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PASSING THE BATON

FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES AND
OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

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THURSDAY
JANUARY 8, 2009

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PLENARY SESSION 1:45-3:00 P.M.
IRAQ, IRAN, AFGHANISTAN, AND PAKISTAN:
IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES, LINKAGES AND
TRADE-OFFS

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Ballroom A

Walter E. Washington Convention Center
801 Mount Vernon Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

LED BY:
ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI

ADMIRAL MICHAEL G. MULLEN
LAKHDAR BRAHIMI

MODERATED BY DANIEL P. SERWER

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 MR. SERWER: My name is Daniel
3 Serwer. I'm Vice President for Peace and
4 Stability Operations here at the U.S.
5 Institute of Peace, and it's a great pleasure
6 to welcome you to this plenary session on
7 Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

8 Each of these countries presents
9 difficult challenges, and we'll be addressing
10 Iran and Afghanistan at separate sessions, but
11 the four countries are also intimately
12 intertwined, with obvious and not so obvious
13 linkages and tradeoffs among them.

14 How should we, we America, we the
15 International Community, approach this tangle
16 of issues? What should take priority? Which
17 military and civilian resources need to be
18 brought to bear? What do we have to do right
19 away, and what can we postpone? How can
20 burdens be shared between America and others?

21 All of us who have served in
22 government know how difficult it is to focus

1 the instruments of national and international
2 power on even one problem. To get the balance
3 right among four of them is going to be an
4 enormous challenge for the Obama
5 Administration.

6 But, for the next hour the
7 challenge belongs to three gentlemen who are
8 admirably well equipped for the task.
9 Unfortunately, Admiral Mullen could not be
10 with us today, had something urgent that came
11 up, and he has taken the liberty, in the
12 spirit of our times, of substituting for
13 Admiral Mullen an Iraqi. This is part of the
14 shift you are noticing with the SOFA, and that
15 Iraqi is Muwafaq al-Rubaie, who is the
16 National Security Advisor of Iraq, and we are
17 very pleased to have him here with us.

18 Ambassador Brahimi, who I think is
19 sitting still at the Institute for Advanced
20 Study in Princeton, brings to the problems of
21 Southwest Asia half a century of diplomatic
22 experience and service to the U.N., and to his

1 native Algeria.

2 And, Zbigniew Brzezinski is CSIS
3 and Johns Hopkins, he's one of America's most
4 distinguished students and practitioners of
5 national -- of international security and
6 national security.

7 Gentlemen, please give us your
8 wisdom. We'll start with Mr. Brzezinski.

9 DR. BRZEZINSKI: Ladies and
10 gentlemen, as our Chairman said, the problems
11 of Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, are
12 interrelated, and that is true. But, it is
13 also a fact that each of these problems
14 requires a distinctive approach, and a
15 specific U.S. policy, even though that policy
16 is shaped in the context of the recognition
17 that these problems are interrelated.

18 These problems, however, could
19 become a single problem and pose comprehensive
20 policy challenges for the United States, if
21 they all became linked in the only fashion in
22 which they could become linked, which is, in

1 the event of an American-Iranian war. If
2 there was an American-Iranian war, we would,
3 indeed, be dealing with a single policy issue,
4 and it is an issue which I would prefer not to
5 confront, for such a war would involve the
6 United States in a conflict that would then be
7 spanning in different degrees of intensity,
8 these four countries, with a total population
9 of approximately 300 million.

10 I mention this quite deliberately,
11 because it seems to me that in thinking
12 seriously about the problems of this region
13 one has to be very conscious of the
14 consequences of one's actions. It is a lesson
15 which I hope we have learned.

16 Nonetheless, it is a fact that if
17 we deal constructively with the specific four
18 aspects of this larger complex of issues, we
19 can make progress, so let me speak then
20 specifically to each of the four, recognizing
21 the dynamic and interactive character of the
22 interrelationship between them.

1 With Iraq, we have now terminated
2 the debate over whether there should or should
3 not be a fixed date for U.S. disengagement.
4 Even though those who have advocated a fixed
5 date for U.S. disengagement have been
6 criticized over the years, as engaging in a
7 risky undertaking, the current departing
8 Administration itself has agreed on the date
9 through the SOFA agreement, and the difference
10 between it and the President-Elect is less
11 than a year. So, we are settled on the notion
12 of departure.

13 But, the military departure alone
14 does not resolve the problems of Iraq, which
15 will have to be handled by Iraqis themselves,
16 but it also requires, in addition, dealing
17 with the problems of the region, and, thus, I
18 do think that once the new Administration
19 takes office it will be desirable to undertake
20 serious regional consultations with all of
21 Iraq's neighbors, regarding the security
22 consequences of U.S. disengagement, and the

1 implications of such for them, and that means
2 a serious effort to engage in a dialogue with
3 Iran, with Turkey, with Syria, with Jordan.

4 I think that it is important --
5 and Saudi Arabia, too -- it is important that
6 this dialogue be conducted preparatory to the
7 final disengagement. If we do so, we can,
8 perhaps, create at least an incipient regional
9 security approach or consensus regarding the
10 consequences of American disengagement,
11 mitigating some of the possible dislocations
12 that may ensure thereafter, and what is
13 important, will indirectly be beginning a
14 serious dialogue with Iran, for the bilateral
15 American Iranian issues they will not be
16 entirely disentangled from regional security
17 issues, and if there is a dialogue on the
18 security issues pertaining to Iraq there is
19 the beginning of as serious American/Iranian
20 dialogue, which in turn can facilitate what
21 will then be increasingly necessary, and which
22 is, serious negotiations, serious negotiations

1 about the nuclear problem.

2 We haven't had such negotiations
3 for a very simple reason. The United States
4 has insisted that the initiation of
5 negotiations be preceded by Iran satisfying
6 U.S. demands for preconditions that need to be
7 met, and the key precondition happens to
8 involve the central issue of the intended
9 negotiations. The precondition has been that
10 Iran has to suspend enrichment, which is the
11 issue that needs to be negotiated.

12 Hence, negotiations without
13 preconditions, or with mutual concessions in
14 advance facilitating the negotiating process,
15 in which case there could be an Iranian
16 suspension of enrichment in return for U.S.
17 suspension of some sanctions. In either case,
18 such negotiations are needed, and they ought
19 to be conducted in an atmosphere that is
20 conducive to serious negotiations, which means
21 not in the context of threats, because threats
22 are not helpful to serious negotiations. And,

1 in the case of Iran, they have the effect of
2 fusing Iranian nationalism with Iranian
3 fundamentalism, thereby contributing to a more
4 intransigent Iranian posture.

5 We have to be also careful in how
6 we deal with the issue of possible sanctions
7 if Iran remains unwilling to accommodate, and,
8 of course, it is necessary to consider
9 additional sanctions, but again, in a fashion
10 that doesn't poison the atmosphere of the
11 negotiations themselves, and there's always a
12 delicate relationship between advancing a
13 negotiating process and creating an atmosphere
14 in which advancement is possible, but without
15 unrealistic expectations that one side alone
16 will make the concessions.

17 If we do this with Iran, we may
18 also be able, if there is progress, to benefit
19 from a more help Iranian posture regarding the
20 problem of Afghanistan, and it useful to
21 recall that late in 2001, and in the course of
22 2002, Iran was at that time very helpful to

1 the United States in dealing with the problems
2 of Afghanistan.

3 Insofar as Afghanistan itself is
4 concerned, it is my view that the United
5 States has to be very deliberate in avoiding
6 the mistakes that the Soviet Union made in
7 Afghanistan. The Soviets came into
8 Afghanistan on the illusion that they could
9 create in Afghanistan a replica of a Soviet
10 type state with the help of Afghan Marxists
11 sympathetic to the Soviet Union.

12 They discovered, not long after
13 their intervention, that that help of the
14 Afghan Marxists had limited political benefit
15 and enjoyed little domestic support, while the
16 presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan
17 increasingly galvanized a nationwide
18 opposition, violent opposition, to the Soviet
19 occupation, which in the end even 160,000
20 troops could not crush, while devastating much
21 of Afghanistan.

22 When we entered Afghanistan in the

1 wake of 9/11, we were greeted by most Afghans,
2 because we had helped them in the resistance
3 to the Soviets, and, thus, we could accomplish
4 what we did with practically no major military
5 deployment, a total of 300 special forces,
6 plus air power. Today, we are engaged in a
7 more serious military engagement, in which
8 almost half, well, more than 50,000 troops are
9 engaged, mostly U.S., but also NATO
10 contingents.

11 This runs the risk of gradually
12 turning the Afghan population against our
13 efforts, and of isolating those democratic
14 Afghans in Kabul on whom we have been relying
15 to create the opposite of a Soviet type state,
16 but a modern nation state based on democratic
17 principles.

18 The enterprise, thus,
19 paradoxically, is turning in the direction
20 painfully reminiscent of what the Soviets
21 experienced. It is, therefore, my view that
22 while we may have to deploy some additional

1 forces to deal with specific problems in
2 specific regions of Afghanistan, the real
3 emphasis is needed, the real emphasis should
4 be put, on a strategy of seeking decentralized
5 political accommodation with those elements of
6 the Taliban that are not committed to the more
7 global terroristic aspirations of Al Qaida,
8 but are focused more specifically on domestic
9 Afghan concerns, elements which have a view of
10 society very alien to us, one that we
11 instinctively and naturally repudiate, but
12 views which do not represent by themselves the
13 kind of threat that Al Qaida has imposed on
14 the United States.

15 If local accommodations with
16 different Taliban groups are possible, in
17 which any Al Qaida presence is eliminated by
18 the Taliban, I think an accommodation based on
19 that formula could also permit some local
20 disengagement by the United States.

21 Such an approach would also help
22 us avoid becoming entangled into a further

1 aspect of the Afghan problem, which has the
2 potential of bogging us down ever more deeply,
3 and that is, conflict, essentially, involving
4 the Pashtun elements of Afghan society that
5 also involve significant segments of Pakistan
6 society. Of the 40 or so million Pashtuns
7 living in the area, 14 million live in
8 Afghanistan, representing close to half the
9 population, 26 million live in Pakistan, and
10 the frontier dividing the two components of
11 the Pashtun people, the Afghan and the
12 Pakistani, is a completely artificial line
13 drawn by the British.

14 Thus, a conflict involving the
15 Pashtuns draws us into ever more deeply into
16 the problems of Pakistan. I think it is very
17 important for the United States to realize
18 that we have neither the political
19 understanding, nor the physical military or
20 political means, to resolve the problems of
21 Afghanistan, and getting drawn into these
22 problems ever more deeply is an undertaking

1 which does not bold a good outcome.

2 In brief, I think we have to
3 rethink comprehensively how we deal with the
4 interrelated but distinctive problems posed
5 before us by the challenges that we face in
6 Iraq, in Iran, and in Afghanistan. We have to
7 do so with the understanding that in the long
8 run it is important for the United States not
9 to become politically and militarily drawn
10 into a conflict from which there may be then
11 no easy exist.

12 Thank you very much.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. CROCKER: Ambassador Brahimi.

15 AMBASSADOR BRAHIMI: Thank you
16 very much. Indeed, it's an honor and a
17 pleasure to be here today, but it is also
18 somewhat intimidating to be speaking after Dr.
19 Brzezinski. I'm also very happy to share the
20 platform of Dr. Muwafaq al-Rubaie, whom I
21 haven't seen for quite some time since our
22 days in Baghdad.

1 I agree with Dr. Brzezinski that
2 Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, in
3 whichever order you wish to take them, all are
4 extremely important countries in what might be
5 called an expanding Middle East, and will
6 undoubtedly be competing for pride of place on
7 the agenda of the next U.S. Administration.

8 They have much in common. There
9 are many linkages between their problems, but
10 again, as Dr. Brzezinski said, they are,
11 essentially, different countries with
12 different backgrounds and circumstances. The
13 linkages are stronger between Afghanistan and
14 Pakistan on the one hand, and between Iraq and
15 Iran on the other.

16 These ritual interferences are
17 particularly important in the case of Pakistan
18 and Afghanistan, and it is obvious that there
19 shall be no peace and no stability in
20 Afghanistan, if for whatever reason Pakistan
21 were to consider that the continuation of
22 conflict and instability in Afghanistan better

1 serves its interests.

2 However, this is no reason to rush
3 to the conclusion, as many have done in Kabul
4 and elsewhere, that conflicts in Afghanistan
5 are entirely due to Pakistan, and that,
6 therefore, peace and stability --

7 MR. CROCKER: Excuse me if I
8 interrupt, the acoustics are bothering us up
9 here. I don't know if they are -- if you'd
10 speak in the middle of these two microphones,
11 I think it will work better.

12 AMBASSADOR BRAHIMI: You will have
13 to position me exactly in the middle.

14 The mutual interference, as I
15 said, I think many in Kabul and elsewhere have
16 rushed to the conclusion that the conflicts in
17 Afghanistan are entirely due to Pakistan, and
18 that, therefore, peace and stability will
19 immediately be restored if only Pakistan wills
20 it.

21 The reality is that Pakistan, and
22 also Iran, and other countries as a matter of

1 fact, can fan the flames of conflict, but
2 Pakistan alone cannot order the return of
3 peace.

4 Amongst the things that these four
5 countries have in common, I see these
6 following three points. One, distant as their
7 respective problems are, in none of them are
8 the solutions going to be military. Each and
9 all of these problems are political, and each
10 of these country's solutions have to be
11 political.

12 Second, the United States has,
13 with each of the four countries, bilateral
14 issues that need to be addressed bilaterally.
15 This is particularly the case with Iran, but
16 in each case there are regional and
17 international dimensions, and to properly
18 address them the United States cannot go it
19 alone. It needs to seek the full cooperation,
20 and they need to do it on equal terms with
21 other players who also have legitimate
22 interests and concerns.

1 Three, important and legitimate as
2 the interests and concerns of the United
3 States and those other countries in the region
4 and further afield are, it is indispensably in
5 each case to give the needs and aspirations of
6 the people of the country concerned all the
7 attention they deserve.

8 I, for one, strongly believe that
9 these needs, and concerns, must be treated as
10 the primary objective of any strategy if
11 decent stability is to return to that given
12 country and to the region as a whole.

13 Let me also observe that if all
14 four countries have serious problems, which
15 country in the world doesn't, Afghanistan is
16 probably the only one where practically all
17 the people in and outside of government
18 recognize that their country is facing a grave
19 internal crisis, and they cannot overcome
20 their difficulties without the support of
21 others.

22 Of course, even in Afghanistan,

1 different communities, different groups, and
2 different individuals, will have different
3 views of what kind of help they need and from
4 whom they would prefer to receive it.

5 Other countries, all three other
6 countries, will probably find it difficult to
7 recognize that they have problems at all, and
8 if they do they will be very particular about
9 what kind of cooperation, what kind of
10 support, and on what conditions they would
11 accept it.

12 Let me say a few words about Iran,
13 speaking as somebody who comes from the
14 region, to see how -- just to highlight how
15 the perceptions of countries -- perceptions
16 countries have themselves, differ from the
17 perceptions that others have of them.

18 Iran has been an -- country in the
19 region for a long time. It was so under the
20 Shah, and it is so today. It has the war
21 against Iraq, devastating as it was, helped,
22 actually, the regime in Iran consolidate

1 itself, and it did not prevent it from
2 expanding its influence far and wide,
3 particularly, in Lebanon, Afghanistan and
4 Central Asia.

5 Of the many unintended
6 consequences of Israel's war on Lebanon in the
7 summer of 2006, Hezbollah, which was supposed
8 to be destroyed by that war, came out hugely
9 in force and its popularity unequaled in the
10 Arab World, and Iran as the supporter of
11 Hezbollah, gained incredibly vast influence
12 all over the region.

13 In this connection, the Israeli
14 policy of relentless collective punishment in
15 Palestine, and which is reaching new heights
16 with the brutal onslaught on Gaza now
17 proceeding, and the support it enjoys from the
18 United States will do very little, indeed, to
19 facilitate the settlement of any of the
20 conflicts in the troubled region of the Middle
21 East.

22 But, the U.S. invasion of Iraq is

1 seen by Iranian leaders as a truly God-sent
2 development for their country and their
3 regime, not only did their big enemy, I don't
4 dare say the Big Satan, eliminated Saddam
5 Hussein, the biggest foe in the region, it
6 also put in power in Baghdad Iraqi political
7 groups, militias and individuals, that were
8 and still are very close to Tehran.

9 As a result today, Iran has vastly
10 more political clout in Baghdad than was in
11 the past. Consequently, Iraq's problems, in
12 their regional dimensions, cannot be
13 effectively addressed and solved without the
14 participation of Iran.

15 In Afghanistan, Iran's influence
16 is, perhaps, second to that of Pakistan, and
17 may barely equal that of India. There is
18 little doubt, however, that the Islamic
19 Republic has the means to seriously obstruct
20 any peace project it sees as detrimental to
21 its national interest or regional agenda.

22 Of the nuclear side, I know far

1 too little to say anything of interest,
2 except, perhaps, that Iran does seem to be
3 within its legal rights in acting as it does,
4 and that in the entire region if some
5 governments may have some concerns about
6 Iran's nuclear program, at the popular level
7 there is very widespread support for
8 everything Iran does or intends to do.

9 As for Iraq, I think I will, now
10 that we have an authoritative voice from
11 Baghdad, I will leave the important things to
12 say about Iraq to him, I will say, however,
13 that, as I think indicated, that the
14 government in Iraq, understandably, demands to
15 be recognized and treated as a legitimate
16 democratically-elected government of the land,
17 and would resist any of the external help,
18 especially, in the political field, unless
19 they are put in concern and self-control.

20 Violence has definitely diminished
21 in a remarkable, even spectacular, way in
22 2008, and that is most welcome. However, the

1 cost of the past seven years has been
2 staggering. The brutal ethnic cleansing that
3 has taken place in Baghdad and most Iraqi
4 cities is grossly unreported.

5 Even more under reported is the
6 tragic situation of minorities. The Center
7 for International Governance Innovation in
8 Waterloo, Canada, has just published a welcome
9 study by Mokhtar Lamani on the issues.
10 Christians, Turkmen, Yazidis, Faili Kurds,
11 Mandaeans, and Shabaks and others, all have
12 been, and are, persecuted and often forced to
13 seek refuge outside of Iraq, wherever they
14 can.

15 Surveys indicate that a couple of
16 years before the invasion there was, perhaps,
17 1 million and a half Christians in Iraq.
18 There is now less than 700,000, and more are
19 trying to leave the country.

20 And, we know that Kirkuk remains a
21 very, very serious bone of contention between
22 Iraq's Arabs, Shia and Sunni, and the Kurds.

1 As to what needs to be done, there
2 is definitely no need to reinvent the wheel.
3 On the two hot wars in which the United States
4 is engaged, Iraq and Afghanistan, there is, in
5 the public domain, a wealth of documents that
6 offer comprehensive analysis and sensible
7 recommendations. To mention just the best
8 known, there is the report of the Iraq Study
9 Group and the report also of the Afghanistan
10 Study Group that was put together by the
11 Institute for the Study of the Presidency.
12 And, there is, of course, the wealth of
13 studies, reports, papers, published by think
14 tanks, not of the least this U.S. Institute of
15 Peace and Kaiser's group in Belgium.

16 So, there is, the building blocks
17 of what needs to be done in these two wars are
18 already there, but they need to come together.

19 I will say a few things about
20 Afghanistan, because that is the place I know
21 best, and I think probably the same -- the
22 same -- the same line can be followed also for

1 Iraq.

2 I think many here are familiar
3 with my view that mistakes we all made in
4 Afghanistan are largely responsible for the
5 deterioration of the situation. The fact that
6 the participants in Bonn were not fully
7 representative of the rich variety of the
8 Afghan society, the refusal to expand either
9 when the population was pleading with us to
10 ensure its presence out of the capitol, the
11 reluctance to reach out to those who were not
12 represented in Bonn, including the Taliban,
13 when doing so at the time may have done a
14 great deal to ensure national reconciliation.

15 The waste by the International
16 Community of scarce resources, and the help
17 given to Afghan efforts to rebuild national
18 regional and local institutions, the
19 incompetence and corruption in the government
20 at all levels, all these factors combined with
21 the invasion of Iraq and its bad consequences,
22 the deterioration of the internal situation in

1 Pakistan, and the facilities enjoyed in that
2 country by the Taliban and other insurgents,
3 to raise all that contributed, to raise
4 doubts, disappointments, and, ultimately,
5 growing hostility towards the new authorities
6 in Kabul, and their international partners.

7 At the end of it all, let us
8 compare the warm welcome given by the people
9 of Afghanistan to ISAF in the early 2002.
10 Let's compare also the understanding clearly
11 shown towards military action by the U.S. and
12 enduring freedom in those early days, and
13 compare that with the growing rejection of
14 both NATO and Enduring Freedom at present.

15 The United Nations itself is not
16 anymore universally accepted, and the
17 international personnel in Kabul, U.N.
18 included, is more and more closed in into an
19 Afghan version of the Green Zone in Baghdad.

20 These developments leads me to
21 venture to ask the following maybe somewhat
22 controversial questions.

1 One, considering how NATO has
2 performed, was it a wise decision to have
3 brought this alliance to Afghanistan in the
4 first place? And, what is to be done now
5 about it?

6 Two, also in hindsight, I'm
7 inclined to say that Enduring Freedom
8 Operation has long outlived its usefulness.
9 After all, it was launched to defeat al-Qaida
10 in Afghanistan, and punish the Taliban, who
11 had chosen to be their allies.

12 By the end of 2001, those
13 objectives had been largely achieved. The
14 Taliban regime had collapsed, and those
15 amongst the Al-Qaida leaders and their foot
16 soldiers who survived the original onslaught
17 were flushed out of the country and to my
18 knowledge have not been seen very often inside
19 Afghanistan since.

20 Enduring Freedom continued as part
21 of an undefined global war on terror against
22 an enemy which was not there anymore.

1 Three, also in hindsight, I am
2 wondering whether we at the United Nations,
3 when we were faced with a firm refusal to
4 extend ISAF should not have explored the
5 possibility of establishing a full-fledged
6 chapter seven United Nations peacekeeping
7 mission to replace both ISAF and Operation
8 Enduring Freedom.

9 These are three important
10 questions, I'm sure that not everybody will
11 agree that they are the right questions to
12 ask, but, perhaps, you would like to reflect
13 about them.

14 For sure, neither NATO nor the
15 U.S. see themselves as a foreign force of
16 occupation in Afghanistan, and earlier on, at
17 the beginning, the overwhelming majority of
18 the people of Afghanistan did not look at them
19 that way either. But, that situation is
20 changing I'm afraid, and it's not the Taliban
21 only who are now wondering if these foreign
22 forces are friendly forces, the way ISAF was

1 in 2002 and 2003, or whether U.S. and NATO
2 forces are occupying forces in the same manner
3 as the Russians were in the 1980s, or in the
4 way the International Coalition is in Iraq at
5 present.

6 Too many weddings and funerals
7 have been bombed from the sky. Too many women
8 and children have been killed. Too many young
9 people, in some instances only kids, have been
10 arrested and kept under total isolation in
11 Bagram for years, or sent to Guantanamo.

12 Consequently, the alternative for
13 these foreign forces is clear enough, to
14 succeed in changing their image and do what it
15 takes to convince, once again, the people of
16 Afghanistan that they are not there to
17 dominate, to humiliate, or persecute, but to
18 help rebuild the state institutions, develop
19 the economy, and bring peace and stability to
20 all.

21 Short of that, they have to face
22 the certainty of fast-growing rejection and,

1 ultimately, the serious probability of
2 military defeat at the hands of a growing
3 national resistance.

4 Thank you very much.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. CROCKER: Thank you,
7 Ambassador Brahimi.

8 Dr. Muwafaq al-Rubaie.

9 DR. AL-RUBAIE: Ladies and
10 gentlemen, thank you for inviting me for this
11 forum. Mr. Chairman, the original panel was
12 meant to be not to include the Iraqis, to
13 discuss Iraq, but we Iraqis forced ourself
14 into this panel. This is another sign of
15 sovereignty, and this has showed how did we
16 negotiate with the SOFA.

17 But, it's an honor and a pleasure
18 to address this forum, and I'm at a
19 disadvantage because I followed two super
20 star, two giants, Lakhdar Brahimi and Dr.
21 Brzezinski.

22 I'll concentrate on Iraq. I would

1 like to share some thoughts on what's Iraq
2 yesterday, what was Iraq yesterday, what's
3 Iraq now, and what's Iraq in the future, and
4 what are the challenges.

5 In the summer of 2006, and we all
6 remember this, we were in a deep civil war,
7 very ugly, and a deplorable state of affairs.
8 We were really, really in a bad shape. What
9 brought us to that civil war is another
10 matter, and hence, the Maliki government
11 started in summer 2006.

12 And, it was very clear to
13 everybody that the joint strategy, or the U.S.
14 and Iraq strategy, which is, basically,
15 transitioning from Iraq -- from multi-national
16 forces authority of the provinces to Iraq, and
17 reduction of U.S. forces, were not working.
18 That strategy was failing.

19 Now, if we compare summer 2006
20 with now, 18 months later, what we have all
21 indicators and all measures shows how
22 considerable reduction in violence and all

1 indicator indices going down. What brought us
2 to here? Why did we get this? We believe
3 there are -- this is multiple factors brought
4 this security achievement we are enjoying now.

5 We have to identify these to
6 sustain them. It depends on who you are
7 asking. If you ask multi-national forces,
8 they will tell you it's the surge and the
9 change of tactics, but I will not start with
10 that, I will start with one thing, which is
11 the Iraqi security forces reached to a level
12 in quantity and quality, and a level that I
13 call critical mass level, whereby we turned
14 the table against the terrorists, and the
15 Iraqi security forces reached to a level
16 whereby the fighting and their planning, their
17 performing, and security operation on their
18 own, and more than 90 percent of their
19 operations they are carrying on their own,
20 because we are much more suited for this
21 fight. We understand the terrain. We
22 understand this country, much more suited for

1 this fight than any other.

2 So, that was a determining factor,
3 I believe.

4 The second is the rejection of
5 this alien ideology of Al-Qaida. Iraq is a
6 very sophisticated society. Al-Qaida and its
7 alien ideology does not fit in a straw in the
8 Iraqi society. That's why the Sunni Arab
9 community turned around and they fought Al-
10 Qaida and got rid of Al-Qaida from their
11 provinces, and that was call it an awakening,
12 call it whatever you like to call it, but
13 that's the essence of it, and that is another
14 determining factor.

15 Also, the policy of national
16 reconciliation and national unity, which was
17 adopted by Prime Minister Maliki and the
18 government, which took over in summer 2006.
19 We pursued aggressive policy of national
20 reconciliation, including everybody, literally
21 everybody in that government, and the Council
22 of Ministers and the government.

1 And also, the aggressive policy of
2 the government of Iraq and which was pursued
3 to in reaching out to the regional power, to
4 our neighbors, what we call regional
5 engagement, reaching out to Iran, reaching out
6 to Syria, reaching out to Saudi, and reaching
7 out to Turkey. I think that was very
8 unpopular by some of our friends, but I think
9 that paid the dividends now. And, the
10 violence is down.

11 Of course, the surge has done --
12 it's very difficult to assess how much the
13 surge has done, but I leave this to the
14 historians and to the annals, to the political
15 annals, to be clearer by how retrospectively
16 as you like.

17 What we have now is a considerable
18 reduction in violence, and I was looking at
19 some of the figures, and I compared the number
20 of murders in Detroit now, 2 million
21 population, to the number of murders in Basra,
22 which is 2 million, and the number of murders

1 in Detroit is double that of the number of
2 murders in Basra.

3 Iraqi security forces in taking
4 the lead in most of the security operations,
5 planning, carrying out, and analyzing.

6 Growing Iraq government legitimacy within
7 Iraq, through its own cities, and in the
8 region, and in the International Community.

9 A lot of ambassadors from Arab country, from
10 the International countries, are coming back
11 to Iraq.

12 And, the government also is
13 maturing gradually, but progressively. The
14 Council of Ministers, the Council of
15 Representatives, and even the individual
16 ministries, are doing better, marginally
17 better services, with capacity building going
18 up.

19 Iraq now is fully sovereign
20 country, especially after the no United
21 Nations Security Council imposing any mandate
22 on Iraq, and the Iraqi's active Chapter 7.

1 Imagine even the United States Government is
2 recognizing Iraq as a sovereign state. So,
3 Iraq is an increasingly secure, democratic and
4 strategic partner to the United States.

5 The challenges are numerous. The
6 most important challenge is from within, on
7 our democracy is the Ba'ath ideology, is the
8 Ba'athist ideology, not the Ba'athist as
9 individuals, probably 99.9 percent of them
10 they are innocent people who they are after
11 their rights, after salaries, but the
12 Ba'athist ideology is very dangerous for Iraq,
13 because this is a Nazi ideology, this is a
14 plotting, conspiring ideology, this is an
15 ideology that does not understand ballot
16 boxes, understand coup d'etat. The bad
17 ideology is like a genetic makeup called
18 Ba'athism, a idea called coup d'etat, cannot
19 change it, and we need to have a very detailed
20 strategy towards that.

21 Also, one of the challenges we
22 need to develop our institutions, ministries,

1 and develop Iraqi security forces, Iraqi
2 security forces cannot claim that they are 100
3 percent professional Iraqi security forces.
4 We have some problems in that. We need to do
5 a lot of work there.

6 We need also to do a lot of work
7 in creating a democratic culture, through
8 elections, referendum, and so on and so forth,
9 and you saw in the last 11 months of debating
10 the SOFA and the Council of Representatives
11 how lively the discussion was.

12 I have a message to deliver here.
13 Bush era in Iraq was liberation, security,
14 security, security. Obama era should be
15 strategic relationship, more holistic
16 relationship, economy, education, cultural,
17 scientific, religious relationship with the
18 United States. This we need to cement this
19 strategic relationship with the United States
20 so that we will finally say, and hand on heart
21 saying, that Iraq is moving with concrete feet
22 heading West, flying West, and this is, we

1 need to consolidate, disengage militarily,
2 disengage in security, we have no problem, we
3 have a road map towards that goal, the SOFA,
4 security forces agreement, very clear.

5 It has a lifespan of three years,
6 it expires in the 31st of December, 2011, but
7 we need to work out an implementation plan to
8 implement the strategic framework agreement
9 immediately, and lay down the foundation for
10 a strategic partnership.

11 You will have a democratic, or you
12 have a democratic, strong partner in the
13 region, democratic partner, remember,
14 democratic partner. You might have partners,
15 but democratic partner is unique for Iraq, I
16 believe.

17 If there is one thing you want to
18 remember from -- forget everything I said --
19 everything I said is not reliable -- one thing
20 is relevant, I believe. I'm here to deliver
21 one message, to the people of the United
22 States of America, to the American people, a

1 big, big, big thank you for everything you've
2 done for Iraq, for liberating Iraq, for
3 sustaining this liberation, and fighting
4 terrorism and sustaining the security gains we
5 are enjoying now, and helping building our
6 democratic institutions, in helping building
7 our Iraqi security forces, so a big thank you
8 to the United States of America.

9 We need to move on from one era,
10 from one phase of the last six years, to
11 another phase of a long-lasting durable,
12 enduring relationship with the United States
13 of America. That's what we are looking for,
14 and that's what the challenge for the new
15 Administration will be.

16 Disengagement in its security is
17 one thing, but do not disengage from Iraq in
18 all aspects. Otherwise, the treasure, and the
19 blood, and the sweat, and the tears you have
20 invested in Iraq will go down the drain, and
21 I don't think anybody wanted this to happen.

22 Ladies and gentlemen, I don't

1 think I deserve a round of applause from you
2 at the end of my speech, but I wanted you to
3 give a big, big, big round of applause to
4 those who sacrificed their life in Iraq, for
5 liberation, for democracy, and for liberating
6 30 million people and helping for the young
7 men and women from United States of America,
8 from the Coalition, from the multi-national
9 forces, and Iraqis who paid heavily as well in
10 life, in their lives.

11 Thank you very much, indeed.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much
14 to all three of our panelists, and,
15 particularly, to Muwafaq for his last remarks.

16 I'm going to open the floor to
17 questions. We'll have time for one or two.
18 While people are getting ready to raise their
19 hands, that's what you have to do is raise
20 your hands, or stand up if you want to ask a
21 question, I would just note a couple of things
22 about the presentations we've heard.

1 One is that the good news came
2 from Iraq, which is a bit of a surprise for
3 many of us. Secondly, I note that though they
4 come from very different perspectives, there's
5 some common themes in the presentations we've
6 heard, importance of neighbors to stabilizing
7 a country, the importance of local ownership
8 and local institutions, importance of
9 combining diplomatic and military instruments,
10 the importance of international legitimacy.

11 It seems to me that you've heard
12 three people who come at things from very
13 different angles, but who have some basic
14 principles in common.

15 A question from the floor?

16 Trudy, please, introduce yourself,
17 Trudy.

18 MS. RUBIN: Trudy Rubin from the
19 Philadelphia Inquirer.

20 We heard Dr. Rabaie talk about how
21 Iraqis took on the fight against Al-Qaida, and
22 with some help from the surge, the critical

1 element was Iraqis doing the heavy lifting.

2 I wanted to ask Dr. Brzezinski and
3 Mr. Brahimi, do you see a way in Iraqi where
4 those extra troops could fulfill the same
5 function in making it possible for Afghans
6 themselves, and for Pakistanis in the FATA, to
7 turn against violent actors who are oppressing
8 them?

9 MR. CROCKER: Please, Mr.
10 Brzezinski.

11 DR. BRZEZINSKI: It seems to me
12 that the situations are quite different. In
13 the case of Iraq, we undertook to remove an
14 obnoxious regime from power, but in the
15 process we also generated an insurgency
16 directed against us, and also the appearance
17 of Al-Qaida in Iraq, which had not been there
18 prior to the U.S. military undertaking.

19 The military outcome in Iraq, that
20 has now emerged, in the final analysis
21 accomplishment of U.S. forces. While I
22 certainly respect the contribution made in

1 more recent times by the Iraqi forces, the
2 fundamental outcome is the product of the
3 overwhelming power of the United States, which
4 deployed 150,000 troops with the most modern
5 equipment, and engaged in intensive combat to
6 achieve what we are now beginning to witness.

7 In the case of Afghanistan, we are
8 dealing with a society which is less
9 accessible, less advanced, intensely
10 xenophobic, initially not hostile to the
11 American presence, but over time increasingly
12 uneasy, and then hostile towards it.

13 I think our task in Afghanistan is
14 not to wage the war to a successful military
15 outcome, but to accommodate to the reality
16 that Afghanistan is a pre-modern society, it
17 is not likely to have a modern state
18 superimposed upon a pre-modern society, and
19 that is it, therefore, in our interest to find
20 those accommodations which are more feasible
21 on local or regional levels.

22 Last, by not least, in Afghanistan

1 those who are contesting us are not linked
2 directly to Al-Qaida. Al-Qaida had a presence
3 in Afghanistan, but Taliban was not an active
4 ally of Al-Qaida in its strikes against the
5 United States or against other countries,
6 particularly, Europe.

7 Thus, separating the Taliban from
8 Al-Qaida, in my judgment, is a feasible and a
9 potentially productive political objective.

10 MR. CROCKER: Ambassador Brahimi?

11 AMBASSADOR BRAHIMI: I agree with
12 what Dr. Brzezinski has just said. Perhaps,
13 add that Afghan society has changed a great
14 deal. It is very much urbanized, much more
15 urbanized today than it was when the Russians
16 were there.

17 And, therefore, society is
18 changing there, and the possibility over time
19 of creating a functioning state is definitely
20 there.

21 The problem of the foreigners
22 there, as Dr. Brzezinski said, is that when --

1 in 2001, when the Americans arrived, when Isab
2 came, when we all went there, we were not seen
3 as an occupying force by practically anybody.

4 Today, more and more people, and
5 that's not -- not the Taliban -- and it's not
6 only the Taliban, are wondering what are these
7 forces. It was reported to me that President
8 Karzai has told some of his people that people
9 don't understand -- people understand that
10 they cannot protect them against Al-Qaida or
11 the Taliban, they cannot understand that they
12 cannot protect them against my allies, the
13 foreign forces here, who are killing, you
14 know, bombarding weddings and funerals and so
15 on.

16 So, the question is there, whether
17 you increase the forces or not, that I don't
18 know, the military people will tell you what
19 to do, what needs to be done is for the
20 Americans and their allies there, together
21 working with the Afghan government, they have
22 got to convince the people of Afghanistan that

1 they are not their enemies, and they are not
2 an occupying force, and that is doable.

3 MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much.

4 Let me take one more, right here.

5 MR. BURLEW: Jonathan Burlew from
6 Congressional Quarterly. I'd like to address
7 this question to Mr. Rubaie.

8 Sir, you spoke of the need to
9 strengthen Iraq's democracy through elections,
10 and we've got the provincial elections in Iraq
11 coming up at the very end of this month.

12 How confident are you that those
13 elections will go smoothly, that there is
14 enough security to protect the polling
15 stations, and that the results of those
16 elections will reflect the will of the people
17 and not the will of the major parties?

18 MR. CROCKER: Dr. Rubaie.

19 DR. AL-RUBAIE: Thank you very
20 much.

21 Well, we have had a good
22 experience in protecting the ballot boxes

1 through the first general election in January,
2 2005, and then the referendum in October,
3 2005, and then the general election at the end
4 of 2005, so we have this track record of the
5 Iraqi security forces having good experience
6 in protecting -- to ensure that this is a fair
7 and free election.

8 But, there are encouraging signs
9 in this new election. Number one, it's going
10 to be much more representative, because the
11 Sunni Arab community will be given a very good
12 chance of choosing their local leaders and
13 provincial councils, and their governors, and
14 this is for the first time, because last time,
15 well, three years ago, three and a half years
16 ago, they had boycotted this. That's number
17 one.

18 Number two, there are two options
19 now, either you have a closed list or an open
20 list, and there is an option for you to elect
21 a particular individual, rather than a list.

22 Number three, I think it's

1 extremely important, now the discussion and
2 the debate in the media now is issue-based
3 politics, rather than sectarian-based. See,
4 this -- I think this is a huge paradigm shift
5 from the old sectarian politics, ethnic
6 politics. I'm not saying that we have moved
7 100 percent to the other side, that's
8 nationalist political program, but I'm saying
9 there are very good early signs that we are
10 talking now about issue politics, we are
11 talking about federalism, as opposed to the
12 central government, the centralized system. We
13 are talking about providing services. We are
14 talking about corruption. We are talking
15 about there are a lot of issues now being
16 discussed in the local election, not
17 sectarian, not ethnic, well, is not included
18 in the provincial elections, but there are no
19 sectarian politics in this public election, I
20 think this is extremely encouraging.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. CROCKER: Please join me in

1 thanking the panel.

2 (Appause.)

3 (Whereupon, the above-entitled

4 matter was concluded.)

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A			B	
able 9:18	11:12 12:9 13:1,4 13:11 25:8,17 26:19 44:13 45:21	38:22 39:8,13 40:7	back 35:10	bothering 16:8
above-entitled 49:3	Afghanistan 1:12	American 7:10,15 38:22 43:11	backgrounds 15:12	boxes 36:16 46:22
accept 19:11	2:7,10 4:11 9:20	Americans 45:1,20	bad 25:21 31:8	boycotted 47:16
accepted 26:16	10:2,3,7,8,9,16,21	American-Iranian	36:16	Brahimi 1:21 3:18 14:14,15 16:12 30:7,20 42:3 44:10 44:11
accessible 43:9	10:22 12:2 13:8,21	5:1,2	Baghdad 14:22 21:6 21:10 22:11 23:3 26:19	brief 14:2
accommodate 9:7 43:15	14:6 15:2,13,18,20	American/Iranian	Bagram 29:11	bring 29:19
accommodation	15:22 16:4,17	7:19	balance 3:2	brings 3:20
12:5,18	18:15,22 20:3	America's 4:3	ballot 36:15 46:22	British 13:13
accommodations	21:15 24:4,9,20	analysis 24:6 42:20	Ballroom 1:15	brought 2:18 27:3 31:9 32:1,3
12:15 43:20	25:4 26:9 27:3,10	analyzing 35:5	barely 21:17	brutal 20:16 23:2
accomplish 11:3	27:19 28:16,18	angles 41:13	based 11:16 12:18	Brzezinski 1:19 4:2 4:8,9 14:19 15:1 15:10 30:21 42:2 42:10,11 44:12,22
accomplishment	29:16 43:7,13,16	annals 34:14,15	basic 41:13	building 24:16 35:17 39:5,6
42:21	43:22 44:3 45:22	anybody 39:21 45:3	basically 31:14	burdens 2:20
achieve 43:6	Afghans 11:1,14	anymore 26:16 27:22	Basra 34:21 35:2	Burlew 46:5,5
achieved 27:13	42:5	appearance 42:16	BATON 1:5	Bush 37:13
achievement 32:4	afield 18:4	applause 14:13 30:5 40:1,3,12 49:2	Ba'ath 36:7	
acoustics 16:8	afraid 28:20	approach 2:15 4:14 7:9 12:21	Ba'athism 36:18	C
acting 22:3	agenda 15:7 21:21	approximately 5:9	Ba'athist 36:8,8,12	call 32:13 33:11,12 33:12 34:4
action 26:11	aggressive 33:19 34:1	Arab 20:10 33:8 35:9 47:11	bear 2:18	called 15:5 36:17,18
actions 5:14	ago 47:15,16	Arabia 7:5	becoming 12:22	Canada 23:8
active 35:22 44:3	agree 15:1 28:11 44:11	Arabs 23:22	beginning 7:13,19 28:17 43:6	capacity 35:17
actors 42:7	agreed 6:8	area 13:7	Belgium 24:15	capitol 25:10
add 44:13	agreement 6:9 38:4 38:8	arrested 29:10	believe 18:8 32:2 33:3 38:16,20	careful 9:5
addition 6:16	air 11:6	arrived 45:1	belongs 3:7	carrying 32:19 35:5
additional 9:9 11:22	Al 12:7,13,17 33:9	artificial 13:12	benefit 9:18 10:14	case 8:15,17 9:1 15:17 17:15,16 18:5 42:13 43:7
address 17:18 30:18 46:6	Algeria 4:1	Asia 3:21 20:4	best 24:7,21	cement 37:18
addressed 17:14 21:13	alien 12:10 33:5,7	asking 32:7	better 15:22 16:11 35:16,17	Center 1:16 23:6
addressing 2:9	alliance 27:3	aspect 13:1	big 21:3,4 39:1,1,1,7 40:3,3,3	central 8:8 20:4 48:12
Administration 1:6 3:5 6:8,18 15:7 39:15	allies 27:11 45:12 45:20	aspects 5:18 39:18	biggest 21:5	centralized 48:12
admirably 3:8	ally 44:4	aspirations 12:7 18:5	bilateral 7:14 17:13	century 3:21
Admiral 1:20 3:9 3:13	alternative 29:12	assess 34:12	bilaterally 17:14	certainly 42:22
adopted 33:17	al-Qaida 27:9,15 33:5,6,10 41:21 42:17 44:2,2,4,8 45:10	atmosphere 8:19 9:10,13	bit 41:2	certainty 29:22
advance 8:14	al-Rubaie 3:15 14:20 30:8,9 46:19	attention 18:7	blood 39:19	Chairman 4:10 30:11
advanced 3:19 43:9	Ambassador 3:18 14:14,15 16:12 30:7 44:10,11	audio 1:23	blocks 24:16	challenge 3:4,7 36:6 39:14
advancement 9:14	ambassadors 35:9	authoritative 22:10	bogging 13:2	
advancing 9:12	America 2:14,20	authorities 26:5	bold 14:1	
Advisor 3:16		authority 31:16	bombarding 45:14	
advocated 6:4		avoid 12:22	bombed 29:7	
affairs 31:7		avoiding 10:5	bone 23:21	
Afghan 10:10,14		awakening 33:11	Bonn 25:6,12	

<p>challenges 1:6 2:9 4:20 14:5 31:4 36:5,21</p> <p>chance 47:12</p> <p>change 32:9 36:19</p> <p>changed 44:13</p> <p>changing 28:20 29:14 44:18</p> <p>chapter 28:6 35:22</p> <p>character 5:21</p> <p>children 29:8</p> <p>choosing 47:12</p> <p>chosen 27:11</p> <p>Christians 23:10,17</p> <p>circumferences 15:12</p> <p>cities 23:4 35:7</p> <p>civil 31:6,9</p> <p>civilian 2:17</p> <p>claim 37:2</p> <p>cleansing 23:2</p> <p>clear 29:13 31:12 38:4</p> <p>clearer 34:15</p> <p>clearly 26:10</p> <p>close 13:8 21:8</p> <p>closed 26:18 47:19</p> <p>clout 21:10</p> <p>Coalition 29:4 40:8</p> <p>collapsed 27:14</p> <p>collective 20:14</p> <p>combat 43:5</p> <p>combined 25:20</p> <p>combining 41:9</p> <p>come 24:18 41:4,12</p> <p>comes 19:13</p> <p>coming 35:10 46:11</p> <p>committed 12:6</p> <p>common 15:8 17:5 41:5,14</p> <p>communities 19:1</p> <p>community 2:15 25:16 33:9 35:8 47:11</p> <p>compare 26:8,10,13 31:19</p> <p>compared 34:19</p> <p>competing 15:6</p>	<p>completely 13:12</p> <p>complex 5:18</p> <p>components 13:10</p> <p>comprehensive 4:19 24:6</p> <p>comprehensively 14:3</p> <p>concentrate 30:22</p> <p>concern 22:19</p> <p>concerned 10:4 18:6</p> <p>concerns 12:9 17:22 18:2,9 22:5</p> <p>concessions 8:13 9:16</p> <p>concluded 49:4</p> <p>conclusion 16:3,16</p> <p>concrete 37:21</p> <p>conditions 19:10</p> <p>conducive 8:20</p> <p>conducted 7:6 8:19</p> <p>confident 46:12</p> <p>conflict 5:6 13:3,14 14:10 15:22 17:1</p> <p>conflicts 16:4,16 20:20</p> <p>confront 5:5</p> <p>Congressional 46:6</p> <p>connection 20:13</p> <p>conscious 5:13</p> <p>consensus 7:9</p> <p>consequences 5:14 6:22 7:10 20:6 25:21</p> <p>Consequently 21:11 29:12</p> <p>consider 9:8 15:21</p> <p>considerable 31:22 34:17</p> <p>considering 27:1</p> <p>consolidate 19:22 38:1</p> <p>conspiring 36:14</p> <p>constructively 5:17</p> <p>consultations 6:20</p> <p>contention 23:21</p> <p>contesting 44:1</p> <p>context 4:16 8:21</p>	<p>contingents 11:10</p> <p>continuation 15:21</p> <p>continued 27:20</p> <p>contributed 26:3</p> <p>contributing 9:3</p> <p>contribution 42:22</p> <p>controversial 26:22</p> <p>Convention 1:16</p> <p>convince 29:15 45:22</p> <p>cooperation 17:19 19:9</p> <p>corruption 25:19 48:14</p> <p>cost 23:1</p> <p>Council 33:21 35:14 35:14,21 37:10</p> <p>councils 47:13</p> <p>countries 2:8,11 5:8 15:4,11 16:22 17:5 17:13 18:3,14 19:5 19:6,15,16 35:10 44:5</p> <p>country 18:6,12,15 18:18 19:18 21:2 23:19 26:2 27:17 32:22 35:9,20 41:7</p> <p>country's 17:10</p> <p>coup 36:16,18</p> <p>couple 23:15 40:21</p> <p>course 9:8,21 18:22 24:12 34:11</p> <p>create 7:8 10:9 11:15</p> <p>creating 9:13 37:7 44:19</p> <p>crisis 18:19</p> <p>critical 32:13 41:22</p> <p>criticized 6:6</p> <p>CROCKER 14:14 16:7 30:6 40:13 42:9 44:10 46:3,18 48:22</p> <p>crush 10:20</p> <p>CSIS 4:2</p> <p>cultural 37:16</p> <p>culture 37:7</p> <p>current 6:7</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <p>dangerous 36:12</p> <p>Daniel 1:22 2:2</p> <p>dare 21:4</p> <p>date 6:3,5,8</p> <p>days 14:22 26:12</p> <p>deal 5:17 9:6 12:1 14:3 25:14 44:14</p> <p>dealing 5:3 6:16 10:1 43:8</p> <p>debate 6:2 48:2</p> <p>debating 37:9</p> <p>December 38:6</p> <p>decent 18:11</p> <p>decentralized 12:4</p> <p>decision 27:2</p> <p>deep 31:6</p> <p>deeply 13:2,15,22</p> <p>defeat 27:9 30:2</p> <p>definitely 22:20 24:2 44:19</p> <p>degrees 5:7</p> <p>deliberate 10:5</p> <p>deliberately 5:10</p> <p>delicate 9:12</p> <p>deliver 37:12 38:20</p> <p>demands 8:6 22:14</p> <p>democracy 36:7 40:5 46:9</p> <p>democratic 11:13 11:16 36:3 37:7 38:11,12,13,14,15 39:6</p> <p>democratically-el... 22:16</p> <p>departing 6:7</p> <p>departure 6:12,13</p> <p>depends 32:6</p> <p>deplorable 31:7</p> <p>deploy 11:22</p> <p>deployed 43:4</p> <p>deployment 11:5</p> <p>deserve 18:7 40:1</p> <p>desirable 6:19</p> <p>destability 15:22</p> <p>destroyed 20:8</p> <p>detailed 36:19</p>	<p>deterioration 25:5 25:22</p> <p>determining 33:2 33:14</p> <p>detrimental 21:20</p> <p>Detroit 34:20 35:1</p> <p>devastating 10:20 19:21</p> <p>develop 29:18 36:22 37:1</p> <p>development 21:2</p> <p>developments 26:20</p> <p>dialogue 7:2,6,14,17 7:20</p> <p>differ 19:16</p> <p>difference 6:9</p> <p>different 5:7 12:16 15:11,12 19:1,1,2 19:2 41:4,13 42:12</p> <p>difficult 2:9,22 19:6 34:12</p> <p>difficulties 18:20</p> <p>dimensions 17:17 21:12</p> <p>diminished 22:20</p> <p>diplomatic 3:21 41:9</p> <p>directed 42:16</p> <p>direction 11:19</p> <p>directly 44:2</p> <p>disadvantage 30:19</p> <p>disappointments 26:4</p> <p>discovered 10:12</p> <p>discuss 30:13</p> <p>discussed 48:16</p> <p>discussion 37:11 48:1</p> <p>disengage 38:1,2 39:17</p> <p>disengagement 6:3 6:5,22 7:7,10 12:20 39:16</p> <p>disentangled 7:16</p> <p>dislocations 7:11</p> <p>distant 17:6</p> <p>distinctive 4:14 14:4</p>
--	--	--	--	--

distinguished 4:4	elements 12:5,9 13:4	exist 14:11	first 27:4 47:1,14	functioning 44:19
dividends 34:9	eliminated 12:17 21:4	expand 25:8	fit 33:7	fundamental 43:2
dividing 13:10	emerged 42:20	expanding 15:5 20:2	fixed 6:3,4	fundamentalism 9:3
doable 46:2	emphasis 12:3,3	expectations 9:15	flames 17:1	funerals 29:6 45:14
documents 24:5	encouraging 47:8 48:20	experience 3:22 46:22 47:5	floor 40:16 41:15	further 12:22 18:4
doing 25:13 35:16 42:1	enduring 26:12,14 27:7,20 28:8 39:12	experienced 11:21	flushed 27:17	fusing 9:2
domain 24:5	enemies 46:1	expires 38:6	flying 37:22	future 31:3
domestic 10:15 12:8	enemy 21:3 27:22	explored 28:4	focus 2:22	
dominate 29:17	engage 7:2	extend 28:4	focused 12:8	G
double 35:1	engaged 11:6,9 24:4 43:5	external 22:17	foe 21:5	G 1:20
doubt 21:18	engagement 11:7 34:5	extra 42:4	followed 24:22 30:19	gained 20:11
doubts 26:4	engaging 6:6	extremely 15:4 48:1 48:20	following 17:6 26:21	gains 39:4
Dr 4:9 14:18,20 15:1,10 30:8,9,20 41:20 42:2,11 44:12,22 46:18,19	enjoyed 10:15 26:1	F	force 20:9 28:15 45:3 46:2	galvanized 10:17
drain 39:20	enjoying 32:4 39:5	face 14:5 29:21	forced 23:12 30:13	Gaza 20:16
drawn 13:13,21 14:9	enjoys 20:17	faced 28:3	forces 11:5 12:1 28:22,22 29:2,2,13 31:16,17 32:7,11 32:15 35:3 37:1,2 37:3 38:4 39:7 40:9 42:21 43:1 45:7,13,17 47:5	general 47:1,3
draws 13:15	enormous 3:4	facilitate 7:20 20:19	foreign 1:6 28:15,21 29:13 45:13	generated 42:15
due 16:5,17	enrichment 8:10,16	facilitating 8:14	foreigners 44:21	genetic 36:17
durable 39:11	ensure 7:12 25:10 25:14 47:6	facilities 26:1	forget 38:18	gentlemen 3:7 4:7 4:10 30:10 39:22
dynamic 5:21	entangled 12:22	facing 1:6 18:18	formula 12:19	getting 13:21 40:18
d'etat 36:16,18	entered 10:22	fact 4:13 5:16 17:1 25:5	forth 37:8	giants 30:20
D.C 1:2,17	enterprise 11:18	factor 33:2,14	forum 30:11,18	give 4:7 18:5 40:3
E	entire 22:4	factors 25:20 32:3	fought 33:9	given 18:11 25:17 26:8 47:11
E 1:16	entirely 7:16 16:5 16:17	Faili 23:10	foundation 38:9	global 12:7 27:21 go 17:18 39:20 46:13
earlier 28:16	equal 17:20 21:17	failing 31:18	four 2:11 3:3 5:8,17 5:20 17:4,13 18:14	goal 38:3
early 26:9,12 48:9	equipment 43:5	fair 47:6	framework 38:8	God-sent 21:1
East 15:5 20:21	equipped 3:8	familiar 25:2	free 47:7	going 3:3 17:8 32:1 35:17 40:16 47:9
easy 14:11	era 37:13,14 39:9	fan 17:1	freedom 26:12,14 27:7,20 28:8	good 14:1 41:1 46:21 47:5,11 48:9
economy 29:19 37:16	especially 22:18 35:20	far 20:2 21:22	friendly 28:22	Governance 23:7
education 37:16	essence 33:13	fast-growing 29:22	friends 34:8	government 2:22 18:17 22:14,16 25:19 31:10 33:18 33:21,22 34:2 35:6 35:12 36:1 45:21 48:12
effect 9:1	essentially 13:3 15:11	FATA 42:6	frontier 13:10	gradually 11:11 35:13
effectively 21:13	establishing 28:5	feasible 43:20 44:8	fulfill 42:4	grave 18:18
effort 7:2	ethnic 23:2 48:5,17	federalism 48:11	full 17:19	great 2:5 25:14 44:13
efforts 11:13 25:17	Europe 44:6	feet 37:21	fully 25:6 35:19	
either 8:17 25:8 28:19 47:19	event 5:1	field 22:18	full-fledged 28:5	
elect 47:20	everybody 28:10 31:13 33:20,21	fight 32:21 33:1 41:21	function 42:5	
election 47:1,3,7,9 48:16,19	exactly 16:13	fighting 32:16 39:3		
elections 37:8 46:9 46:10,13,16 48:18	Excuse 16:7	figures 34:19		
element 42:1		final 7:7 42:20		
		finally 37:20		
		find 19:6 43:19		
		firm 28:3		

Green 26:19 greeted 11:1 grossly 23:4 group 24:9,10,15 groups 12:16 19:1 21:7 growing 26:5,13 30:2 35:6 Guantanamo 29:11	<hr/> I <hr/> idea 36:18 identify 32:5 IDENTIFYING 1:13 ideology 33:5,7 36:7 36:8,12,13,14,15 36:17 illusion 10:8 image 29:14 Imagine 36:1 immediately 16:19 38:9 implement 38:8 implementation 38:7 implications 7:1 importance 41:6,7 41:8,10 important 7:4,5,13 13:17 14:8 15:4,17 18:1 22:11 28:9 36:6 48:1 imposed 12:13 imposing 35:21 incipient 7:8 inclined 27:7 include 30:12 included 26:18 48:17 including 25:12 33:20 incompetence 25:19 increase 45:17 increasingly 7:21 10:17 36:3 43:11 incredibly 20:11 India 21:17 indicate 23:15 indicated 22:13 indicator 32:1 indicators 31:21 indices 32:1 indirectly 7:13 indispensably 18:4 individual 35:15 47:21	individuals 19:2 21:7 36:9 influence 20:2,11 21:15 initially 43:10 initiation 8:4 innocent 36:10 Innovation 23:7 Inquirer 41:19 inside 27:18 insisted 8:4 Insofar 10:3 instances 29:9 instinctively 12:11 Institute 1:1,23 2:5 3:19 24:11,14 institutions 25:18 29:18 36:22 39:6 41:8 instruments 3:1 41:9 insurgency 42:15 insurgents 26:2 intended 8:8 intends 22:8 intensely 43:9 intensity 5:7 intensive 43:5 interactive 5:21 interest 21:21 22:1 43:19 interests 16:1 17:22 18:2 interference 16:14 interferences 15:16 internal 18:19 25:22 international 2:15 3:1 4:5 17:17 23:7 25:15 26:6,17 29:4 35:8,10 41:10 interrelated 4:12,17 14:4 interrelationship 5:22 interrupt 16:8 intertwined 2:12 intervention 10:13	intimately 2:11 intimidating 14:18 intransigent 9:4 introduce 41:16 invasion 20:22 23:16 25:21 invested 39:20 inviting 30:10 involve 5:5 8:8 13:5 involving 13:3,14 Iran 1:12 2:7,10 4:11 7:3,14 8:5,10 9:1,7,17,22 14:6 15:2,15 16:22 17:15 19:12,18,22 20:10 21:9,14 22:2 22:8 34:5 Iranian 7:15 8:15 9:2,2,4,19 21:1 Iran's 21:15 22:6 Iraq 1:12 2:7 3:16 4:11 6:1,14 7:18 14:6 15:2,14 19:21 20:22 22:9,12,14 23:13,17 24:4,8 25:1,21 29:4 30:13 30:22 31:1,2,3,3 31:14,15,16 33:5 34:2 35:6,7,11,19 35:22 36:2,3,12 37:13,21 38:15 39:2,2,17,20 40:4 41:2 42:13,17,19 46:10 Iraqi 3:13,15 21:6 23:3 32:11,15 33:8 35:3 37:1,1,3 39:7 42:3 43:1 47:5 Iraqis 6:15 30:12,13 40:9 41:21 42:1 Iraq's 35:22 Iraq's 6:21 21:11 23:22 46:9 Isab 45:1 ISAF 26:9 28:4,7,22 Islamic 21:18 isolating 11:13 isolation 29:10	Israeli 20:13 Israel's 20:6 issue 5:3,4 8:8,11 9:6 48:10 issues 2:16 5:18 7:15,17,18 17:14 23:9 48:15 issue-based 48:2
<hr/> H <hr/> half 3:21 11:8 13:8 23:17 47:15 hand 15:14 37:20 handled 6:15 hands 30:2 40:19,20 happen 39:21 happens 8:7 happy 14:19 heading 37:22 heard 40:22 41:6,11 41:20 heart 37:20 heavily 40:9 heavy 42:1 heights 20:15 help 9:19 10:10,13 12:21 19:3 22:17 25:16 29:18 41:22 helped 11:2 19:21 helpful 8:22 9:22 helping 39:5,6 40:6 Hezbollah 20:7,11 highlight 19:14 hindsight 27:6 28:1 historians 34:14 holistic 37:15 honor 14:16 30:17 hope 5:15 Hopkins 4:3 hostile 43:10,12 hostility 26:5 hot 24:3 hour 3:6 huge 48:4 hugely 20:8 humiliate 29:17 Hussein 21:5	<hr/> J <hr/> January 1:9 47:1 Johns 4:3 join 48:22 joint 31:13 Jonathan 46:5 Jordan 7:3 judgment 44:8			
	<hr/> K <hr/> Kabul 11:14 16:3 16:15 26:6,17 Kaiser's 24:15 Karzai 45:8 kept 29:10 key 8:7 kids 29:9 killed 29:8 killing 45:13 kind 12:13 19:3,9,9 Kirkuk 23:20 know 2:22 16:9 21:22 23:20 24:20 45:14,18 knowledge 27:18 known 24:8 Kurds 23:10,22			
	<hr/> L <hr/> Ladies 4:9 30:9 39:22 Lakhdar 1:21 30:20 Lamani 23:9 land 22:16 largely 25:4 27:13 larger 5:18 late 9:21 launched 27:9 lay 38:9			

lead 35:4	48:15	mission 28:7	45:19	32:17
leaders 21:1 27:15 47:12	<hr/> M <hr/>	mistakes 10:6 25:3	negotiate 30:16	operations 2:4 32:19 35:4
leads 26:20	major 11:4 46:17	mitigating 7:11	negotiated 8:11	OPPORTUNITIES
learned 5:15	majority 28:17	MODERATED	negotiating 8:14 9:13	1:6
leave 22:11 23:19 34:13	makeup 36:17	modern 11:16 43:4 43:17	negotiations 7:22 7:22 8:2,5,9,12,18 8:20,22 9:11	opposed 48:11
Lebanon 20:3,6	making 42:5	Mokhtar 23:9	neighbors 6:21 34:4 41:6	opposite 11:15
LED 1:19	Maliki 31:10 33:17	month 46:11	neither 13:18 28:14	opposition 10:18,18
legal 22:3	Mandaeans 23:11	months 31:20 37:9	new 1:6 6:18 20:15 26:5 39:14 47:9	oppressing 42:7
legitimacy 35:6 41:10	mandate 35:21	Mount 1:17	news 41:1	option 47:20
legitimate 17:21 18:1 22:15	manner 29:2	move 39:9	note 40:21 41:3	options 47:18
lesson 5:14	map 38:3	moved 48:6	noticing 3:14	order 15:3 17:2
Let's 26:10	marginally 35:16	moving 37:21	notion 6:11	original 27:16 30:11
level 22:6 32:11,12 32:13,15	Marxists 10:10,14	Mullen 1:20 3:9,13	nuclear 8:1 21:22 22:6	ought 8:18
levels 25:20 43:21	mass 32:13	multiple 32:3	number 34:19,21 34:22 35:1 47:9,16 47:18,22	ourself 30:13
liberating 39:2 40:5	matter 16:22 31:10 49:4	multi-national	numerous 36:5	outcome 14:1 42:19 43:2,15
liberation 37:13 39:3 40:5	maturing 35:13	31:15 32:7 40:8	N.W 1:2,17	outlived 27:8
liberty 3:11	means 7:1 8:20 13:20 21:19	murders 34:20,21 34:22 35:2		outside 18:17 23:13
life 40:4,10	meant 30:12	mutual 8:13 16:14		overcome 18:19
lifespan 38:5	measures 31:21	Muwafaq 3:15 14:20 30:8 40:15		overwhelming 28:17 43:3
lifting 42:1	media 48:2	<hr/> N <hr/>		ownership 41:7
limited 10:14	men 40:7	name 2:2	<hr/> O <hr/>	<hr/> P <hr/>
line 13:12 24:22	mention 5:10 24:7	nation 11:16	Obama 3:4 37:14	P 1:22
linkages 1:13 2:13 15:9,13	message 37:12 38:21	nation 11:16	objective 18:10 44:9	paid 34:9 40:9
linked 4:21,22 44:1	met 8:7	national 3:1,16 4:5 4:6 21:21 25:14,17 30:3 33:15,16,19	objectives 27:13	painfully 11:20
list 47:19,20,21	MICHAEL 1:20	nationalism 9:2	obnoxious 42:14	Pakistan 1:12 2:7 4:11 13:5,9,16 15:2,14,17,20 16:5 16:17,19,21 17:2 21:16 26:1
literally 33:20	microphones 16:10	nationalist 48:8	observe 18:13	Pakistani 13:12
little 10:15 20:18 21:18 22:1	middle 15:5 16:10 16:13 20:20	Nations 26:15 28:2 28:6 35:21	obstruct 21:19	Pakistanis 42:6
live 13:7,9	militarily 14:9 38:1	nationwide 10:17	obvious 2:12,12 15:18	Palestine 20:15
lively 37:11	military 2:17 6:13 11:4,7 13:19 17:8 26:11 30:2 41:9 42:18,19 43:14 45:18	native 4:1	occupation 10:19 28:16	panel 30:11,14 49:1
lives 40:10	militias 21:7	NATO 11:9 26:14 27:1 28:14 29:1	occupying 29:2 45:3 46:2	panelists 40:14
living 13:7	million 5:9 13:6,7,9 23:17 34:20,22 40:6	naturally 12:11	October 47:2	papers 24:13
local 12:15,19 25:18 41:7,8 43:21 47:12 48:16	Minister 33:17	Nazi 36:13	offer 24:6	paradigm 48:4
long 10:12 14:7 19:19 27:8	Ministers 33:22 35:14	necessary 7:21 9:8	office 6:19	paradoxically 11:19
long-lasting 39:11	ministries 35:16 36:22	need 2:17 8:6 17:14 17:20 19:3 24:2,18 36:19,22 37:4,6,18 38:1,7 39:9 46:8	old 48:5	part 3:13 27:20
look 28:18	minorities 23:6	needed 8:18 12:3	once 6:18 29:15	participants 25:6
looking 34:18 39:13		needs 8:11 17:19 18:5,9 24:1,17	one's 5:14	participation 21:14
lot 35:9 37:5,6			onslaught 20:16 27:16	particular 19:8 47:21
			open 40:16 47:19	particularly 15:17 17:15 20:3 40:15
			operation 27:8 28:7	

44:6	plus 11:6	Presidency 24:11	47:13 48:18	recognizing 5:20
parties 46:17	points 17:6	President 2:3 45:7	public 24:5 48:19	36:2
partner 36:4 38:12	poison 9:10	President-Elect	published 23:8	recommendations
38:13,14,15	policy 1:6 4:15,15	6:10	24:13	24:7
partners 26:6 38:14	4:20 5:3 20:14	prevent 20:1	punish 27:10	reconciliation 25:14
partnership 38:10	33:15,19 34:1	pre-modern 43:16	punishment 20:14	33:16,20
Pashtun 13:4,11	political 10:14 12:5	43:18	pursued 33:19 34:2	record 47:4
Pashtuns 13:6,15	13:18,20 17:9,11	pride 15:6	put 12:4 21:6 22:19	reduction 31:17,22
PASSING 1:5	21:6,10 22:18	primary 18:10	24:10	34:18
peace 1:1,23 2:3,5	34:14 44:9 48:8	Prime 33:17	P-R-O-C-E-E-D...	referendum 37:8
15:19 16:6,18 17:3	politically 14:9	Princeton 3:20	2:1	47:2
21:20 24:15 29:19	politics 48:3,5,6,10	principles 11:17	P.M 1:12	reflect 28:12 46:16
peacekeeping 28:6	48:19	41:14		refuge 23:13
people 13:11 18:6	polling 46:14	prior 42:18	Q	refusal 25:8 28:3
18:17 26:8 28:18	popular 22:6	PRIORITIES 1:13	Qaida 12:7,13,17	regarding 6:21 7:9
29:9,15 36:10	popularity 20:9	priority 2:16	33:10	9:19
38:21,22 40:6,18	population 5:8	probability 30:1	quality 32:12	regime 19:22 21:3
41:12 45:4,8,8,9	11:12 13:9 25:9	probably 18:16	quantity 32:12	27:14 42:14
45:18,22 46:16	34:21	19:6 24:21 36:9	Quarterly 46:6	region 5:12 6:17
percent 32:18 36:9	pose 4:19	problem 3:2 4:19	question 40:21	18:3,12 19:14,19
37:3 48:7	posed 14:4	8:1 9:20 13:1 38:2	41:15 45:16 46:7	20:12,20 21:5 22:4
perceptions 19:15	position 16:13	44:21	questions 26:22	35:8 38:13
19:15,17	possibility 28:5	problems 3:20 4:10	28:10,11 40:17	regional 6:20 7:8,16
performed 27:2	44:18	4:13,17,18 5:12	quite 5:10 14:21	17:16 21:12,21
performing 32:17	possible 7:11 9:6,14	6:14,17 10:1 12:1	42:12	25:18 34:3,4 43:21
permit 12:19	12:16 42:5	13:16,20,22 14:4		regions 12:2
persecute 29:17	postpone 2:19	15:9 17:7,9 18:14	R	reinvent 24:2
persecuted 23:12	posture 9:4,19	19:7 21:11 37:4	Rabaie 41:20	rejection 26:13
personnel 26:17	potential 13:2	proceeding 20:17	raise 26:3,3 40:18	29:22 33:4
perspectives 41:4	potentially 44:9	process 8:14 9:13	40:19	relationship 9:12
pertaining 7:18	power 3:2 11:6 21:6	42:15	reach 25:11	37:15,16,17,19
phase 39:10,11	34:3 42:14 43:3	product 43:2	reached 32:11,15	39:12
Philadelphia 41:19	practically 11:4	productive 44:9	reaching 20:15 34:3	relentless 20:14
physical 13:19	18:16 45:3	professional 37:3	34:5,5,6,6	relevant 38:20
place 1:17 15:6 23:3	practitioners 4:4	program 22:6 48:8	ready 40:18	reliable 38:19
24:20 27:4	preceded 8:5	progress 5:19 9:18	real 12:2,3	religious 37:17
plan 38:7	precondition 8:7,9	progressively 35:13	reality 16:21 43:15	reluctance 25:11
planning 32:16 35:5	preconditions 8:6	project 21:20	realize 13:17	relying 11:14
platform 14:20	8:13	properly 17:17	really 31:8,8	remains 9:7 23:20
players 17:21	prefer 5:4 19:4	protect 45:10,12	reason 8:3 15:20	remarkable 22:21
pleading 25:9	preparatory 7:6	46:14	16:2	remarks 40:15
please 4:7 41:16	presence 10:16	protecting 46:22	rebuild 25:17 29:18	remember 31:6
42:9 48:22	12:17 25:10 43:11	47:6	recall 9:21	38:13,18
pleased 3:17	44:2	provided 1:23	receive 19:4	reminiscent 11:20
pleasure 2:5 14:17	present 26:14 29:5	providing 48:13	recognition 4:16	remove 42:13
30:17	presentations 40:22	provinces 31:16	recognize 18:18	replace 28:7
plenary 1:12 2:6	41:5	33:11	19:7	replica 10:9
plotting 36:14	presents 2:8	provincial 46:10	recognized 22:15	report 24:8,9

<p>reported 23:5 45:7 reports 24:13 represent 12:12 representative 25:7 47:10 Representatives 35:15 37:10 represented 25:12 representing 13:8 Republic 21:19 repudiate 12:11 requires 4:14 6:16 resist 22:17 resistance 11:2 30:3 resolve 6:14 13:20 resources 2:17 25:16 respect 42:22 respective 17:7 responsible 25:4 restored 16:19 result 21:9 results 46:15 rethink 14:3 retrospectively 34:15 return 8:16 17:2 18:11 rich 25:7 rid 33:10 right 2:18 3:3 28:11 46:4 rights 22:3 36:11 risk 11:11 risky 6:7 ritual 15:16 road 38:3 round 40:1,3 Rubaie 46:7,18 Rubin 41:18,18 run 14:8 runs 11:11 rush 16:2 rushed 16:16 Russians 29:3 44:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <hr/> <p>sacrificed 40:4</p>	<p>Saddam 21:4 salaries 36:11 sanctions 8:17 9:6,9 Satan 21:4 satisfying 8:5 Saudi 7:5 34:6 saw 37:9 saying 37:21 48:6,8 scarce 25:16 scientific 37:17 second 17:12 21:16 33:4 Secondly 41:3 sectarian 48:5,17 48:19 sectarian-based 48:3 secure 36:3 security 3:16 4:5,6 6:21 7:9,16,18 32:4,11,15,17 35:3 35:4,21 37:1,2,3 37:13,14,14 38:2,4 39:4,7,16 46:14 47:5 see 17:5 19:14 28:15 42:3 48:3 seek 17:19 23:13 seeking 12:4 seen 14:21 21:1 27:18 45:2 sees 21:20 segments 13:5 self-control 22:19 sensible 24:6 sent 29:11 separate 2:10 separating 44:7 serious 6:20 7:2,14 7:19,22,22 8:20,22 11:7 18:14 23:21 30:1 seriously 5:12 21:19 served 2:21 serves 16:1 service 3:22 services 35:17 48:13 Serwer 1:22 2:2,3</p>	<p>session 1:12 2:6 sessions 2:10 settled 6:11 settlement 20:19 seven 23:1 28:6 Shabaks 23:11 Shah 19:20 shape 31:8 shaped 4:16 share 14:19 31:1 shared 2:20 Shia 23:22 shift 3:14 48:4 Short 29:21 showed 30:15 shown 26:11 shows 31:21 side 9:15 21:22 48:7 sign 30:14 significant 13:5 signs 47:8 48:9 simple 8:3 single 4:19 5:3 Sir 46:8 sitting 3:19 situation 23:6 25:5 25:22 28:19 situations 42:12 six 39:10 sky 29:7 smoothly 46:13 society 12:10 13:4,6 25:8 33:6,8 43:8 43:16,18 44:13,17 SOFA 3:14 6:9 30:16 37:10 38:3 soldiers 27:16 solutions 17:8,10 solved 21:13 somebody 19:13 somewhat 14:18 26:21 sophisticated 33:6 Southwest 3:21 sovereign 35:19 36:2 sovereignty 30:15 Soviet 10:6,9,11,16</p>	<p>10:18 11:15 Soviets 10:7 11:3,20 spanning 5:7 speak 5:19 16:10 speaking 14:18 19:13 special 11:5 specific 4:15 5:17 12:1,2 specifically 5:20 12:8 spectacular 22:21 speech 40:2 spirit 3:12 spoke 46:8 stability 2:4 15:19 16:6,18 18:11 29:19 stabilizing 41:6 staggering 23:2 stand 40:20 star 30:20 start 4:8 32:9,10 started 31:11 state 10:10 11:15,16 29:18 31:7 36:2 43:17 44:19 States 1:1,23 4:20 5:6 8:3 10:1,5 12:14,20 13:17 14:8 17:12,18 18:3 20:18 24:3 36:1,4 37:18,19 38:22 39:8,12 40:7 43:3 44:5 stations 46:15 strategic 36:4 37:15 37:19 38:8,10 strategy 12:4 18:10 31:13,14,18 36:20 straw 33:7 Street 1:2 strengthen 46:9 strikes 44:4 strong 38:12 stronger 15:13 strongly 18:8 students 4:4</p>	<p>studies 24:13 study 3:20 23:9 24:8,10,11 substituting 3:12 succeed 29:14 successful 43:14 Suite 1:1 suited 32:20,22 summer 20:7 31:5 31:11,19 33:18 Sunni 23:22 33:8 47:11 super 30:19 superimposed 43:18 support 10:15 18:20 19:10 20:17 22:7 supporter 20:10 supposed 20:7 sure 28:10,14 surge 32:8 34:11,13 41:22 surprise 41:2 Surveys 23:15 survived 27:16 suspend 8:10 suspension 8:16,17 sustain 32:6 sustaining 39:3,4 sweat 39:19 sympathetic 10:11 Syria 7:3 34:6 system 48:12</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <hr/> <p>table 32:14 tactics 32:9 take 2:16 15:3 46:4 taken 3:11 23:3 takes 6:19 29:15 Taliban 12:6,16,18 25:12 26:2 27:10 27:14 28:20 44:3,7 45:5,6,11 talk 41:20 talking 48:10,11,13 48:14,14 tangle 2:15</p>
--	--	--	--	---

tanks 24:14	track 47:4	unique 38:15	wanted 39:21 40:2	years 6:6 23:1,16
task 3:8 43:13	tradeoffs 2:13	United 1:1,23 4:20	42:2	29:11 38:5 39:10
tears 39:19	TRADE-OFFS	5:6 8:3 10:1,4	war 5:1,2,5 19:20	47:15,15
Tehran 21:8	1:13	12:14,20 13:17	20:6,8 27:21 31:6	yesterday 31:2,2
tell 32:8 45:18	tragic 23:6	14:8 17:12,18 18:2	31:9 43:14	young 29:8 40:6
terminated 6:1	transcript 1:23	20:18 24:3 26:15	warm 26:8	
terms 17:20	transitioning 31:15	28:2,6 35:20 36:1	wars 24:3,17	<hr/> Z <hr/>
terrain 32:21	treasure 39:18	36:4 37:18,19	Washington 1:2,16	Zbigniew 1:19 4:2
terror 27:21	treated 18:9 22:15	38:21 39:8,12 40:7	1:17	Zone 26:19
terrorism 39:4	troops 10:16,20	43:3 44:5	waste 25:15	<hr/> 1 <hr/>
terroristic 12:7	11:8 42:4 43:4	unity 33:16	Waterloo 23:8	1 23:17
terrorists 32:14	troubled 20:20	universally 26:16	way 22:21 28:19,22	1:45-3:00 1:12
thank 14:12,15 30:4	Trudy 41:16,17,18	unpopular 34:8	29:4 42:3	100 37:2 48:7
30:6,10 39:1,7	true 4:12	unrealistic 9:15	wealth 24:5,12	11 37:9
40:11,13 46:3,19	truly 21:1	unreported 23:4	weddings 29:6	1200 1:2
48:21	trying 23:19	unwilling 9:7	45:14	14 13:7
thanking 49:1	Turkey 7:3 34:7	urbanized 44:14,15	welcome 2:6 22:22	150,000 43:4
themes 41:5	Turkmen 23:10	urgent 3:10	23:8 26:8	160,000 10:19
thing 32:10 38:17	turn 7:20 42:7	useful 9:20	went 45:2	17th 1:2
38:19 39:17	turned 32:13 33:9	usefulness 27:8	West 37:22,22	18 31:20
things 17:4 22:11	turning 11:12,19	U.N 3:22 26:17	we'll 2:9 4:8 40:17	1980s 29:3
24:19 40:21 41:12	two 13:10 16:10	U.S 2:4 4:15 6:3,5	we've 40:22 41:5	<hr/> 2 <hr/>
think 3:18 6:18 7:4	24:3,17 27:6 30:19	6:22 8:6,16 11:9	46:10	2 34:20,22
12:18 13:16 14:2	30:20 40:17 47:18	15:7 20:22 24:14	wheel 24:2	200 1:1
16:11,15 22:9,13	47:18	26:11 28:15 29:1	whichever 15:3	20001 1:17
24:13,21 25:2 34:7	type 10:10 11:15	31:13,17 42:18,21	wide 20:2	2001 9:21 27:12
34:8 39:21 40:1	<hr/> U <hr/>	<hr/> V <hr/>	widespread 22:7	45:1
43:13 47:22 48:4	ugly 31:7	variety 25:7	wills 16:19	2002 9:22 26:9 29:1
48:20	ultimately 26:4 30:1	vast 20:11	wisdom 4:8	2003 29:1
thinking 5:11	undefined 27:21	vastly 21:9	wise 27:2	20036-3011 1:2
thoughts 31:1	understand 32:21	venture 26:21	wish 15:3	2005 47:2,3,4
threat 12:13	32:22 36:15,16	Vernon 1:17	witness 43:6	2006 20:7 31:5,11
threats 8:21,21	45:9,9,11	version 26:19	women 29:7 40:7	31:19 33:18
three 3:7 17:6 18:1	understandably	Vice 2:3	wondering 28:2,21	2008 22:22
19:5 28:1,9 38:5	22:14	view 10:4 11:21	45:6	2009 1:9
40:14 41:12 47:15	understanding	12:9 25:3	words 19:12	2011 38:6
47:15,22	13:19 14:7 26:10	views 12:12 19:3	work 16:11 37:5,6	26 13:9
THURSDAY 1:9	undertake 6:19	violence 22:20	38:7	<hr/> 3 <hr/>
time 9:22 14:21	undertaking 6:7	31:22 34:10,18	working 31:17	30 40:6
19:19 25:13 40:17	13:22 42:18	violent 10:18 42:7	45:21	300 5:9 11:5
43:11 44:18 47:14	undertook 42:13	voice 22:10	world 18:15 20:10	31st 38:6
47:14	undoubtedly 15:6	<hr/> W <hr/>	<hr/> X <hr/>	<hr/> 4 <hr/>
times 3:12 43:1	uneasy 43:12	wage 43:14	xenophobic 43:10	<hr/> 40 13:6
today 3:10 11:6	unequaled 20:9	wake 11:1	<hr/> Y <hr/>	
14:17 19:20 21:9	Unfortunately 3:9	Walter 1:16	Yazidis 23:10	
44:15 45:4	unintended 20:5	want 38:17 40:20	year 6:11	
told 45:8	Union 10:6,11			
total 5:8 11:5 29:10				

<hr/> 5 <hr/> 50,000 11:8 <hr/>				
<hr/> 7 <hr/> 7 35:22 <hr/> 700,000 23:18 <hr/>				
<hr/> 8 <hr/> 8 1:9 <hr/> 801 1:17 <hr/>				
<hr/> 9 <hr/> 9/11 11:1 <hr/> 90 32:18 <hr/> 99.9 36:9 <hr/>				