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Introduction:

STROBE TALBOTT, President
The Brookings Institution

Moderator:

DANIEL BENJAMIN, Senior Fellow and Director
Center on the United States and Europe
The Brookings Institution

Featured Speaker:

THE RIGHT HONORABLE DES BROWNE
Secretary of State for Defense
United Kingdom

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ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TALBOTT: I'm Strobe Talbott and I'd like to welcome you here to the Falk Auditorium of the Brookings Institution this morning. It's my great honor to be able to introduce The Right Honorable Des Browne, the Secretary of State for Defense for the United Kingdom both to Washington and here to Brookings. As with a number of other previous very distinguished visitors to this auditorium, we're yet again extremely grateful to Ambassador Nigel Sheinwald and his staff at the British Embassy for making today's event possible. It wasn't long ago that we had the pleasure of hosting the Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling here at Brookings. This week we have something of a double-header because tomorrow once again with a lot of thanks to Sir Nigel, Brookings will be hosting Secretary Browne's colleague Jim Murphy, the United Kingdom's Minister for Europe who will be talking to us about the role of public diplomacy on the transatlantic agenda.

I'd like to say just a couple of words underscoring the importance of Secretary Browne's visit to Washington. I think everybody in this room understands how events over the last 7 years have strained relations between the United States and some of its very best friends and allies around the world. Yet through it all, the bond between the United States and the United Kingdom has proved especially strong and resilient,

and that bond of course is rooted in current interests, current challenges, current enterprises, and current opportunities, but it's also rooted in history. To wit, Secretary Browne is here to mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Mutual Defense Agreement between Washington and London.

It is both a cliché and a truth that the U.S.-U.K. relationship is special and that fact is written into Britain's new and first national security strategy that emerged this spring, and that sentiment, that view of the relationship, is often and sincerely reciprocated here on the American side. Mr. Browne's host this week, Secretary Bob Gates, greeted him during one of their recent and frequent meetings as representing America's closest ally. The two secretaries will be meeting later today, and Secretary Browne also has meetings at the White House and on Capitol Hill.

The issues on his mind for this visit and therefore very much on the agenda for our discussion with him this morning is as always full and fairly sobering. It includes counterterrorism, counterproliferation, arms control, and also of course the conflicts and the U.S.-British common cause in Iraq and in Afghanistan where American and British troops have worked and fought together for years.

Just a quick note on how we will proceed. After Secretary Browne's opening remarks, my colleague Dan Benjamin, the Director of

our Center on the United States and Europe, will moderate about 20 minutes of interchange with all of you here in this room.

Secretary Browne, thank you again for doing us this great honor, and the podium is yours.

MR. BROWNE: Strobe, first of all may I thank you for your very kind introduction. It's a real pleasure to be addressing the Brookings Institution this morning. I'm delighted that my colleague Jim Murphy will be addressing the Brookings Institution shortly, and I realize that my whole role is to attune your ears to the Scottish accent so that you will be able to pay more attention to Mr. Murphy when he speaks to you about Europe.

Brookings is renowned worldwide for its ability to generate new ideas, shape debates, and to influence governments. You have a real impact here in the United States, but your impact is also felt overseas and your example has been an inspiration to think tanks in the U.K.

Strobe, you have described your mission in the following words: our job is to come up with ideas that make sense and that make a difference. This is simply stated, but as anyone who has worked in government knows, that's an exacting objective. And under your leadership since 2002, Brookings has delivered on the same time and again. Thank you for that.

I am in Washington for an anniversary as you've heard that is not last Friday's two-hundred and thirty-second anniversary of the little difficulty between our two great nations, but the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Mutual Defense Agreement, one of the central planks of U.S.-U.K. defense cooperation, a collaboration that enabled the United Kingdom to contribute to the West's defense against the Soviet threat for decades, a collaboration that reinforces our mutual security, enhances deterrence, and helps keep the peace. This collaboration in such a crucial and sensitive area of defense can be seen as a symbol of how profound the trust is between our two countries and how close the relationship is.

As we move toward the renewal of the NPT in 2010, that same (inaudible) of expertise supports our shared ambition for nuclear disarmament. Our technicians are working together to support efforts for further multilateral disarmament and to prevent proliferation, but of course our relationship in the nuclear arena does not stand alone as part of a web of connections that bind the U.S. and the U.K. together. Every day thousands of our citizens, Americans and Brits, travel across the Atlantic for business, for study, and for pleasure. The U.K. is one of the largest investors in the United States and as a result over one million U.S. jobs and subsidiaries of United Kingdom companies, and in parallel United States companies, support over 900,000 jobs in the United Kingdom.

We are bound together in common projects. Our governments have charities, our NGOs are together involved in projects that bring simple things like mosquito nets to Africa (inaudible) medicines to developing nations and aid to humanitarian disasters, our intelligence people share information and objectives, our military personnel walk side by side in training and exercises and in defense colleges. And the principal subject of my talk today, they are deployed together in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are working exceptionally well together. They have built up massive operational experience.

Of course, there are tensions too. Both of us can see in our armed forces the stress of operating at such a temp in two theaters at the same time, but we are seeing the signs of our strategies paying off in Iraq, we know that in Afghanistan we are engaged in a generational struggle and our forces need time and space to reconstitute themselves.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to talk first about Iraq. There is little doubt that the coalition alongside the government of Iraq are making real progress. Since sovereignty was transferred to the Iraqi government in June 2004, Iraq has been on a hard, rocky, and uphill road, that it's a road that is heading in the right direction, and I must give credit where credit is due. There was a certain degree of international maybe even here national skepticism when the U.S. surge was announced. That

must have been frustrating, but we know that strategic patience is essential in all operations, and the world can now see more clearly that the surge but not the surge alone has brought about clear and tangible security improvements on the ground in Iraq.

Personally I just want to go on record that I have the utmost respect and admiration for the leadership, the planning, and the implementation of the surge by General David Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. They have done an excellent job under very difficult circumstances, and in the last 6 months we have turned the corner. We the world owe them an enormous debt of gratitude.

I am not, ladies and gentlemen, trying to paint an overly optimistic picture here. I fully recognize that parts of Iraq remain violent, beset by unemployment, sectarianism, little government capacity. But at the same time we must not ignore the victories that have been won or the progress that has been achieved. The U.K. is focused in the south of the country where over the last 6 months we have seen considerable change for the better. In March, Prime Minister al-Maliki launched a major surge operation under the name Charge of the Knights to confront in Basra head on the militias and the gangs whose criminality and intimidation blighted the lives of the Basrawis. The Basra surge got off to a somewhat uncertain start. It was hurried, a small percentage of troops had come

straight from training and didn't perform as well as we would have hoped. But Prime Minister al-Maliki brought in reinforcements from across Iraq and together with the U.S. troops who were embedded with them, the Iraqis showed the speed and the flexibility that would have been impossible a year before. The number of Iraqi forces in Basra temporarily was doubled, and the persistence and determination of the Iraqi authorities and the security forces paid off in little over a month. The grip of the militias which had been creeping insidiously over the city appears to have been broken. Of course, it would be premature to claim that the militias have been defeated, but their criminal activities and their ability to intimidate the local populace severely have been curtailed. Former sympathizers appear to have jumped at the opportunity to ditch their support for insurgent leaders who have been captured or displaced.

Charge of the Knights was and is an Iraqi-led operation. If it had been British troops searching people's homes in Basra, we would still be fighting there today. I have no qualms with the fact that we withdrew from Basra (inaudible) when we did. We recognized that the problems in Basra were intra-Shia, a struggle for political and economic dominance. The surge there could only work when local conditions were right, only the Iraqis could resolve these problems, and when they were able to do so

they did. Local negotiations brought quick solutions to issues that conflict was only inflating, a real example of Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems.

All of that said, of course British troops continue to walk side by side with the Iraqi Security Forces. Already we have completed the training of the 10th Division which has recently been involved in the very successful operations in al-Amarah and Maysan Province. And our main focus is now in bringing the 14th Division which will be the resident division in Basra up to a standard where they can operate independently of our support.

Just as your own forces do with the Iraqi units to which they are assigned, we have embedded military transition teams or MTTs as they are better known within the command structure at divisional, brigade, and at battalion levels in the Iraqi division. We eat, sleep, work, and fight alongside the Iraqis and will continue to do so until that vital training is complete.

But military superiority alone will not deliver the lasting stability and prosperity that we seek for Iraq, and nor will a continued dependence upon the coalition whether for troops or for money. Our shared strategy since 2003 has always been to get Iraq to a place where it no longer needs our support. Increasingly Iraq is a wealthy country and substantially can afford to fund its own reconstruction. What the Iraqi

government needs now is help to plan, budget, and spend its own resources better to deliver improvements for its own people. That's why as our role providing security assistance slowly reduces, and as we focus more on training the Iraqi forces, British efforts are now concentrating on helping the Iraqis to strengthen a democratic and effective government, and in particular to manage the economic redevelopment of Basra.

The establishment of the Basra Development Commission is a key state in this regeneration. This independent Iraq-owned business champion for Southern Iraq was set up in December 2007 after discussions between the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih and U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Michael Wareing, a leading U.K. business figure and co-chair of the Basra Development Commission, has been visiting Basra regularly and working with local business leaders. Following a successful investors conference in March, there has been an increasing flow of interest from regional and multinational businesses.

Ladies and gentlemen, the facts about Basra are stunning. It has potential to be one of the wealthiest cities in the world. Oil exports through the city presently are earning the Iraqi government over $6 billion a month. This is a huge economic potential, and to boost and maintain economic regeneration is vital for Iraq's strong links to the outside world.

Lying at the head of the Gulf, Basra Province contains Iraq's only two notable ports, Um Qasr and Basra itself, and subject to the necessary investment, now we are encouraging the Iraqis to develop infrastructure for containerized shipping. As a result of Iraqi coalition activity, the Iraqi now have the opportunity to turn their backs on the ways of the past, to elect leaders of their own choosing, to invest in their own surroundings, and to create sustainable livelihoods.

The U.K. committed itself to help Iraqis, and after 5 years we remain committed. The coalition has stayed the course in Iraq and our patience is paying off. The increasing capability of the Iraqi armed forces gives the government of Iraq increasing confidence in deploying them with U.K. and U.S. support of course. As security increases, economic development starts to pick up pace and in turn strengthens the hand of the Iraqi government.

Ladies and gentlemen, this (inaudible) circle is one we see the beginnings of in Afghanistan too. Undoubtedly we are far less advanced there. There too a democratic government is supported by a growing and increasingly capable national armed forces. There too the security created by a coalition, in this case ISAF, is establishing the space for (inaudible) and in turn the delivery of health and education on the ground to strengthen support for the government. I have no doubt that it

will be a longer haul in Afghanistan. We are after all reconstructing a country after over three decades of conflict. That's why it is vital for the international community to remain committed to Afghanistan, something of which I know no American audience will never need persuading.

There are fewer clearer illustrations of the central tenet of our foreign and security policy. Wherever possible we must tackle security challenges early and its source and wherever possible we should bring to bear political, diplomatic, and economic tools to prevent threats from developing, but the realities are that we must be ready to use force if necessary.

Military force was and is necessary to address the threats to add safe haven inside Afghanistan and to create the conditions in which the nonmilitary and ultimately decisive elements of our strategy can deliver mission success in Afghanistan. Over the last 7 years Afghanistan has transformed from a failing state to an embryonic democracy. Our mission there has the strongest possible moral justification and strategic rationale which perhaps explains why in both of our countries there is no serious political opposition to our commitment and why 40 other countries including all 24 other NATO members are operating alongside us there.

By all means, let us acknowledge that this is a long-term and challenging enterprise. Let us also recognize that it is not discretionary.

We cannot responsibly ignore the threat posed by an Afghanistan governed by a regime like the Taliban. And let us recognize too that whilst our mission in Afghanistan is fraught with challenges, our progress there is in the right direction. Every soldier who has served in Afghanistan knows that this is a campaign that cannot be won by military means alone. Hence, we have what you call the cross-government approach and what we call the comprehensive approach. However, we should be clear that the starting point for this approach is security. Military means alone have never been the solution in Afghanistan and the cross-government approach would fail without them. Here we should pause and pay particular tribute to the servicemen and -women who have served our two countries there in Afghanistan. To see these professional, courageous, and positive young people achieving so much in such difficult circumstances is as much a credit to our values as the behavior of the Taliban is a stain on their values. The Taliban who once boasted that they would drive ISAF out of the country have themselves been driven out of large tracts of their former heartland and compelled to lure the strategic sites from insurgency to terrorism. What this means is that the campaign in Afghanistan can no longer be won by the Taliban. However, it can still be lost by the international community if we fail to maintain our cohesion

as an alliance and rapidly and sustainably fill with reconstruction and development the security space that we are creating.

NATO is our most-effective means of generating cohesion as an alliance. NATO's structures and doctrines help to address the significant interoperability challenges that confront the campaign of the coalition. More importantly, NATO engenders political resolve. It was forged during the Cold War, a time when strategic patience was everything. The resolve of NATO's members is strengthened by the alliance and it generates political cohesion that our Coalition of the Willing can only dream of. And on balance, NATO provides us with more answers than questions (inaudible) I know that there is understandable concern here on this issue and I share some of that frustration. I want to see all NATO members contributing fairly and without caveats on use of their troops and that is why I want us to (inaudible) NATO's decision-making process as to ensure that it works more effectively as attuned to the challenges of the 21st century. Without NATO however we would have a less-effective forum to discuss these issues and we would in all probability have fewer allies.

To fill the security space that NATO is delivering in Afghanistan, our common aim is to develop an Afghan government capable of providing for its people the infrastructure, the industries, the

schools, the hospitals, the jobs, the utilities, and the services that the Taliban never will provide. There is a way of understanding that if the structures of governments that we develop are to be sustainable for the long term and robust, then they must be delivered through Afghan structures and in line with Afghan culture. There is a legitimate and difficult debate to be had as to how far along this path we can readily proceed without straying too far from the norms of international acceptability. It is my personal opinion that further dialogue is needed in this area, but also that we need as an international community to be prepared to be bold.

Take the issue of law and order for example. Whereas the Afghan people regard their army as a well-disciplined and effective force, they regard the police quite rightly as being corrupt and ineffective, contributing to rather than addressing the security problem. We should not be surprised that it's harder to generate an effective police force than it is to generate an effective army. While an army exists to serve the state, a police force exists to serve the law. Where an army brings with it its own systems of internal justice and discipline, a police force which operates at the point of corruption must be overseen by the legal processes that it upholds. In Afghanistan this gives us two challenges. The first is that because we are currently trying to create order in a police force where

there is relatively little law and effective justice system, it is inevitable that elements of the Afghan police will become corrupt and self-serving. The second is the very challenge of creating an effective justice system in Afghanistan in a country with pitifully few trained lawyers and judges, an illiteracy rate of 23 percent, and there are no quick fixes to that problem. Moreover, we the international community also need to have an honest and informed debate about the type of legal system that a country called the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan needs. A Western model would be inappropriate and it certainly would be unsustainable. But unless we address these challenges, our efforts to create an effective police force continue to be seriously undermined. We should not fear the requirement for Afghanization as it is sometimes called. And provided do not have illusions of imposing a Jeffersonian-style liberal democracy into Afghanistan overnight, solutions to these challenges do exist. To get to them we just need to discuss the issues honestly and be prepared to help the Afghans to create structures that may not sit easily with our own culture and norms but do so with theirs.

Before I move on from this point I should probably update you on where we are with the legal case study that I just alluded to. To be honest, it's still early days for us. In Helmand where few Afghans have access to formal justice outside the provincial capital, we are working with

the Afghans to create effective and fair systems for customary or informal justice based on local *shuras* but with the right of appeal to the formal system. We can learn from our experiences in other countries in this regard and build upon those sorts of local solutions.

Let me comment on development. Fundamentally and understandably Afghans want to see the evidence of why life under a new democratic government is going to be any better than life under the Taliban who incidentally did bring justice to them. It might have been a crude from of justice, but they do bring justice. $15 billion have been made available since 2001 for development expenditure and that has had a dramatic effect. This may not be at the forefront of our considerations of how Afghanistan is, but during the Taliban years there were only one million Afghan children in school. This is a country with a population of about 40 million people. Today that figure is over 6 million, 2 million of whom are girls. The Taliban educated no girls at all. In 2004, 1 in 10 Afghans had access to basic medical facilities, and today the figure is 8 out of 10. And the best indicator of our progress in Afghanistan is that since 2001 nearly 5 million refugees have returned to their homes in Afghanistan. These are the true indicators of success. They should not be measured in Taliban or (inaudible) casualties. These are the fundamentals of a new country.

This is not to say of course that we cannot do better. In particular, our progress with the development of Afghanistan can and must be leveraged more effectively by improving the coordination of the international community's delivery and by helping the Afghan government to crack down more robustly on corruption. Kai Eide's appointment as the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations has been a very significant and positive step in this regard, but we need to ensure that we are doing all that we can to support him, and presently we are not.

Once the Taliban argued that they were opponents of the drug trade in Afghanistan, and now they have given up any such pretense at all. The opium poppy is the lubricant of their insurgency, a means to exert control over farmers to raise money to buy arms and to corrupt the governance and cohesion of the entire country. In Helmand, 50 percent of the policemen in some districts not only are on the pay of narcoinsurgents, but are drug addicts themselves. And farmers who try to switch from poppies to wheat or to pomegranates at best are taken back to the Taliban's sole cash crop or at worst are killed as a lesson to their neighbors. Progress in dealing with the poppies has been slow, but is accelerating. In the final analysis, of course only the Afghans themselves can bring and secure peace in their country. I have to say I have now

visited Afghanistan six times in the past 25 months and each time I visit I come back a little more confident that we will succeed in doing that.

In 2001 Afghanistan was a failed state, projecting al-Qaeda terrorism throughout the world. Today a democratic government now sits in Kabul, al-Qaeda has been pushed back into the remotest of its heartlands, and some 40 countries are working alongside the Afghans to build almost from scratch the fabric of a working democratic Islamic republic. The challenges still remain, but we now know what we need to do to meet them. And let me assure you that the United Kingdom is and will remain committed to doing what is necessary.

Naturally our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are the focus of much attention, but it's also important to step back and place our joint campaigns in the wider international context. It's now 7 years after the attacks of 9/11 in this city and in New York, and it's 3 years almost to the day since the last catastrophic and still horrifying attacks of July 7, 2005, in London. Now we can see more clearly than perhaps we could at the time what it is that has changed in the world and what we must do to keep our people safe. The British government has set out its conclusions in our first ever national security strategy. Much of its analysis is unsurprisingly very similar to your own national security strategy. It looks in particular at what globalization, the dominant international trend of our

times, means for our security. The U.K. national security strategy explicitly states we must work through multilateral institutions, isolationism will not work. Our strategy is also very clear about the U.K.-U.S. relationship and it states partnership with the United States remains our most-important bilateral relationship and central to our national security. An important element of the defense and security relationship between us is in the area of defense equipment collaboration and trade. The U.K. makes major defense investments here, a total of about $50 billion in long-term contracts over the last 3 years alone. U.K. defense-related businesses sustains around 100,000 jobs here in the United States distributed across almost every state. I want the U.K.-U.S. defense relationship to be as strong as possible which is why I want to add my support to the U.K.-U.S. Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty, a treaty that will improve the ability of our defense industries to design and to create new capabilities and to contribute to better interoperability. Our Parliament, the U.K. Parliament, has ratified this treaty. Currently the treaty is under consideration in the Senate. I strongly urge that the treaty be ratified in both countries' interests as soon as possible. Failure to do this undoubtedly would have an adverse effect on our common objective to achieve greater interoperability for our armed forces and strengthen coalition effectiveness.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all have a responsibility for the sake of our own security to ensure that we are working together across government departments and between government departments to build up responsible states that govern effectively, and in our globalized era we have no choice but to engage with the world in its most challenging places. It has already been observed that the 20th century measured strength by what states could destroy. The 21st century will measure strength by what states can build. Helping others build stable, legitimate states that properly serve their people requires international partnerships. These partnerships will require international credibility, international resources, and International range. Surely that's an environment where the United States will need partners who have real hard and soft deployable capabilities that are interoperable. In short, partners like the United Kingdom.

So we arrive at one undeniable truth, the U.K. and the U.S. will continue to be faced with complex defense issues both overseas and domestically. In the light of this, how we best move [is] forward together, whatever the election results here in November result in. You may have noticed that I have so far avoided using the phrase special relationship not because I don't think it is special, but because I wanted to focus on why it is special. I think one of the key sources of America's enduring strength is

the deeply seeded alliances and relationships that you have built around the world. The United Kingdom is proud to be counted amongst your allies. Ironically, the extremely close and interconnected nature of U.S. and U.K. ties can lead politicians and populations in both of our countries to take this relationship for granted and to forget why we benefit mutually from it. But the fact remains that the U.K.'s vision for peace, for security and stability in the world, is practically identical to that of the United States. Our assessment of the true nature of the challenges to the U.K. national security and to the security of the international system mirrors that of the United States. We are allies with America in our thinking, but we are also allies in our doing.

The U.K. has strived to maintain top-notch, deployable military capabilities that can interoperate seamlessly with our American coalition partners when circumstances dictate the use of military force. And just last week we signed a contract for two new state-of-the-art aircraft carriers. Combined with our partnership in the Joint Strike Fighter Program, this is a substantial and concrete investment in continuing interoperability. And the U.K. has shown its willingness to spend blood and treasure alongside Americans on matters which we fundamentally believe are right like in Afghanistan and in Iraq, but also in Kuwait and in the Balkans in the previous decades. Perhaps it was these conflicts that

led my good friend Secretary Gates to state, as an old cold warrior I believe in allies and alliances -- brought victory in that long twilight struggle as President Kennedy described it and are indispensable to meeting the security challenges of this century. The U.K.-U.S. defense partnership is enabled by a complex and sometimes invisible web of day-to-day interactions with Americans and Britons deep inside each other's defense and security establishments, for example, in our defense schools and military exercises and through technology sharing and equipment development, and with exchange officers in our civilian and military headquarters. This web helps us to have a sixth sense while working together in complex defense and military issues which is perhaps a unique experience under any two nations throughout history.

A shared sense, ladies and gentlemen, may be an unintended consequence of the 1958 Mutual Defense Agreement, but us it is indeed a fortunate and beneficial consequence. Thank you very much.

MR. BENJAMIN: Secretary Browne, thank you very much for a lucid, clear-eyed, comprehensive, and I think very resolute set of remarks. We remember of course that the desk in the Oval Office is made from the timbers of the "Resolute" so it's an important quality to have.

I think part of the reason that our relationship across the Atlantic has flourished so much is if I can put it in a British sports idiom, we

have been fast-bowlers with each other rather than off-speed spinners. Let me ask you a fast one, and I know you'll get it from the members of the fourth estate later, so you can warm up here. The Maliki government has suggested setting a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq. You made I think very insightful and correct remarks about how in Basra if it had been British troops going house to house you'd be still be fighting there. What does Her Majesty's government think about setting a timetable for withdrawal?

MR. BROWNE: Thank you very much, Dan, for those remarks, and one of English colleagues will no doubt explain the cricket analogy. We are a united kingdom, but that game is much a mystery to me as it is to anybody else.

MR. BENJAMIN: We could talk about the caber toss if you prefer.

MR. BROWNE: I don't think the analogy quite holds, but anyway, I got the point.

I'm not a fan of timelines and changing operational environments like Iraq or Afghanistan. They don't serve any of us. The press and media love them, and in fact in the 2 years plus as Secretary of State for Defense I must have been asked to give timelines for both Iraq and Afghanistan a thousand times. So it's not difficult to answer the

question since I'm practiced answering it, and my attitude toward this is to stick with the formula I developed in the first week in this job which was to say that decisions would be conditions-based and based on advice from our military commanders and we have consistently stuck to that. That doesn't mean that on occasions you don't have to change because the fact of the matter is that our presence and our operations in all of these environments changes the environments. We have for example in Afghanistan, and I make this point very strongly, changed the behavior of our enemy from one of insurgency to one of terrorism. That grabs the headlines and gives the impression across the world that they are succeeding, we are failing, but we are not.

To get back to Iraq, a number of things are happening in Iraq and some of them we should celebrate, and the fact that Prime Minister al-Maliki is asserting Iraq sovereignty in many different ways in speaking to different audiences both domestically, in the region, and in the world, in the way in which politicians do is a function of the functioning of politics in a democracy. But in 2 years of dealing in the coalition with our coalition partners and with the Iraqi government, I know that we can come to decisions which serve all of our processes. So whatever (inaudible) from what Prime Minister al-Maliki may have said in a specific environment to a specific audience I know from my own experience it was a process of

transition which we have been engaged in now in Iraq for some period of time that will involve discussions and agreements with the Iraqis. Does that mean that we will be able to impose our will on them as to what we want to do? No, it doesn't. And should we be able to? No, we shouldn't. This is a sovereign country and we have ambitions that this government will assert its authority over its own people and over the space. When it starts to do so, we should encourage them to do so and we should deal with them as a sovereign government. We should leave them the space to be able to deal with their own politics. So I'm confident that if we continue on the road that we have been on over the last year or more in Iraq, we will come to a point of agreement with the Iraqis any transition in the drawdown of troops and that we will not be forced into some timeline that doesn't serve the circumstances in Iraq.

MR. BENJAMIN: Perhaps your English colleagues can tell you afterwards that you hit a 6 on that one.

MR. BROWNE: (inaudible)

MR. BENJAMIN: You talked about the importance of alliances, and I don't think that many Americans in the audience would disagree with the assessment that we agree fully and we're delighted when we see the British commitment to a strong defense and that at this point the debate over European defense is largely over in terms of how it

will fit in with NATO and with U.S. strategy, and the only question really is how do we get our other allies to take defense spending a little more seriously in their commitment to building the capabilities that at least in our discussions we all agree upon? You stand between the United States and Europe both geographically and in an historical sense intellectually in understanding our Continental friends. What advice would you give to this and the next administration in terms of encouraging building of those capacities and reaching the goals that have been set?

MR. BROWNE: In terms of the NATO alliance in particular, this is the challenge of the 21st century. If I may just draw on another part of the islands that I come from to draw an analogy, the Irish quite often say if you ask them for directions or how long it will take to get to a particular place, if I were going there I wouldn't start from here. The problem is we are where we are and we have the advantage that we have in NATO, the most successful political/military alliance the world has ever know. There are many reasons for that (inaudible) contribution to that and Euro-Atlantic cohesion. And if we were developing an alliance now in the 21st century to meet the challenges of a globalized world where we try to transform a Cold War alliance into something that has the flexibility to do that, we wouldn't, we wouldn't start from here, but we should not destroy what we have and what we have is a coherent alliance of people who

have a substantial common interest and we have a club that many people want to join.

I just say this in passing, what we are doing in Afghanistan together is strengthening that alliance and is transforming that alliance. We only need to look at the process your neighbor Canada has gone through in considering their commitment to Afghanistan and the role that they will play in the world in terms of its security. They are a country who have in Afghanistan transformed themselves from being a peacekeeping country to a country capable of war fighting if it is necessary in a comparatively short period of time. They are not the only country to have gone through that process. Many of those allies who are in the NATO alliance who have spun out of the old Soviet Bloc of influence have gone through two transformation processes, one from forces that were incapable of doing almost anything in a modern environment, through the process that we went through into having deployable and (inaudible) they're much smaller than we are in scale and we in turn are much (inaudible) in scale, but they're very effective and we know for example the massive contribution (inaudible) Czech forces had with the particular capability that they deployed in Helmand over the last summer when we were under considerable pressure and from the way in which the Taliban

were operating. I point to Denmark and I point to the Netherlands. There are a number of countries. We can go through them.

In fact, the transformation of NATO from being a Cold War alliance to being a 21st century alliance has been taking place in the caldron of Afghanistan at greater pace that (inaudible) of Brussels or the discussions among ministers. The fact that they have had to do it has transformed a number of countries. But we need to address this issue more strategically and at the highest possible political levels. And so what I ask any incoming administration today is to support those of us in the NATO alliance to think of transformation of that alliance as its greatest challenge in a process that we will begin in a special meeting of ministers convened -- that we will develop significant and ask the defense ministers to take ownership of in a special meeting of defense meetings to be convened by the Secretary General in London in September and through the next ministerial meeting planned in April culminating one hopes in the summit of NATO leaders which will take place next year on its Sixtieth Anniversary.

So my plea is to recognize and celebrate what has happened, to draw one's attention away from those countries who are almost the (inaudible) of the criticism for not doing what we want to do, but to (inaudible) on those countries that are transforming and to point out to

the others that these examples of what we should all be following fundamentally to transform NATO (inaudible) so that this decision-making process is and its structure that lend themselves to the demands of the 21st century.

MR. BENJAMIN: At this point, time is short, but we should have some questions. Please give us your name and have a question mark at the end of your question.

MR. SCHWEID: Barry Schweid, Associated Press. Mister Secretary, could you kindly give us your assessment of developments in Iran? You haven't mentioned Iran at all. I understand why, but that's a very live subject. Do you think diplomacy will work? Do you have a date for Solana to meet up with the Iranians again? Is this an alarming situation or is it just more of the same?

MR. BROWNE: You want all of these questions answered? I didn't mention Iran. I think there would be a list of things I didn't mention. The patience of the audience has been tested I thought by the 40 minutes I spoke.

As far as Iran is concerned of course Iran interestingly, and connects both Iraq and Afghanistan in the same -- they clearly have an interest, and an understandable interest, in what happens in Iraq because they are their close neighbor and these societies, particularly the Shia

societies, are connected to each other and have been for generations long before we expressed any interest in that part of the world even as the United Kingdom and we have a substantial in Iran and what happens in Afghanistan -- the problems that the Taliban generated in Afghanistan came to our streets, they are ever present in the streets of the cities of (inaudible) they have in excess of 2 million heroin addicts in that country and almost of our heroin has its roots in their nearest neighbor to the east.

And they have been involved deeply in trying to resolve that problem and building infrastructure and working with those people who are on the border (inaudible) for some considerable period of time. But typical of Iran of course they back every horse in the race so they support Karzai -- government, they support the opposition in the National Front -- what used to be the Northern Alliance, and they support the Taliban as indeed our forces have revealed by exposing the materiel that they are bringing in in order to support them. So Iran and our ability to be able to engage with Iran and to make Iran face up to its international responsibilities particularly with regard -- program for the development of material for nuclear weapons is at the forefront of my mind and it's a very complex issue and the international community needs to stick together in dealing with this. And I try dearly to unravel the complexity of Iranian society and the way it has structured its government, but it's a challenge (inaudible)

what I do know is that and we need to find a way of engaging with these people that is a balance of carrots and sanctions or carrots and threats that engages them in a way that hitherto we have been able to make any progress with. And I will resist the temptation to give simplistic answers to those important questions that don't lend themselves to simple answers (inaudible) but what I do know is that we need to continue to show resolution and resolve and strength in the face of this regime but that we need as an international community to continue to find ways of trying to engage with them because there are in that very complex society as we all know many people who don't share the ambitions of their leadership.

MR. BENJAMIN: Next question? Diana Negroponte. You don't need to announce who you are.

MS. NEGROPONTE: Diana Negroponte, and a Brit within the Brookings Institution. Minister, the experience of Northern Ireland has given your armed forces tactics which U.S. forces do not necessarily appreciate and this was demonstrated in Basra between our forces and yours in the years 2004 and 2005. Some claim it contributed to the withdrawal of your forces from Basra, but now we work together in the challenges of Afghanistan. How have we found ways to reconcile distinct tactics?

MR. BROWNE: Akin to this responsibility that I presently have as the Secretary of State for Defense in the United Kingdom in my mid-fifties with no military experience, I have met in the last 2 years in the military of all of our allies some of the most 21st century people I have ever met in my life. I have no knowledge of the history of your military's attitude toward counterinsurgency or their analysis of the challenges -- although I have read David Petraeus's book. It is not my experience that we do not understand the complexity of these issues or indeed the comprehensive nature of the responses necessary. In fact, the opposite. That may mean that people are quick learners. I have no idea where -- came from. I certainly know that the people I work with do not exhibit that stark difference in their appreciation and analysis of what is necessary in the complexity of these environments that some people caricature them as having. This is not a proper representation of -- approach to this. And we were 40 years in Northern Ireland. We learned a lot. And many of the things that we learned in Northern Ireland we bring to the modern way in which we approach these issues. That doesn't mean (inaudible) but there are things that we should understand and one of them is that none of these challenges can be resolved by military means alone. Essentially all you can do with military force is create space and opportunity and you have to build the other parts of the comprehensive approach in terms of

economic opportunity governments and just the sorts of things that we take for granted in our societies, that politics is the (inaudible) despite the fact that it gets a bad name. We have to create space for politics to work, to deliver to people what they need. But for it to be sustainable, that politics has to come as it did in Northern Ireland out of the indigenous people. That leadership has to come from them.

The fundamental challenge we face in Afghanistan, and this I hope came across from what I said, is that the nature and complexity of the challenge there is greater even than the nature and complexity of the challenge in the diverse environment of Iraq. The reason for that is that the violence in Afghanistan and in that region debilitated the capacity of the local people to such an extent that it will take a generation to rebuild it. This is a country which has lost two generations to education. It is a country whose middle-classes and professional classes are driven out of the country. It is a country where only 23 percent of the population can read and write, and even then that is dispersed across the country in a nonconsistent way. So if we come to the conclusion as I believe we have as the world -- resolving Afghanistan is not a discretionary demand, we have to do it because we cannot allow it to be an ungoverned space again. And the most important thing we need to commit ourselves to is the strategic patience to deal with that. So we need to say this is going to

take a long time so let's buckle down and do it and let's build the capacity not just in military terms, but in all the other complementary fashions. We could put thousands and thousands of Brits on the ground in uniform. What we can't do is we can't put thousands and thousands of Brits in the ground in terms of economic development or in terms of building the rule of law and in terms of improving governance. We can't do it. We don't have that capability and that capacity in our countries. But nor do we have it in a culturally sensitive way.

The answer to this, and I've come to this conclusion, I came to it very correctly that it's been reinforced and maintained (inaudible) is that we can only do this across the world by building with the regional capacity to do it so we need to find partners who are culturally sensitive to that environment to work with us. Now that's a big challenge in this part of Asia. I understand that. But that's what we need to do and that's the only way in which we will make it sustainable.

And let me just tell you one other lesson we learned from Northern Ireland, is that you cannot seal borders. You cannot seal borders. You know this. Your Southern border is flat and open. You cannot seal it. We could not seal 26 miles of border between the North and South of Ireland with 40,000 troops. Please do not demand of Pakistan or Afghanistan that they try to seal the many hundreds of

kilometers of mountainous border between these two countries. Now what does that lead us to? It leads us to the conclusion that this is a shared responsibility across that border. You cannot solve (inaudible) Afghanistan without understanding that it is integrally associated with what's going on in Pakistan. What's the answer to that? The answer to that is not to do something which is counterintuitive to what you're doing in Afghanistan, it's to accept that you need a comprehensive approach both sides of that (inaudible) and working together with the same people to move (inaudible) across it or we will not provide a sustainable (inaudible) so what I've just done is I've doubled the problem in size and in scale and lengthened it probably twice as long, but it is not discretionary. It needs to be done (inaudible) George Robertson my Scottish colleague and former Secretary General, political colleague of NATO, said, and it was the ultimate truism, if we don't go to Afghanistan, Afghanistan will come to us and it will come to us repeatedly, and you can add to that the tribal areas in Pakistan because that's where the problem is.

MR. BENJAMIN: Secretary Browne, we'd like to have a lot more time with you, and we haven't even gotten onto the issues of Scottish politics for which you are also responsible.

MR. BROWNE: They are insoluble.

MR. BENJAMIN: And you can't seal the border.

MR. BROWNE: I don't want to.

MR. BENJAMIN: But in closing let me just ask you one last question. President Clinton was fond of saying that he used to go out on the Truman Balcony and look at the burn marks on the White House from the War of 1812 and remind himself how importance it was to keep this relationship on track and going in the right direction. Do you have any words of wisdom for the next president on what he should do to keep this relationship on track and special?

MR. BROWNE: Like any relationship, the answer is quite simple, we should work at it.

MR. BENJAMIN: And with that bit of Scottish parsimony, we'll call this to an end. I want to thank you very much for joining us today. This was a terrific event and a terrific set of remarks, and we look forward to seeing you again here at Brookings. Thank you very much.

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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.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

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