Rather than comment on hypotheticals, let me say specifically what I did.

Q. Okay.

The President. Obviously, my assets were significantly smaller than some other Presidents or President-elects. But we made a decision to liquidate assets that might raise questions about how it would influence policy.

I basically had our accountant put all our money in Treasury bills—the yields, by the way, have not been massive over the course of the last 8 years—[laughter]—just because it simplified my life. I did not have to worry about the complexities of whether a decision that I made might even inadvertently benefit me.

And that's consistent with the broader approach that we've taken throughout my administration, which is to not just meet the letter of the law, but to go well beyond the letter to the spirit of the law, not just for me, but for the people in the White House and in our leadership positions.

We have established a whole set of rules, norms, playbooks that just keep us far away from the line. Early on in the administration, there would be questions about, could a staff person go to this conference or what should they do about this gift that was provided? And I think it was maybe our first General Counsel who was responsible for setting up our guidelines and rules inside the White House that said, if it sounds like it would be fun, then you can't do it. [Laughter] That's a general test. If it sounds like something you would enjoy or appreciate, no-go.

And as a consequence—and I'll knock on some wood here, because we've got 2 months left—I am extremely proud of the fact that over 8 years we have not had the kinds of scandals that have plagued other administrations. And when I met with the President-elect, I suggested to him that having a strong White House Counsel that could provide clear guideposts and rules would benefit him and benefit his team because it would eliminate a lot of ambiguity. And I think it will be up to him to make determinations about how he wants to approach it.

I know what worked for us, and I think it served the American people well. And because I had made a promise to the American people that I would not fall into some of the familiar habits of Washington, that I wanted a new kind of politics, this was one indicator. And at the end of 8 years, I think I can say to the American people I delivered on that commitment.

With respect to cyber, the NSA, Admiral Rogers is a terrific patriot and has served this country well in a number of positions. I generally don't comment on personnel matters here. I can say generally that we've spent a lot of time over the last several years looking at how we can organize our cyber efforts to keep pace with how rapidly the environment is changing.

Increasingly, our critical infrastructure, government data, financial systems are vulnerable to attack. And both state and non-state actors are getting better and better at it, and it is becoming more and more rapid. And it is inevitable that we're going to have to modernize and update not just the tools we use to defend those assets and the American people, but also how we organize it. And it is true that we are exploring a range of options in terms of how we organize the mission that currently exists.

Rich Edson [Fox News].

2016 Presidential Election/Democratic Party/U.S. Electoral System/Former President George W. Bush/The President's Post-Presidency Plans

Q. Good evening, and thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

Q. Earlier this year, former President George W. Bush reportedly said that he warned, he would be the last Republican President. Now Republicans have won the White House, control the House and Senate, two-thirds of State legislatures, 34 Governorships, and there are charges

of a shallow Democratic bench behind you. Are you worried you could be the last Democratic President for a while? And secondly, sir, speaking of your predecessor, he made sure to offer essentially no public criticism of you during your time in office. Will you equally withhold public criticism for President Trump, even if he attempts to dismantle much of what you've accomplished? Thank you.

The President. Well, no, I'm not worried about being the last Democratic President. I think——

Q. But for a while?

The President. Or not even for a while. And I say that not being cute. The Democratic nominee won the popular vote, and obviously, this was an extremely competitive race, and I would expect that future races will be competitive as well. I certainly think it's true that politics in America right now are a little up for grabs, that some of the old alignments within both parties—Democrat and Republican—are being reshaped. And although the results of this election involved some of the specifics of the candidates and aren't going to be duplicated in every subsequent election, Democrats do have to do some thinking about, how do we make sure that the message we have is received effectively and results in winning elections?

This is something that I've been wrestling with throughout my Presidency. When you look at the proposals I put forward, they garner majority support. The majority believes in raising the minimum wage. The majority believes in commonsense gun safety rules. The majority believes in investing to rebuild our infrastructure and create jobs. The majority believes in making sure that people aren't going bankrupt when they get sick. The majority agrees with all the individual components of Obamacare. [*Laughter*]

I think there was a Gallup Poll this week, subsequent to the election, that showed that the general public has a more favorable view of Democrats than Republicans. And as I noted, my approval ratings are quite high. And yet what's been true during the course of my 8 years is that, that does not always translate. In fact, too often, it hasn't translated into working majorities either at the State level or at the Federal level.

Now, some of that is just the nature of our system and geography. Right? As long as Wyoming gets the same number of Senators as California, there's going to be some tilt towards Republicans when it comes to congressional races. The fact that a lot of Democratic voters are bunched up in big cities and a lot of Republican voters are spread out across geography gives them an advantage when it comes to congressional races.

Some of it is just political bad luck. For example, I came in as an economy was in free fall, and although we took the right steps to save the economy, in my midterm election in 2010, people couldn't yet see the recovery, and not surprisingly, the President's party got punished. We lost control of a lot of not just congressional seats, but also gubernatorial seats and State legislative seats. And that happened to be the year that the census is done and you start doing redistricting, and those Republicans took advantage of political gerrymandering to lock in majorities, even though in numerous subsequent elections, Democrats have actually cast more votes—or more votes have been cast for Democratic congressional candidates than Republican. And yet you end up having large Republican majorities.

So there are just some structural problems that we have to deal with. But look, you can't make excuses about the rules. That's the deal, and we've got to do better. And I think doing better, as I said, involves us working at the grassroots, not ceding territory. Going out into areas where right now we may not stand a chance of actually winning, but we're building up a cadre

of young talent. We're making arguments. We're persuading. We're talking about the things that matter to ordinary people day to day and trying to avoid some of the constant distractions that fill up people's Twitter accounts.

And if we do that, then I'm confident that we'll be back on track. I don't think that there has to be a complete overhaul here. I think that there does have to be better organization, a smarter message. And one message I do have for Democrats is that a strategy that's just microtargeting particular, discrete groups in a Democratic coalition sometimes will win you elections, but it's not going to win you the broad mandate that you need. And ultimately, the more we can talk about what we have in common as a nation and speak to a broad set of values, a vision that speaks to everybody and not just one group at a time, the better off we're going to be.

I think that's part of the reason why I was able to get elected twice, is that I always tried to make sure that, not only in proposals, but also in message, that I was speaking to everybody.

You had a second part to your question?

Q. As for criticism of your successor?

The President. Ah. Look, I've said before, President Bush could not have been more gracious to me when I came in. And my intention is to, certainly for the next 2 months, just finish my job. And then, after that, to take Michelle on vacation—[*laughter*]—get some rest, spend time with my girls, and do some writing, do some thinking. So I want to be respectful of the office and give the President-elect an opportunity to put forward his platform and his arguments without somebody popping off in every instance.

As an American citizen who cares deeply about our country, if there are issues that have less to do with the specifics of some legislative proposal or battle, but go to core questions about our values and our ideals, and if I think that it's necessary or helpful for me to defend those ideals, then I'll examine it when it comes. But what I do know is, is that I have to take Michelle on vacation. [*Laughter*]

Juliet. Juliet Eilperin [Washington Post].

The President's Executive Authority/Syria/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. Given what you just said about the strong differences that you and President Putin have on the future of Syria and the conflict there, can you talk a little about how you see that unfolding, both at the end of your tenure, at the beginning of Donald Trump's, and whether you have concerns that even if we eliminate the Islamic State in eastern Syria and western Iraq, we may be allowing a permanent Al Qaida safe haven around Aleppo and Idlib? And on Aleppo, can you say to what extent you think the United States has fulfilled its responsibility to protect in that instance?

And then, in terms of finishing your job, which you just mentioned, in the last week, you exercised your executive authority on multiple fronts: finalizing oil and gas leasing rules on public lands as well as issuing a 5-year leasing plan banning drilling in the Arctic and the Atlantic. Many Republicans say that you should hold off finalizing anymore rules as you're headed out the door because they oppose many of them and will seek to overturn them when they control both the executive and the legislative branch next year. What do you say to that suggestion?

The President. Well, on the second question, these are the same Republicans who suggested that they didn't need to confirm a Supreme Court Justice when I was 9 months out, until the next election. I think their general approach seems to be that probably 2 days after my reelection, I should stop until the next election. I don't think that that's what the Constitution calls for.

The regulations that we have issued are ones that we've been working on for a very long time. They've been subject to extensive public notice and comment, and everybody has known they've been out there. These aren't things that we've been surprising people with. They're well considered, they're the right thing to do. They're part of my task of finishing my work.

And I recognize that when the new administration comes in and a new Congress comes in, that they will have the option of trying to undo some of those rules and regulations that we've put into place. And that's their prerogative. That's part of how democracy works. But I feel very strongly these are the right things to do, and I'm going to make sure I do them.

With respect to Syria, as I said, I think, even on this trip in a previous press conference, I am not optimistic about the short-term prospects in Syria. Once Russia and Iran made a decision to back Assad in a brutal air campaign and essentially a pacification of Aleppo, regardless of the potential for civilian casualties, children being killed or wounded, schools or hospitals being destroyed, then it was very hard to see a way in which even a trained and committed moderate opposition could hold its ground for long periods of time.

And the issue that obviously I've wrestled with for the last 5 years: How involved should the United States be? What are our legal constraints in such involvement? What are our moral obligations? What are our strategic interests? Those haven't changed. I continue to believe that we did not have a legal basis for military intervention there; that it would have been a strategic mistake given the work we still had to do in Iraq, the counter-ISIL campaign, ongoing operations in Afghanistan that we have worked tirelessly to arrive at a political transition of some sort and that could alleviate the suffering and provide humanitarian access. And we will continue to do that work all the way until the last day that me and John Kerry and others have the authority to speak for the United States Government.

But ultimately, it takes two—or in this case, four or six or eight—to tango. And we're just not getting help or interest from those parties that are supporting Assad, and Assad, as a consequence, has been emboldened. Look, this is a man who has decided that destroying his country, turning it to rubble, and seeing its population scattered or killed was worth it for him to cling to power when he had the option to peacefully engage in a transition that could have kept the country intact. That's his mentality. That's not a mentality we support. That's a mentality that the Russians and the Iranians have been willing to support. But at this stage, we're going to need to have a change in how all parties think about this in order for us to end the situation there.

Now, our ability to go after ISIL, I think, can be sustained. There's no doubt that there will continue to be extremist forces in and around Syria because it's still going to be in chaos for quite some time. There will be elements in Iraq, just as there have been elements in Afghanistan even after the Taliban we're swept out, even after we killed bin Laden. But I think we can effectively reduce the risk and take their key external operators off the field.

The thing I'm probably most concerned about is making sure that even as we do that, U.S. policy, U.S. statements, U.S. positions don't further radicalize Muslims around the world or alienate and potentially radicalized law-abiding Muslims who are living in Europe or the

United States. And that's why I think it's important for us to understand those are our key allies in this fight, not enemies.

Mike Memoli [Los Angeles Times].

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi/Democratic Party/U.S. Presidency/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. This final foreign trip of your Presidency is obviously playing out in very different circumstances than you might have expected. A very different transition is underway than the one you might have envisioned. Given that, though, I wonder if you've intentionally sought to approach this trip reflecting more on the powers of and influence of the Presidency on the world stage so that you might be able to offer the kind of counsel to your successor that he has said he hopes to draw upon.

And also, on a political note, you talked often during your reelection campaign about this fever that had consumed the Republican Party, an effective political strategy that they employed to block you even on issues where there might have been some common ground.

The President. Right.

Q. What would be your advice to Democrats who might see that kind of strategy as the same kind of path to taking back power that the Republicans employed? And related to that, what would your advice be to House Democrats about whether or not to reelect Nancy Pelosi as the party leader in the House?

The President. Well, I'll work in reverse. I think Nancy Pelosi is an outstanding and historic political leader. So much of what we accomplished was accomplished because of her smarts, her tenacity, her legislative skill. And I don't normally meddle with party votes, and certainly on my way out the door, probably, I shouldn't meddle here. But I cannot speak highly enough of Nancy Pelosi. She combines strong, progressive values with just extraordinary political skill. And she does stuff that's tough, not just stuff that's easy. She's done stuff that's unpopular in her own base because it's the right thing to do for the American people. I think she's a remarkable leader.

With respect to Democrats and Republicans and how Democrats should deal with a new administration, I think you give them a hearing. I certainly don't want them to do what Mitch McConnell did when I was elected: meet the day of and say our sole objective is to not cooperate with him on anything even if the country is about to go into a depression so that we can gain seats in the midterms and ultimately defeat him.

That's not why the American people send us to Washington, to play those games. So that's not my advice to Democrats. My advice to Democrats is, know what you care about and what you stand for, and fight for your principles even if it's a hard fight. If there are areas where the new administration is doing something that's going to be good for the American people, find a way to work with them. If you think it's going to be a problem, then say so and make the argument.

The touchstone is, what's good for the American people. And that's worked for me. It means that at the end of the day—and at the end of 8 years—I can look back, and I can say that I consistently did what I thought was best. It doesn't mean you don't make mistakes, but it means that you're being true to your oath and the commitments you made to the people who elected you.

And in terms of reflecting on the U.S. Presidency as I've been traveling, I think the main reflection I have and the main advice that I give to the incoming President is, the United States really is an indispensable nation in our world order. And I say that as somebody who has gone out of his way to express respect for every country and its people and to consistently acknowledge that many of the challenges that we face are not challenges that America can solve on its own. But what I also know is that the basic framework of the world order coming out of World War II and then on through the end of the cold war was shaped by a set of ideals and principles that have worked for the vast majority of people, not just America, but around the world. The notion of democracy and rule of law and a free press and an independent judiciary and open markets and a social welfare state to moderate some off the sharp edges of capitalism and lifting up issues of human rights and investing in public health and development—not just within our own borders, but elsewhere in the world—and working with multilateral institutions like the United Nations, making sure that we're upholding international norms and rules.

That's what's made the modern world. And there have been times where we, ourselves, have not observed some of these norms as well as we should and have been accused of hypocrisy. Here in Latin America, there have been times where countries felt disrespected and, on occasion, had cause for that. There are times where we haven't observed these values in our own country and have fallen short of our ideals. But that basic structure is the reason why the world is much wealthier, much more secure, and, yes, less violent, healthier, better educated, more tolerant than it was 50 years ago.

And that requires constant work. It doesn't just happen on its own. I've said this in Europe. I've said this in places where there's this pushback against this modern order. But you take an example like Europe, before that order was imposed, we had two world wars in the span of 30 years. In the second one, 60 million people were killed. Not half a million, not a million, but 60 million. Entire continents in rubble.

In places like Asia—the Asia-Pacific, before that order existed, you routinely saw famines of millions of people, not just concerns about low wages, but people dying because they didn't have any food or drinking water or died of cholera or simple diseases—if somebody had some penicillin.

And so what I would say would be that we all share responsibilities for improving that order and maintaining it and making sure it's more inclusive and delivers greater hope and prosperity for more corners of the world. We all have responsibilities—every nation—in respecting the dignity and worth of their citizens. And America can't do it all for everybody else. There are limits to our reach into other countries if they're determined to oppress their people or not provide girls education or siphon off development funds into Swiss bank accounts because they're corrupt. We're not going to be able to handle every problem.

But the American President and the United States of America—if we're not on the side of what's right, if we're not making the argument and fighting for it, even if sometimes we're not able to deliver it a hundred percent everywhere—then it collapses. And there's nobody to fill the void. There really isn't. There are other very important countries, like a China, where we can't—if it weren't for China's cooperation, we couldn't have gotten the Paris Agreement done. But China is not the one who was going around organizing 200 nations to sign on to a Paris Agreement or putting together the paper and the policy outlines and the conceptual framework.

Russia is a very significant military power, but they're not worrying right now about how to rebuild after a hurricane in Haiti. We are.

And I've said before, that's a burden that we should carry proudly. And I would hope that not just the 45th President of the United States, but every President of the United States understands that that's not only a burden, but it's also an extraordinary privilege. And if you have a chance to do that right, then you should seize it.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:52 p.m. at the Nasca Room in the Ministry of Cultural Affairs Building. In his remarks, the President referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; former White House Counsel Gregory B. Craig; Democratic Presidential nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Merrick B. Garland.

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Locations: Lima, Peru.

Names: Asad, Bashar al-; Bush, George W.; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Craig, Gregory B.; Garland, Merrick B.; Kerry, John F.; Kuczynski Godard, Pedro Pablo; McConnell, Mitchell A.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Pelosi, Nancy; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Rogers, Michael S.; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); Civil rights : Privacy; Civil rights : Women's rights and gender equality; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Commerce, international : Group of Twenty (G-20) nations; Commerce, international : U.S. exports :: Expansion; Communications : News media, Presidential interviews; Congress : Bipartisanship; Congress : House of Representatives :: Minority leader; Congress : Senate :: Majority leader; Defense and national security : Cybersecurity :: Cyber attacks; Defense and national security : Cybersecurity :: Strengthening efforts; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Developing countries : Government corruption; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Environment : Paris Agreement; Government organization and employees : Accountability and transparency, strengthening efforts; Iran : Syria, role; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice-designate; Peru : President; Peru : President Obama's visit; Peru : Relations with U.S.; Presidency, U.S. : President-elect; Presidency, U.S. : Transition process; Russia : President; Russia : Syria, role; Security Agency, National; State, Department of : Secretary; Syria : President; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Syria : President; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); Ukraine : International diplomatic efforts; Ukraine : Political unrest and violence; World Trade Organization.

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