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P R O C E E D I N G S

DR. FULLILOVE: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this event hosted by the Brookings Institution and by the Lowy Institute for International Policy in Sydney, Australia. I'm not Carlos Pascual, the Vice President in Foreign Policy at Brookings. Carlos is en route from Langley, but probably being held up by the traffic that's being generated by President Obama's speech to the National Prayer Breakfast. So I'm going to step in.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think everybody in the room probably believes that yesterday was a remarkable day. For me it began with the joy in the voice of the announcer on the Metro Subway at 6:00 a.m. saying to passengers, "Rub up against each other: a little rubbin' never hurt no-one."

I saw it in the raucous capitalism that was being practiced by the hawkers of memorabilia on the streets of Washington, which showed me that the free market is not dead in the United States and that Barack is good for business; but I also saw, I think, the seriousness and some of the darker implications of elected office in this country was visible, or invisible to me, actually, in the bullet-proof glass that was wrapped around the president, bullet-proof glass that I believe is now called by the Secret Service "transparent armor."

So it was a day that mixed seriousness and formality with the great martial traditions and the musical traditions of this country. It was a

remarkable thing to witness.

What we wanted to do today was to hone in on the centerpiece of the inauguration, and that is the inaugural address. And we have invited, I think, two wonderful speakers to help us to analyze that address.
First of all, I might start by mentioning both of them.

We're joined first of all by Mike Gerson, who is the Roger Hertog Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, the author of Heroic Conservatism, a syndicated columnist for *The Washington Post* whose review of Mr. Obama's speech is already on the newsstand, a contributor to *Newsweek*. And, most importantly, I think for our purposes today, one of George W. Bush's chief collaborators and chief writers in the White House and worked on many of the president's most famous and beautiful speeches, especially in the aftermath of 9/11.

Secondly, we have Vinca LeFleur, a partner at West Wing Writers, who served from 1995 to 1998 as a member of the National Security Council staff for President Clinton as Director for Speechwriting and Special Assistant to the President. And prior to joining the White House staff, Ms. LaFleur served as a speechwriter for the Secretary of State.

So we have two wonderful, practiced writers and speechwriters who have sat in the White House and married the rhetoric to the reality to help us to examine the speech. So what I might do is call on first of all Mike to

give us an analysis of how he saw President Obama's inaugural address.

MR. GERSON: Thank you so much. There were a couple of surprising things to me yesterday. The first surprise was how much Dick Cheney looked like Mr. Potter from "It's A Wonderful Life." The second thing was the speech itself. Many of us had expected masterful rhetoric and perhaps some ideological shallowness. Obama, after all, was not elected leading an intellectual movement that had developed over the years like Bill Clinton and the New Democrats; instead, I think we got a speech that was rhetorically flat and intellectually interesting. It was an extraordinary moment.

I love the history of Washington, and in the 19th century this was one of the principal slave marts in the entire country. The Mall itself was lined with places where slaves were sold, and the echoes and ghosts on the Mall are amazing, you know, not just Martin Luther King but Marian Anderson singing and so many others. So the moment was extraordinary.

And there is no doubt -- I have no doubt -- that Obama has a confidence and presence that fills a stage, even the massive one yesterday. This is extraordinary and useful. It's amazing from a leader just six years from speaking on the floor of the Illinois state legislature. Obama is a prodigy of presence, and that is the reason he's the president of the United States.

There were high points in the speech, some phrases I liked a great deal: "Our security emanates from the justice of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint." There's some nice rhythm to the ear in that phrase. I thought the use of the biblical phrase "to set aside childish things" effectively drew attention to one of Obama's greatest strengths: his mature adult manner.

But much of the speech was surprisingly not of inaugural quality; it was handicapped by distracting clichés. There were "rising tides" and "gathering clouds" and "raging storms" and "nagging fears" and "dark chapters" and "watchful eyes" and "dying campfires" and "icy currents." When the speech got to "children's children," it became a total mystery to me how Obama could use such tired language particularly when Obama in the past has exemplified or shown such a good writer's ear. And I really don't have an answer to that question.

I found certain phrases just strange. I don't think the first inaugural use of the word "swill" was particularly successful, and much of the critical reaction this morning I think is essentially conceded that the speech was more prose than poetry, some arguing that an ornate speech would have been inappropriate to our grim economic moment. That strikes me as more of an excuse than an explanation. Good rhetorical poetry doesn't have to be ornate and even prose should be good prose.

But a politically successful speech doesn't have to be an eloquent speech. I think in many ways that's the lesson of the Clinton years. I don't think Bill Clinton was often particularly eloquent, but I think he was often very, very effective. I thought Obama's speech was an effective speech and more than that an intellectually sophisticated speech.

Obama's foreign policy mentions in the speech, I thought, was surprisingly tough and Kennedy-like. He said, "Our nation is at war." He made reference to the ideological struggle against Islamic extremism, people inducing terror and slaughtering innocents. He talked about defeating America's enemies. He had tremendous praise for America's veterans.

There were, of course, other elements of the speech rejecting torture and other things that probably were more consistent with earlier rhetoric, but I found these mentions genuinely reassuring, and they should have been from a president with no military background, with very little foreign policy experience. I think it was fully appropriate for him to make this point, and it probably reflects in my view more than just strategy. An American president is much smarter on the day that he takes office than the day that he wins office, basically because he'd had a series of very sobering briefings about the nature of international threats, the possibility of future terrorist attacks.

I was glad that he mentioned, made a direct mention of international assistance, foreign assistance, although I thought that the formulation was a bit unfair about America can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside of our borders. It's a strange way to put it given the fact that American foreign assistance has more than doubled in the last eight years.

I found his -- let's see here -- above all, I really found his formulation about the new era of responsibility to be a strong theme, traditional but not tired. Great American leaders -- people like Lincoln and King -- were radical in a certain sense, but they talked about progressive ideals of unity and social justice in terms of returning to our founding ideals. Most Americans, or many Americans, will not accept progressive change based on progressive or relativistic morality. They will, or they're more likely to, accept progressive changes based on traditional moral ideals that are, in fact, revolutionary in their implication. That I think was politically smart. It is a way to build a broad coalition. It is also a deep moral insight into the nature of the American experiment, and that is very much to Barack Obama's credit.

Thank you.

MR. PASCUAL: Michael, thank you, that was excellent. My apologies for not being here at the beginning of your talk. I was coming back from a briefing and the roadworks on 123 were not sympathetic to my

desire to be here for the beginning of the session. But I think one of the things that you've really laid out from the beginning is that very interesting dilemma, potentially maybe not necessarily dilemma between politically successful and eloquent, and what "politically successful" and "communication" actually mean, and what is appropriate at a different time, that different forms of communication may in fact actually be more appropriate in some circumstances at least in terms of trying to achieve politically what you're trying to do rather than necessarily the eloquence part of the equation. I had not thought about that kind of context before, and I think that will be interesting to continue to explore.

I want to turn next to Vinca LaFleur, and I know that Michael Fullilove has already briefly introduce Vinca. On a personal note, Vinca and I have worked together when we were both on the National Security Council staff, and I can vouch for the ways in which at times she took ideas and concepts and sort of bureaucratic wonkiness and turned them into statements that were eloquent and of a political nature and of a policy nature.

And it really did reinforce in my mind that there is an interactive process here of struggling with the details of knowledge of what one tries to do in formulating a policy in a bureaucratic agenda and somehow communicating it in a way so that it becomes clear and understood and compelling, which in the end has to be a critical factor around which others

are willing to get behind it. And having seen the raw material that Vinca began with in many cases, in many cases beginning with me, I know what a tremendous job it was to actually turn it into something of a greater nature.

So on that personal note thank you. Thank you for joining us, and I'll pass the mike over to you.

MS. LAFLEUR: Well, thank you very much, Carlos. That was very generous, and I'm really delighted to be here to be with Carlos again and to meet Michael and also to sit next to Mike Gerson, whose writing I have admired for quite some time now.

Carlos just talked about making policy clear, understandable, and compelling, but Mike Gerson also made it beautiful, and I'm not sure I always reach that standard. So I'm really delighted to be here.

I just want to comment very quickly on a few things that Mike noted, and then my own thoughts about the speech. In saying that President Obama's remarks yesterday were not of inaugural quality, I would submit that inaugural quality in general is pretty lousy, and so, you know, of the 44 of these speeches that have been given, there are only a very few that we refer to over and over and over again, or that we can quote from memory. So we'll just put that out there.

Inaugural addresses are not just a president's first statement to the nation as president but also in some ways his introduction to the world in the

sense of providing a vision of his leadership priorities and voice and style. And it's an unusual speech because there are multiple audiences, all very significant. There are the people there. There is the American public viewing; there is the world; and then there is the challenge of speaking to the moment and also speaking to the ages. And because this speech is so unique, it tempts many presidents and their speechwriters down what my colleague Jeff Shessel called "the road of rhetorical ruin, to aim for rhetorical heights, ruffles and flourishes that may actually overreach the man or the moment.

And I think, fortunately, that particular challenge was not a real concern for this president because supported by his very talented speechwriter, Jon Favreau, but also with his own prodigious gifts as a writer and a speaker, he has already proven himself over the course of the campaign and the past few months to be an extraordinarily eloquent communicator-in-chief.

In addition, yesterday was historic well before the president opens his mouth, and so in that delicate balance of trying to speak for the moment or speak for history, if President Obama erred in the side of speaking to this moment, I think the history had already been made, and that was part of his calculus.

It was impossible not to be deeply moved by the vision on the Mall

yesterday by the symbolism, the echoes and shadows of Martin Luther King at one end of his dream and then at the other end of the Mall of our new, our dynamic, handsome young president with his hand on Lincoln's bible taking the oath of office, our first African-American president. I think as a country it gave us the feeling that dreams can come true, that things can change, and that indeed they already have, and that ours is a nation where a man whose father 60 years ago might not have been served in a restaurant could today rise to take the highest office in the land.

And I think the speech as well was beautifully crafted and forcefully delivered calling on Americans to embrace what Obama called the New Era of Responsibility: responsibility for one another, for our community, for our economy, for our planet.

Now, this notion of responsibility which Mike touched on as well, this is not a new theme. President Clinton, as some of you may remember, talked about opportunity, responsibility, and community, and President Bush as well in his inaugural talked about the importance of responsibility. But I do think President Obama put a sharper edge on it in his remarks yesterday that previous presidents have spoken of responsibility more in a sense of our responsibilities to one another, volunteering in our communities, being our brother's keeper and so on, whereas I think the message yesterday was more about acting like grown-ups.

And I think the whole demeanor that President Obama took there on the podium and the tone of his remarks is reinforcing that kind of responsibility. It was sober in tone. It didn't try to minimize any of the challenges ahead, but it did offer us the sense of real purpose and confidence and vision that was anchored in perhaps prosaic specifics: roads and bridges, electric grids and digital lines, cars and factories, schools and universities, restoring science to its rightful place.

On foreign policy we already knew that President Obama had a very sympathetic audience in the wider world where citizens did indicate that could they have voted in our election, his victory would have been even more overwhelming, and recent polls have shown that optimism that U.S. relations with the world are going to improve under President Obama's tenure.

I was struck that almost a quarter of his speech was directed at audiences, explicitly directed at audiences beyond our borders, and in President Clinton's second inaugural, which is when I was in the White House, that was the inaugural address that I was there for. There was really only about a paragraph that was explicitly directed to the world, and I think in President Bush's first about that much, although the second, obviously, was very, very different.

Even though there were only a few really explicit references to

change, I did feel that the subtext of change came through pretty clearly in the foreign policy section and that there was a fairly clear rejection of past policy. Part of this was in the way that President Obama phrased some of these things, talking about America being ready to lead once more, which implicitly suggested that perhaps we had not been leading lately, and talking about alliances: "Power alone cannot protect us, doesn't entitle us to do as we please," et cetera, et cetera, that "we'll be guided by these principles once more," again implicitly suggested to me that these principles had been neglected or cast aside.

The key priorities I think were very familiar: leaving Iraq, forging peace in Afghanistan, working to lessen the nuclear threat, tackling climate change. I was also struck by the very forceful message against terror and the strong language there: "You cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."

But President Obama did not mention 9/11 as such, and I thought that was interesting, too, because eight years ago I think all of us, regardless of party, I think we felt that was a real watershed moment. That was a moment when everything changed, and I think some of this speech was suggesting that maybe we shouldn't have reacted that way, maybe not everything changed, and that this speech is really about getting back to what is truth, what was old, what endures. So at the end going all the way back to George Washington, you know, to put America back in the course

of our narrative are clearly since our Founders.

The litany of pledges directed at nations and people around the world, very reminiscent of Kennedy's inaugural and also echoed in President Bush's second inaugural talking explicitly to regions around the world, so to (inaudible) the world any way forward to those who seek to sow conflict or blame (inaudible) on the West or people will judge you on what you build, not what you destroy; a message to "those who cling to power through corruption and dissent, you're on the wrong side of history, but we'll extend a hand if you unclench your fist," which in President's Bush's second inaugural the same idea, I felt was expressed over there. The language was: If you walk down the road of openness that we'll we by your side. But again, the same message of: If you make a move, we'll meet you.

And then the message about development. I was struck, again just an observation, but watching the speech being delivered, up until that point in the litany, every time he says "to these people, to that people, we will do this," the "we" was very clearly about the United States. And the last one when he says, "to nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we can no longer afford indifference," when he was speaking those words, it seemed to me that the "we" there was more ambiguous, that it was meant to include all the developed nations. Although when you read it on the page, you wonder, well, maybe he just means the United States. But I'm not sure

about that intention there.

Now, obviously, a speech at the end of the day is just a speech, and whether or not any of these words are ultimately immortalized I think will depend on whether they're truly borne out in policy and progress. We have seen some anticipated -- we can anticipate some first steps. We know he's meeting today with his national security team to talk about plans for Iraq and Afghanistan; already an Executive Order on Guantanamo and so forth.

But perhaps more significant is the change of mood that I think we felt in Washington that some of us have felt really since November, a sense of energy and optimism that I think is real and that will be borne out in a different spirit here because, for me personally, it has been very demoralizing over the past five, six years to watch the way America's image has been tarnished in the world and to see opinions of my country -- or our country -- sink even in some of our closest friends and allies. I think that's been very dispiriting, and to feel again that America, by virtue of what we saw yesterday on the Mall, and I feel like that ceremony in all of its dimensions was really a testament to what is best about this country, of what we're so proud of, and what we feel so good about.

And so even though in the end the speech could not have been reduced to a single phrase, I find myself agreeing with something I read in an editorial in an Israeli newspaper last night, which was that the message

could be reduced to three simple words: Yes, we can.

Thank you.

MR. PASCUAL: Thank you, and particularly on this theme of responsibility, maybe we can come back to that, especially because, as you say, it gave a sober context to the speech, yet it was also a moment of jubilation. And it was an interesting contrast between that environment of sobriety of the difficulty that's being faced at the sense of possibility. And, in part, the speech had to be responsible for it; in part it was the moment that you said that history had been made before he opened his mouth, literally before he opened his mouth because the news by the CNN ticker that said he's now president even though at 12 o'clock exactly he technically becomes president of the United States even though he hadn't taken the oath yet. So he literally hadn't opened his mouth.

But, you know, there is that sobriety at the same time this sense of possibility and how we come back to that and the language and the rhetoric and what it means to follow up will be interesting.

I want to come now to Michael Fullilove and Michael is a Visiting fellow here at Brookings. He's also the Director of Global Issues at the Lowy Institute in Sydney, and I'm really indebted to Michael for this event, but in fact for many, many more issues. Michael has been a prolific and creative participant in the American -- contributor to the American political

process. Many of you may have seen his op-eds in *The New York Times* and the *Financial Times* and a number of other places. He has been a very thoughtful and eloquent observer of the American political process.

He's also been an analyst of speeches and has done that in Australian context, but he has done that much more broadly and so I think brings a wide context in which to be able to comment on these issues as someone who is looking at these questions from the outside, but intimately knows the American process and intimately knows speechmaking.

Michael, I also thank you for bringing together as a partner in sponsoring this event the Lowy Institute, and we're very pleased to be able to do that together with or Australian friends and partners. Over to you.

DR. FULLILOVE: Well, thank you, Carlos, for that very generous introduction.

There's a story that speechwriters tell to each other in hushed tones that on the 4th of March, 1865, just as Abe Lincoln began to deliver a second inaugural address to a country that was soon to emerge from civil war, the sun broke through the clouds and bathed the scene with light. I didn't see such an obvious indication of heavenly approval during Obama's inaugural address yesterday, but earlier in the morning, long before he put one hand on Lincoln's bible, I did see an eagle soaring and swooping in front of the capitol. And if, as my neighbor on the Mall believed, the eagle

was a ring-in, then I think that only demonstrates again the remarkable efficiency of the Obama machine in managing to organize that.

I find myself, I think, on the edge of the panel but perhaps in between Mike and Vinca in my assessment of the speech. I thought the speech was strong. I thought it was a fine speech without being Obama's best speech and without being an inaugural address for the ages. It wasn't the equal, obviously, of Kennedy's inaugural or either of Lincoln's inaugurals. Obama himself admitted last week that ‘there's a genius to Lincoln that is not going to be matched’.

There were prosaic elements of the speech which were unexpected. I didn't think I would live to see words like "goods and services" and "data and statistics" mentioned from the steps of the Capitol, and I don't think they had to be. But, of course, Lincoln and Kennedy are very hard benchmarks to reach even for a writer and a speaker a gifted as Obama. In fact, perhaps they are particularly hard for Obama because of his gifts, and that's part of the context that we haven't mentioned so much in the panel so far: that Obama's remarkable candidacy and his victory rested to a large degree on the quality of his speeches.

In fact, the 2008 presidential campaign was almost a test case under near laboratory conditions of the power of speechmaking where his two principal opponents, Hillary Clinton and John McCain, were explicitly

running as doers not talkers at exactly the same time that Obama was filling stadiums, thrilling audiences with rhetoric at exactly the same time that his speeches were being put to music by the young kids.

The milestones on Obama's journey to the White House in a quite unusual way were his -- were probably half a dozen speeches. His 2002 speech on Iraq which became his chief foreign policy calling card during the campaign; his eloquent announcement of his candidacy in Springfield; his speech to the 2004 DNC speech which flattened the audience in Boston's Fleet Center a little bit like the Halifax Explosion in 1917 flattened Halifax; his speech to the Jefferson-Jackson dinner; his remarkable race speech in Philadelphia. So I think the expectations are extraordinarily high every time Obama gets up to the podium. Everybody thinks this is going to be the speech that they remember forever.

So I think his speech yesterday was perhaps more in line with his speech to the 2008 DNC in Denver than his 2004 speech in Boston. It was workmanlike, it was businesslike, but I think it was still strong. I think, as Vinca intimated, I think his inaugural address was much better than most inaugural addresses. And I don't know whether it's an excuse or an explanation, Mike, but I wonder if there was not a deliberateness to this pulling back; that I wonder if he wasn't concerned about further widening the gap between the extraordinary expectations that this country and the world

has for his presidency and the intimidating challenges before it. And if there was an element of deliberateness to it, then it probably only confirms his emerging reputation for prudence.

Let me say a couple of things about the foreign policy section of the speech. I was struck by the specificity of the foreign policy elements, the way in which he went down and ticked off specific policies. He wasn't up in the clouds, he was down on the ground. I take the points that Mike and Vinca made about the toughness of the foreign policy speech in parts, and yet I have to say standing in front of him down on the Mall, I actually thought the liberalism of the foreign policy element of the speech stood out more. To me, it was consistent with the liberalism of his foreign policy rhetoric on the campaign trail, and it may even give pause to those who are pointing to the centrism of some of his key foreign policy picks because this is clearly because he went out of his way to underline the fact that he intends to stick by the foreign policy promises he made that were regarded as down the liberal end of the foreign policy spectrum.

For example, as Vinca said, he made a deliberate effort of addressing all other peoples and governments who are watching today from the grandest capitals to "the small village where my father was born." I think by alluding to the fact that America's power derives not just from a strength of arms but also from sturdy alliances and enduring convictions, I think he

picks up on the very strong line of criticism against President Bush's foreign policy that it was a break from the post-World War II tradition of working with allies and through institutions to achieve U.S. goals. I think that criticism is much much fairer in relation to President Bush's first term than his second; but nevertheless I think Obama was signing up to that line of criticism by making those remarks.

He signaled a determination to push ahead on two foreign policy issues that are central to liberals. He said, "I will work -- we have to work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the specter of a warming planet," especially -- I mean that comment on the nuclear threat I think is particularly interesting. He promised, as Vinca said, a new way forward to the Islamic world, and I thought it was interesting that perhaps the best line of the inaugural, perhaps the most memorable line, was going right back to his very controversial promise to engage directly with U.S. adversaries. And that line was this: "To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you're on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." To me, that is not a retreat from the liberalism of his foreign policy promises during the campaign, it's an advance.

I think finally on the foreign policy element, I was struck by his promise to temper American power with humility and restraint. As I said to

Mike before we came in, I'm a great admirer of President Bush's second inaugural. I thought it was a beautiful speech and one of the greats. Where I took issue, I think, with that speech was a gap that I saw between the foreign policy rhetoric and the foreign policy reality. And whereas President Bush announced four years ago his determination to end tyranny in our world even if that promise was hedged with qualifications and caveats, I think Obama was pulling very much from that kind of global ambition and promising humility and restraint.

Finally, about the moment, if the speech was good, I think everybody agrees that the historical moment was extraordinary. Obama has made it his practice not to refer explicitly to his race but to hear him refer to the fact that his father may not have received service at a local restaurant 60 years ago and to do that from the steps of a building that was raised from slaves was a moving moment. And I think it shows -- I think the inauguration of an African American shows again how many surprises the United States has in store for the world. It shows us that the United States continues to defy the naysayers and the declinists, and it continues to surprise even its friends.

So I guess I would conclude in this way: Barack Obama's speech will linger in my memory but not as much as the making of it.

MR. PASCUAL: Michael, thank you. It's interesting listening to all three of you speak and your commentary about the nature of the

speech and the way that it was crafted, and looking at it as more of a policy wonk and asking myself the question on, as you were talking, on did it do what it needed to do? And there I came out was, you know, in that sense it was remarkably efficient and really did hit the right note. I mean to an American audience he said from the beginning: Look, we're not screwing around here. This is tough. We've got to do something about it. We all have to do our piece, and, you know, he referred back to we are great because we, the people, and used that as the theme of saying that we all have this responsibility to restore what we can to American greatness.

I thought to a business community an interesting concept that he put out there in my view was, if you're looking to invest in the United States, look at technology. I mean he basically said this is the area that we have to develop; it's our future and we can't -- we can't not do this. We have to harness this technology as a foundation, as a part of the remaking of America.

To the international community he made very clear that we are a friend and our intent is to be a friend. And he, I think, put that in a very specific context. I don't know if you would agree with this, Mike, but as a contrast you're either with us or against us, it started us out on a different point: that we are together and unless you say that you're against us, we're together.

But he also made it very clear that the United States has to do its part within this international environment; that the world is changing and that we have to change with it and was something he made very explicit. But even on the question related to poverty I thought was interesting because if you look at what he talked about, he talked about agriculture, about water, about education; not about handouts but actually to creating a capacity for others to make themselves productive. And I think that in a sense that goes back to the theme of responsibility, that this wasn't a speech about the government is going to come in and do something for you; the government is going to play a responsible role and help create an environment where you can do something, which I think -- I mean that's the way I read it and I took it.

But what I found very interesting in discussions and commentary with people afterwards was an excitement because they felt involved, which was really quite interesting. It wasn't that something just happened to them but they felt there seemed to be this invitation to include them in a process which I think was part of the power of what was done.

So some of my unsolicited but quick reactions to this, I just want to maybe come back to the three of you on a particular issue because there's obviously this dynamic here between a policy process and apparatus and a team that contributed to this: There's the speechwriter and then there's

the individual. And particularly, the two of you have been in the midst of that and have had to bring that together. And how you bring it together also is going to influence future effectiveness I mean you can actually take policy to a new height, to a new level.

I remember when President Clinton talked about NATO enlargement, and he put it in a speech and suddenly, you know, three years of policy debate ended overnight. But then there becomes the question of you may say something in a speech, but you fall flat because you can't actually get it done because you don't have the structures behind you to make it happen.

And I wonder if, particularly, Mike, if you want to start out on this and reflecting on this dynamic and how much of a tension there is between on the one hand wanting to express yourself, being understanding of the policy process, trying to be respectful of the individual, and how do you balance all of that to come together on a speech that really sets the right message but in the end is going to actually put ideas out there that can have something done with them?

MR. GERSON: Well, the message process that produced this inaugural address struck me as quite a successful one. I agree with you. I thought that, for example, his discussion of the role of government was as kind of sophisticated and detailed as any presidential inaugural since Reagan in '81, who developed a quite different view of government, but

talked very much about the role of government and the role of individuals.

This speech very much talked about a kind of active but limited government, our concerns not big or small, does it work, was highly pragmatic. I think that was -- I don't think that's too much of a departure from the past; I think in some ways it's very third-wayish, very Bill Clinton-like in a certain way. I think Clinton actually used those formulations about government, but I think it's an effective formulation and a kind of useful, organizing principle.

And I thought that from the international perspective. I don't, by the way -- you know, every inaugural speech announces a new era in contrast to the past, every single one. I mean it could have been taken to say a tortuous past to a new generation of Americans and all the virtues they showed as some vicious attack on Dwight Eisenhower, okay? I'm not sure that's true. I mean I think almost every president announces "we're in a new age, we're at a new beginning." I actually is one of the great virtues of our presidential system, you know, at least since Roosevelt, is that we get this regular renewal of American purpose after a kind of tiredness sets in that's natural in these processes.

And it is always a hopeful moment. It will be a hopeful moment for eight years from now, and, you know, Bush in his speech, having a whole section on responsibility, could have been interpreted as a vicious

repudiation of Bill Clinton, you know: lack of responsibility. I can tell you it wasn't intended that way. But I think for people that have that predisposition they might have read it that way.

And so in that aspect I don't think there was a huge kind of amount of discontinuity. So from a message perspective I thought the speech was very, very strong. I said this -- I described Obama in this speech this morning as a -- in my Post column, as a conservative revolutionary, which is the great progressive tradition in America, okay? You, whether it's Wilson or Roosevelt, or Lincoln as part of that progressive tradition, or Martin Luther King, these are people who said we have to change fundamentally; things are wrong, and we route that change not in some alternative morality but in the return to the deepest values of our tradition, okay?

That's the way Americans accept change. It's to say that we're finally embodying the conservative values of the founding of our country. That is a, I think, you know, an insightful view of American history and a summary.

What I don't know is about the speechwriting process in this. I have tremendous respect for Jon Favreau. I have tremendous respect for Barack Obama's writing abilities, and I'm somewhat mystified about the process that produced both some very good lines but some very obvious rhetorical failures that could have been easily taken care of. And what process, what filters in that process to prevent that from happening, I don't -- I guess I

reject the overall argument that somehow, you know, a prosaic tone can be, you know, an effective -- you know, is a natural response to crisis.

He could have given, in my view, with these themes a cleaner, you know, less typical, less tired speech, and it would have been better. And maybe this is kind of, you know, a little bit of a difference here in that, you know, I actually don't believe that Bush's inaugurals were somehow summarizing extraordinary, exceptional historical moments, and they won't be remembered that way, okay? I think Bush's rhetorical moments came after 9/11 and the crisis that history gave him.

But this was an historical moment for Obama, an extraordinary moment in our history. I talked with, you know, John Lewis a few days before the speech, who had spoken at 23 years old on the steps of the Capitol right before Martin Luther King, okay, and asked him, "Would you have expected that? Would your 23-year-old self expected that?"

And he said, "Not in a million years." He said, "We had hope, we had faith, but I would have said, `You're crazy that this would have happened in 45 years in my lifetime'." He said at the end of that conversation which he said, "Some force caused the spirit of history or God Almighty is in it," he knows, okay.

And then I look at like the ending of that speech, okay, which is nice, okay, but could have literally been given by any president in American

history, okay, talking about Valley Forge or, you know, whatever he talked about. I did believe that moment about his father at the, you know -- you know, being served and segregation. It was a good moment, an emotional moment. The only time I choked up during the speech, okay, but I don't know how purposeful or intentional it was, but it was a historical moment, and it was probably better than most inaugural speeches just, you know, judged on craft. But it wasn't equal to that moment.

MR. PASCUAL: Thanks very much. Vinca?

MS. LAFLEUR: Maybe I'll just say a word about the foreign policy speechwriting process as I experienced it. I don't know what the process was for pulling yesterday's speech together, but I do know that there is a big difference between writing for a candidate on the campaign trail and writing for a president in the White House just because the amount of time that you get to spend together is so far constrained, and the president's time is so precious and so limited. So it's a very good thing that -- not just Jon Favreau but actually there is a team who had written for the president on the campaign trail who know him very well and will be bringing that personal history into the White House.

During the Clinton administration, the foreign policy speechwriters were housed in a separate office than the domestic policy speechwriters. And this is a break from tradition. I think President Bush put them back.

The reason, as I understand it, that it was done that way in the Clinton administration is because President Clinton came to office having been the governor or a rural state, not a foreign policy expert, and Tony Lake, who was National Security Advisor at the time and his deputy, Sandy Berger, who had been a speechwriter himself for Cy Vance earlier in his career really wanted to protect the foreign policy speeches from domestic politics and so housed the foreign policy speechwriters in the NSC, and our chain of command reported up through the National Security Advisor.

And President Clinton, who as all of you know, really likes to ad lib, was very, very good at ad-libbing, at least in the early years did not ad lib as much on t he foreign policy speeches, I think in part just sort of mindful that this was an area, you know, that changing a word could actually cause an incident.

I can say from experience that, you know, as a speechwriter, that's something that you worry about, that words that may sound really good or look really good on the page may have significance in a diplomatic context that you're not always aware of. And I think that this was something that, you know, we tried to work very, very closely with people like Carlos, with the real policy experts to help, you know, save us from ourselves when we were reaching for rhetorical flourishes that could get us into trouble.

And I did, you know, I did myself once make a mistake like that where

it was a speech that had to do with -- it's a biological weapons convention, the new protocol at the biological weapons convention -- and I had changed a word at the request of somebody at the Pentagon, who had changed a word in a sentence that to my mind was the equivalent of changing "happy" to "glad." But when the president delivered it, the person at the National Security Council who was responsible for this issue area came to me in a panic and said, "What did you do? You've just set back negotiations three years," you know. Terrible.

On the other hand, there were moments when actually I think that coming to it as somebody who was thinking about communication and not, you know, not burdened in a way by too much expertise in any particular subject area or, you know, 30 years of experience in the trenches and laboring over a treaty or something, was actually helpful in advancing things along.

And for me, Northern Ireland was a case where this happened where when President Clinton went to Belfast for the first time, I had the incredible honor and privilege of working on those speeches. And there was a line that I wrote that was something to the effect of, you know, coming together, sitting at the table in good faith isn't an act of surrender, it's an act of strength. And I didn't know that "No Surrender" was apparently one of the slogans of one of the key parties to the conflict. So to me this was a line with

a little bit of alliteration, you know, trying to get the point across. I didn't realize that it would have a deeper meaning.

And when the president actually said this in the speech, somebody in the audience jumped up and put out a roar. But I actually think that, you know, going there, you know, saying something that may be had I known more, you know, had I been more focused on that maybe wouldn't have said, it made the speech bolder. And that was a good thing. And I think -- I think finding that balance, you know, between being able to say things that previously people thought you couldn't say can help move policy along.

DR. FULLILOVE: This is a question that I think about a lot because I feel I have a bit of a Jekyll and Hyde personality when it comes to these things because on the one hand I'm a speech aficionado and I love speeches, and I edited a collection of speeches and all that sort of stuff. But my day job is very much the nitty-gritty of foreign policy, and it's a really interesting tension, and it's really interesting to observe how the tension is played out.

On the one hand, I think most foreign policy professionals are overly careful about this. I agree with Vinca, a speech in the end is just a speech, it's not a treaty. And I get very frustrated with Nervous Nellies who worry constantly about faux pas that can be made. I think there is no excuse for a boring speech on foreign policy given how interesting the world is and how

intimidating the challenges that the West faces.

On the other hand, I think you've got to always be careful to maintain this relationship with the policy that you're running. Just two quick comments from a non-American perspective: One thing that I observe is how different non-American speeches on foreign policy tend to be and how they tend to be more restrained. And I think part of the reason for that is the extraordinary richness of the American rhetorical tradition. Part of it is that U.S. foreign policy speeches, especially presidential speeches in foreign policy, are being literally parsed and examined in every capital of the world, and everybody's watching them. So there's a degree of extra care, I guess, that needs to be taken.

But also I think it's to do with America's position in the international system. Less powerful countries like my own cannot remake the world in our image, even if we wanted to. Our external circumstances condition our foreign policy in more prosaic directions. It is hard, I promise you, to draft soaring rhetoric about market access or EU regulations, or the other sort of nitty-gritty elements of foreign policy of smaller countries. So that's one difference.

The other point I'd make, I guess, coming more closely to Obama's speech yesterday, we talked about how moving it is to have him give that speech at that moment in that location. There is also a geopolitical element

I think to that aspect. I think his story, his life's story, has some geopolitical power and partly it's the African American element, but partly it's that he is not just biracial but multiracial; that in a sense Obama is a child of globalization.

He is linked to Africa by his father; he's linked to Asia by his upbringing; he's linked to the Islamic world by his middle name. And I think much of the world is moved by of course, by the spectacle of an African American being inaugurated, but there's also a sense in which a lot of the world thinks, well, actually, we own a piece of Obama in a funny sort of way. And I think Obama realizes that, and I was struck by one quote he gave to The New York Times Magazine during the campaign.

He said this: "If you can tell people we have a president in the White House who still has a grandmother living in a hut on the shores of Lake Victoria, and has a sister who's half-Indonesian, married to a Chinese Canadian, then they're going to think that he may have a better sense of what's going on in our lives and in our country."

MR. PASCUAL: Let me open this up to our audience and invite you to ask your questions. I ask that you introduce yourself and keep your questions brief as possible. Over here in the back, please.

MR. LAMONT: My name's Ned Lamont.

MR. PASCUAL: Ned, thanks for joining us today.

MR. LAMONT: Watching Al Jazeera briefly this morning, they had on an endless loop the open hand and the clenched fist, which reminded me that probably this was a speech that more internationals heard than American's heard. And I was just sort of thinking about how you talked about targeting foreign audiences.

You know, a phrase like that, I sort of know how it plays in a coffeehouse and in different parts of the United States. How does it play in a coffeehouse in Cairo? Do we care? And who's our audience? Is it America? Is it the coffeehouses of the governments, and what's the balance for a speechwriter?

MR. PASCUAL: Do you want to --

MR. GERSON: Well, I think a line like that, which I think was an effective line, has multiple audiences and they're not inconsistent in this circumstance. It's actually not particularly unusual to hear a president directly addressing foreign audiences.

I remember part of John Kennedy's speech following either the Cuban Missile Crisis or Bay of Pigs as a speech directly to, you know, the Cuban people. Bush had that in his second inaugural. He had a kind of series of things addressing hostile foreign governments, addressing governments that might be accessible to reform, addressing individuals who were fighting for democracy and human rights in their own countries

and so sometimes it's done purposely.

But in that case, you know, I do believe that this is an exceptional public diplomacy moment. The closing of Guantanamo, the changes of various policies are likely to play well to a world audience and would likely have happened under John McCain, by the way.

The section on global warming I think appeals to European opinion in a very positive way. I think those things were probably purposeful in the speech. I think there's a little bit of a mythology that somehow the entire world hates us, but the, you know, the reality here if you look at the Pew, the sophisticated, the most sophisticated Pew studies on there, on this topic, is that resentment against America certainly deepened in certain parts of the world, but it has not gotten much broader in the last eight years. And in places like India and Israel and Africa America is quite well regarded.

But, you know, there were elements -- but he set out two particular problem audience, I think, in this speech. One of them is the tone in which we engage the Muslim world, and, you know, I think that there were very positive elements there of his outreach, and the other one is just some issues when it comes to alliances and global warming in particular that would be the, you know, reassuring in European capitals. And both those are perfectly, you know, worth doing in an inaugural address, even if they, you know, they don't speak necessarily directly to the American people.

MS. LAFLEUR: Just the only thing I'll say, I think I concur with much of what Mike said. I just want to point out that as a speechwriter and you hear in these inaugural speeches themes that hearken back to things that have been said before, and on the sort of the metaphors of the hand and the fist, President Bush, Sr., also used the same metaphor in a different way, but he said, "To the world, too, we offer new engagement and a renewed vow we will stay strong to protect the peace. The offered hand is a reluctant fist but once made strong and can be used with great effect." So just the sort of themes first heard.

MR. PASCUAL: And I think it's actually -- I mean it's a very good question on how the whole speech and the series of actions around it are going to play out in the Muslim world -- I think part of the audience that was also being addressed here was actually Osama bin Laden, and just last week we had another event, and one of my colleagues, Bruce Riddell, talked about Osama bin Laden's memo to the president, and the message that he was trying to lay out there in which at one point Al Qaeda had shown a degree of concern about this president -- a very popular president with Hussein as a middle name -- coming to office, and now a sense of triumphalism with the global economy in crisis in a sense that America may not have the staying power, but we who are America's pundits do.

And I think that part of the message here was that we are friends to

the rest of the world. We are going to have partnerships with them, and we also are ready to in fact maintain that clenched fist, and that was part of the message on terror that we will defeat you. There can be no ambiguity here. There's a commitment to defeat those terrorist elements.

But there is a very clear and distinct effort to differentiate the comments on terrorism and the comments to the Muslim world. And, separately, he said to the Muslim world, "What I offer is engagement based on mutual interest and respect." And so in a sense almost an effort to move away from the conceptualization of Islamic terrorism and say, "I'm going to have a different way of speaking with you about these issues," and it will be interesting to see how whether it -- I'm quite sure that that was the intent of why it was written that way, whether it will, in fact, actually play out that way will be very interesting, I think.

MR. GERSON: Can I add one thing just to kind of maybe a sobering note because I do think it's an extraordinary moment from that perspective? But if you look at the international polling that relates to the discontent with America, you know, some of it relates to things like Guantanamo that are solvable, but the highest ones are particularly in the Muslim world, are support of Israel and a desire for us to leave Afghanistan.

And this will be a high point of good feeling for Barack Obama because once he enters office he will be as every other president has been,

supportive of Israel in many of its goals, and he's actually promised, you know, an expansion of the campaign in Afghanistan in order to get a better outcome.

These are, you know, there are some things you can do in public diplomacy to solve problems, and I believe that global warming and Guantanamo are very much in that category. There are other things that every American president does that the world doesn't like, and they're worth doing anyway, and Obama will find that. That's the natural process by which, you know, the honeymoon ends.

DR. FULLILOVE: Just two very short comments. First of all to agree with what Mike said then, Obama will find that the international system is perhaps even more difficult to change than America, and it's often not amenable to rhetoric. And regimes in Pyongyang and Riyadh are not particularly fast to come around, but they find the speeches, for that matter, exotic life stories. So I think Mike is right to point out that public diplomacy also has its limits.

The other thing, just in response to Ned's excellent question, in terms of getting speeches out to these multiple and diverse audiences, Obama is the beneficiary of technology. In fact, I think in his campaign he produced a sort of unique combination, he used a unique combination of all technologies like logic and intelligence and wit, and new technologies like

e-mail and YouTube. And YouTube I think is a real boon for speechwriters and for speechmakers because after years of complaining, that news media will only report one line out of a speech, and you'll only get one clip, one sound bite from a speech.

Audiences now on the other side of the world can go to YouTube and listen to a speech in its entirety. One statistic that struck me last year when those sermons by Reverend Wright were in a constant loop was that Obama's race speech nevertheless scored many more downloads than any of Reverend Wright's incendiary sermons. And so he was able to reply to Reverend Wright, not in an ad or a 60 Minutes interview, but actually in a speech, with a long compelling argument that was heard not only by the people who watched it, who saw a bit of it on TV, not only by those who watched it in its entirety on C-Span or CNN, but those who could dial it up for days and weeks afterwards on YouTube.

MR. PASCUAL: Back down (inaudible). And I might take a couple of questions here together. In the back over here?

MS. ALEM: Hi, good morning. Nikki Alem with Brookings I'm just curious about the extent to which the president is, I guess, expected to follow through on the specific issues that he mentions in his inaugural address Michael, you mentioned that the president actually laid out very specific foreign policy goals.

Carlos, you touched on President Obama's goals in terms of sustainable agriculture, clean water provisions. How much has this speech meant to sort of set the tone for the presidency versus actually holding him accountable for some of the issues that he mentions in the speech? Thank you.

MR. PASCUAL: Okay, let me come up here to the front. Gary, you had wanted attention?

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks. Gary Mitchell from The Mitchell Report. Two quick comments, the first being I thought one of the most remarkable things about the speech yesterday was the sort of dog that didn't back component, which was that he thanked President Bush particularly for his help with the transition. But I do not recall that he thanked Vice President Cheney, which I think spoke legions to what followed about how we will do things differently.

And second, to Vinca's quote from the -- I don't know that it was Haaretz or -- one of the Israeli newspapers about "yes, we can." I thought one could argue that sort of the theme of the speech changed from "yes, we can," to "yes, we will." It seemed to me that was what happened.

I want to pose a question but put it in the form of a sort of a thesis about yesterday. I understand that the charge for the panel today was to analyze the speech, but it seems to me that what we will analyze over time

was the occasion. And I'm wondering without trying to decide was it purposeful, or could it have been done better, the speech, per se, that it seemed to me that Obama saw his speech as one element in a series of components that include the Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman music, which was remarkable, that wonderful performance by Joe Lowery, and that in a sense that the message from yesterday that I think I took away -- and I'm interested in your reaction to this -- is that it was very much Obama, because he didn't see himself as the show; he saw himself as part of the show, not the least of which and, arguably, the most of which was the two million people who came to be part of that moment in history.

So if you can view that as a question, I'd just be interested in your responses.

MR. PASCUAL: Okay, let me come back to the three of you. Michael, I don't know if you want to start on either, the first part of it being how much of this is tone and how much is it really agenda-setting?

And then Gary's piece of this, which is in a sense related: Are we looking at multiple ways of conveying a message orchestrated by the central person but multiple ways of conveying the message?

MR. GERSON: Well, I can respond to the first one; I'm not sure about the second. But on the first, this is one of the great secrets of the importance, the kind of behind-the-scene importance of the speechwriting

process often. The reason people fight to get certain things in speeches, when the president says something, it gives a bunch of people who share that agenda down in the system in the departments, at the NSC, a lot of other places the ability to say, "Look here," you know.

And so there's an internal process that's quite important when you do these things. When the president says it, it makes a difference.

I just remember it was an off-handed comment that the president made about Burundi early in his presidency, not on my watch when he was -- it was in specific reference to Burundi. I found out near the end of the presidency that our ambassador there and the people who cared about Burundi in this State Department constantly used that as a way to force policy in the system to say, "He cares about this."

I saw that a little bit. We went to the United Nations and, one of is early UN speeches and were the first American president to talk about sexual trafficking, okay, had a whole section on sexual trafficking. And people throughout the system, throughout the government system and in NGOs in foreign countries when they were dealing with our government and, you know, in a variety of setting used that as a basis to push internally on these things.

So I do think that the specificity insofar as there is some -- and there is in this -- has an importance in this process as it moves along, if not for the

Congress, then certainly internally within a large and complicated governmental system, which is always trying to determine, you know, kind of the president's intentions as he moves forward.

MR. PASCUAL: (Inaudible)

MS. LAFLEUR: To build on that, I think that in an inaugural it is more about -- it is certainly more about tone than about programmatic detail, and the State of the Union is for programmatic detail. But inaugural is more about sort of a broad agenda-setting and tone. This speech did have some specifics in it, but not down to programmatic detail.

Whether President Obama conceives of himself as sort of part of a bigger show, I don't know. But I share this sort of feeling overall that yesterday really was about a lot more than his inaugural address and that the whole pageant reflected, including and especially the people on the Mall and the way that we felt, whether or not we can quote from the speech which really what yesterday signified.

I think that -- and this is just my personal opinion -- but I think that perhaps in not giving us a single line that we can immediately quote, which actually, when I think about President Obama's speeches, you know, over the past few years, they are passages that made an enormous impact on me, but there aren't a whole lot of one-liners. And I think, you know, the YouTube phenomenon which I do think really is a wonderful boon to people

who care about speeches as a foremost communication, that it allows, you know, how to resist that, you know, sound "bite-ization" factor that President Obama in his race speech, I think, was the most germainic example of this, really forcing us to listen to the whole thing. And it's worth listening to the whole thing.

And so in this speech, too, I think it's more about -- the tone that he set and the big goals that he laid out or the bit sort of priorities that he laid on things like climate change or proliferation, it's more about what kind of president he wants to be rather than this particular speech going down in history.

And I'll just say as a quick aside, as I've, you know, gone back in this season and reread a lot of inaugural addresses, I was quite struck by President Truman's address, which is not one that anybody ever talks about. But Harry Truman is one of my favorite presidents, especially on the foreign policy score. And when you go back and look at what he put forth, he laid out a four-point plan, you know, four priorities:

And the first was supporting the United Nations. And the second was continuing strong support for the European recovery plan, for the Marshall Plan.

And the third was building alliances for common defense, and he talked about how there was this North Atlantic Treaty in the works.

And then the last point was actually about technical assistance to foreign countries, really the precursor for a lot of development policies that have come down the road since.

And at the end of his speech he had a paragraph -- you know, and his speech is really all about communism and democracy -- but at the end of his speech -- now, what have I done with it? -- he has a paragraph where he says that, you know, "Many years from now I predict that those nations" -- here we go -- "In due time as our stability becomes manifest, as more and more nations come to know the benefits of democracy and to participate in growing abundance, I believe that those countries which now oppose us will abandon their delusions and join with the free nations of the world in a just settlement of international differences."

And it's very satisfying to think that that speech given 60 years ago yesterday, you know, 1949, but then in 1989 so much of that did come to pass, and that the sort of programmatic things or priorities that he laid out in that speech actually laid the foundation for an extraordinary half century of American foreign policy.

DR. FULLILOVE: Just on the last question, you characterized the speech as moving from "yes, we can," to "yes, we will." Maybe that's right, but I guess I'd point out to you he didn't use either phrase; he deliberately didn't use either phrase, and he deliberately, it seems to me,

didn't nod to any of his memorable phrases from his speechmaking past.

In his speech in Grant Park when he accepted the nomination, he did. He nodded back to his 2004 DNC speech, and he returned to his troth that we're not red states and blue states, we're the United States of America. In this speech he deliberately didn't when he easily could have. It struck me that there were old-fashioned elements to the speech yesterday: the emphasis on hard work, the reference to virtue. Virtue, it seems to me is an old-fashioned word we don't use much.

Passing over Lincoln, who I think was in danger of being overused and going right back to the most old-fashioned president and the first president, George Washington, or, as I heard President Bush refer to him the other day, "the other George W," so I think there was an old-fashioned element, and I just -- I guess I'd bring it back, I'd loop it back to what I said in my prepared notes, that was this a way of getting away from the personalization of the focus on Obama?

I was very struck when I sat there in the Mall surrounded by all these people. Most of the people around me were oblivious to the seal and the flags in front of them and all the paraphernalia that you see with inaugurations. They were oblivious to Vice President Biden as well, I have to say. They were there to see Obama. They were breaking out into chants of "Obama," and I just wonder if Obama sees that that's been incredible

useful to him to date, but it has to have an end point, and if that made him -- if that inclined him towards delivering an old-fashioned speech.

MR. PASCUAL: Let me take two more questions, and then I'll come back to the panel. We'll start right over here.

MR. BATESON: Will Bateson. What should the message have been to the politicians in Kiev and Tblisi, and the other countries that ring the Russian Federation now? What might they have drawn from yesterday's speech about the foreign policy of the United States?

MR. PASCUAL: And then we'll go all the way on that side in the back again.

MS. DOWLINGTON: Jo Dowlington, just to add to that point in respect to China as well.

MR. PASCUAL: Okay, since that was so brief, I'll take one more over here.

MR. CHOKOFF: Dominick Chokoff from the British Embassy. Just as an observation on unintended consequences from certain phrasing in speeches, I note that speeches cause quite a stir in Zimbabwe because the ZANU-PF party sign is a clenched fist, and they're wondering whether that part of the speech was directed at Mugabe, which may be an example of where a speech can be bolder than intended and may do some good there.

However, the point I wanted -- the question I wanted to make was a

bit like one of the questions you've had earlier about the immediate context of the occasion, because as one of the people on the National Mall over the last few days I felt very much that this was at least an event in two acts with the concert on the Sunday afternoon and the inauguration yesterday, and that at that concert a very large crowds gathered, and we had a lot of emotion and also quite a big speech from Obama.

And I just wondered whether you would like to comment on whether or not the facts there were two speeches being made within a couple of days meant that those preparing the speech wanted a bit of balance with a lot of emotion and harking back to civil rights and Lincoln on the Sunday afternoon, and then something which was a little less eloquent and flowery and perhaps more work-a-day for the inauguration itself. Thank you.

MR. PASCUAL: Why don't I come backwards on the panel and give you an opportunity to respond in whatever way to these questions and anything else that you want to add in closing commentary. Michael, do you want to begin, and probably fitting for you to begin with messages to Kiev and Tblisi and maybe even China?

DR. FULLILOVE: On the Russian question I might like to hear from you, Carlos, as you're more expert on it than I.

I think he did refer, I think, to working with old foes on issue -- I think it was specifically in relation to nuclear disarmament and climate change.

And I guess I would take that as signaling both in relation to Russia and China a desire for significant engagement. I don't think Obama will turn a blind eye to bad behavior by the Chinese in the Security Council, where they often pursue their national interests with a sort of focus that would be regarded as highly amoral if the United States would have partaken in that behavior.

I don't think he will turn a blind eye to bad behavior by the Russians, but at the same time I think that John McCain was sometimes tempted almost to fetishize bad behavior on the part of potential competitors to the United States, and I think by putting that -- by referring to "old foes" in relation to those particular issues of nuclear disarmament and climate change, I think Obama -- not to read too much into it as ZANU-PF probably have into that reference to the clenched fist -- I think he was saying: We don't turn a blind eye to your behavior, but I know that to solve these global problems that we face, in some cases existential problems, we need global solutions, and that means working with countries who are different from us and in many cases have different interests from us but also share common interests.

In terms of the question about whether they tried to strike a balance between the two speeches, I think there was some element of conversation between them. I thought that the Lincoln parallels were overdone in the

Lincoln speech, and I thought the visuals of bringing Obama's lectern to the center of the Lincoln Memorial whereas other people spoke from the sides, so that he was directly under the Great Liberator was an unexpected note of excess on behalf of the Obama campaign. They didn't need to do that. I thought it was a little over the top, and maybe that's why -- perhaps that's related to why Lincoln didn't really get a look-in yesterday.

If they tried to make the balance that you mentioned where they make the other speech a bit more emotional and this one a bit more programmatic, if that was their thinking, then I think they were mistaken because in five and ten years' time, we won't be -- we won't be putting in compilations of speeches a speech that was given at a concert; we will be looking to inaugural addresses. That's one of the critical points where a speechmaker has to -- a presidential speechmaker has to make his mark. So they should have focused on that.

The only thing I'd say to end on a positive note, Carlos, speeches to me are like time capsules. You can go back in, and you can unpack a speech, and it can give you a sense of the issues that the country faced and audiences that a leader felt he or she needed to address. And, in fact, many of the personal characteristics of the leader and the speaker. And if that's the case, I think we buried a very important time capsule yesterday.

MS. LAFLEUR: I'll just speak quickly to the challenges having

multiple speeches on the calendar, because this is kind of the flip side of, you know, on the one hand the benefit of the modern communications environment that you have so many more channels to bet the message out in a more complete way, and yet at the same time there is the sort of the pressure of the modern media cycle and the desire to be driving the news all the time and to have the president out there all the time. And there is a risk that overexposure devalues the currency or the power of the presidential voice.

So this is something to his attention to be managed. And I think that one thing that's already clear in this presidency which is different from previous ones is the degree to which Barack Obama himself has become an icon, you know; that his image, the image of his face and his name on our hats and, you know, on our buttons and our ties and our coffee cups and -- I mean just like "him, the man" that he has become this icon in a way that I do think will need to be managed carefully.

I think the element of stagecraft in speeches -- speeches today we look at them as performance as much as the words on the page. And in the wonderful piece that Jill reported in The New Yorker on inaugurals that I mentioned some of you have read. You know, she reminds us that for years inaugural addresses basically were read. Nobody heard them. I mean Harry Truman was the first one to have it televised, but now we have this

incredible stagecraft associated with it, and that is a big part of how we interpret, how we feel about a speech, and whether or not a speech is a success and what it all means, and so on.

And I think it will be fascinating to watch how this new administration continues to adapt to the ever evolving media environment. When we were in the White House in the Clinton years, that was when the Internet kind of became a tool of the masses, and the Clinton administration was the first one to have a Web site.

The Bush administration took that Web site much farther as a channel of communication. The newwhitehouse.gov was on line yesterday within seconds of the inaugural, and it has a blog, you know. And where we were doing radio addresses they're doing a video address, and, you know, it will continue to evolve to try and keep pace with this environment.

MR. PASCUAL: Michael, I'm going to just maybe inject a couple of things, and I'll give you the last word.

Clearly, every country around the world -- Dominick, you put it well, and the other questioner -- and they're looking at the speech and wondering what's the message for us? And it is possible to overread the speech, and so we shouldn't take it too far.

I think in Moscow some of the things that will be taken from it will certainly be that the message that the United States has to change the

world. Having just been in Russia about a month ago, this sense that the United States isn't the only -- isn't the dominating factor, but that we're in an interactive process from the world that will be taken quite seriously.

The statement of friendship will be taken as a positive gesture, but the statement where I think that everybody will be looking at and wondering who does that refer to is that "your people will judge you on what you build." Certainly that is a theme that can resonate and should resonate in many, many countries. No country is going to want to admit that they're the one where it should be resonating. And that's one of the questions I think we need to think a little bit about.

The other point that I'd just want to make, it goes back to Nikki's question a bit earlier. In part, one of the practical things that comes out of the speech is it does set a little bit of an agenda in the sense that there is a punishing schedule of issues and meetings and summits that start almost right away. And one of the things that the speech actually did was it basically gave instructions to the bureaucracy, and maybe it wasn't quite intended this way, but to the bureaucracy it actually said that, you know, we have all of these issues in front of us, and we're going to deal with them.

And the fact that some issues were included, for example the poor, that we're not forgetting the development agenda I thought was particularly important. The nuclear agenda that this is going to be a part of what we're

doing. The climate change agenda we are going to engage here. It was especially important to make sure that those were out other because there's a bureaucracy there trying to figure out how to organize itself and what to do. And a real dilemma that is before this administration, President Obama began the speech with talking about the importance of making hard choices.

And in some ways when you look at a huge agenda like this that includes all of these issues, like terrorism, nuclear security, climate change, poverty, the economic crisis, most public management specialists would say, you know, you can't do everything. You've got to pick things, you have to make hard choices, and yet we have a world that has all of these things in front of us. And part of what he was doing was saying, you know, all of these have to be part of the agenda, we have no choice, and so put it on your to-do list because this is part of the reality of what we're going to face. We have to do these things, we have no choice. We can't just simply ignore them.

Mike?

MR. GERSON: Very briefly, there were some messages for other nations, and they've been pointed out: cling to power through corruption and deceit; nations will ask: Am I in this category? But there was not as direct a message in this speech to individuals who are oppressed in

other countries, that are living in conditions that deny their liberty. Maybe that is a reaction to the Bush example. I'm glad poverty was mentioned, but, of course, the poverty that many of the extreme poor experience in the United States is not -- or in the world is not just water and hunger but a denial of their humanity through the denial of representation and oppressive governments.

I think there was not as direct a message in this speech, and it fits the broader theme. This was in some ways perhaps a rejection of a certain stream or tradition of inaugural address. It's not the Lincoln tradition which was a promise of a kind of spiritual union after a struggle of a physical union that was a transcendent ideal that was worth, you know, the blood of the country.

There was not in this speech a call to generational arms like John Kennedy, you know, "bear any burden," you know, "pay any price." There was not in this speech like Martin Luther King, a call to the "beloved community," you know, some kind of mystical, spiritual reality of our country.

There was not, and it was an inaugural address, but the ambitions or the kind of moral certainty of Franklin Roosevelt, who after all called for the four freedoms everywhere in the world. It was not that kind of speech.

Now, there could be a variety of reasons for that. It could be an

expression, an appropriate expression of humility in a difficult time. Maybe people are tired of ambition after a strenuous period of American history. I don't know. I mean that's true, it could be true. In many ways Obama has been, was elected as a return to normalcy in our country.

Both of you mentioned it, maybe 9/11 wasn't as decisive a moment as we thought. Maybe we don't need these ambitious natural international exertions, grand national goals of, you know, the end of tyranny and other issues.

But I would only comment that something's lost in that and maybe that's just the reality of our historical moment. I think something was lost rhetorically. I think an opportunity was lost to summarize what I regard as one of the most extraordinary periods or moments of American history, and one of the most extraordinary, unlikely moments of American history.

I very much wanted someone to summarize that moment. You know, this is a situation where when John Lewis spoke, you know, he told me that when he spoke African Americans with doctorates were asked in their literacy test in order to vote in the South, how many bubbles are there in a bar of soap, to prevent them from voting. I mean this is unbelievably dramatic, and I wish the moment had been.

MR. PASCUAL: It's quite fascinating in a sense that the former speechwriter for George W. Bush -- I mean I almost get the sense,

Michael, that you wish you had the moment because it was so significant that you wanted, actually, underscore it further.

MR. GERSON: I wanted to write the speech.

MR. PASCUAL: Which I think is a tremendous tribute to the moment. It wasn't a transcendent ideal, as you said. I think it was a good job of effective communication, nothing else. By the number of e-mails that I had on my screen this morning from around the world, it did certainly communicate to a great range of people throughout the world, and now we have the agenda before us, an agenda that was laid out there, but is an extraordinarily complicated one and on there the job of making those hard choices.

Thanks to our panel. A great discussion.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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