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HISTORY STRIKES BACK:
A DISCUSSION WITH HUBERT VÉDRINE AND
MADELEINE ALBRIGHT

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Moderator:

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Featured Presenter:

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Former French Minister of Foreign Affairs

Discussant:

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT
Former U.S. Secretary of State

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NOTE: Mr. Vedrine's remarks have been transcribed from the simultaneous French to English translation and should be considered unofficial. Please refer to the audio file on the Brookings website for his original remarks in French.

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BENJAMIN: Good afternoon. I'm Daniel Benjamin and I'm the Director of the Center on the United States and Europe and I want to welcome you to Brookings. It is indeed dark, cold, and raining outside, but I'm delighted to say that we are joined today by two of the most illuminating thinkers and most experienced practitioners in the world of foreign affairs, former French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine, and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Together they will discuss Mr. Védrine's provocative new book, *History Strikes Back: How States, Nations and Conflicts are Shaping the 21st Century*.

Few have been engaged at the highest level of national politics and policy for as long as Hubert Védrine. At the ripe age of 34 he was appointed by President Mitterrand to be Diplomatic Adviser at l'Elysées. He later served as Mitterrand's presidential spokesman and then Secretary General of the Presidency. In May 1997 during the period of cohabitation under President Jacques Chirac he was named Minister of Foreign Affairs and held this position for 5 years, making him one of the longest-serving foreign ministers of the French Republic.

Hubert Védrine has long been a good friend of Brookings, I'm happy to say, and in addition to publishing two books now with the

Brookings Press, he delivered the 2007 Raymond Aron Lecture here entitled "France in an Age of Globalization," some of the material of which shows up in this book as well I'm happy to say. And in my view and those of many of us who were there, that was one of the most impressive intellectual presentations that we have seen in the last 2 years here at Brookings.

If he is no stranger to Brookings, Monsieur Védrine is even less of one to Madeline Albright, the sixty-fourth Secretary of State whose term of office overlapped entirely with his at the Quai d'Orsay. Together they worked through the difficult international problems of the late 1990s including above all those in the former Yugoslavia, culminating in the action in Kosovo.

In addition to her many achievements in office, Secretary Albright has been a powerful demonstration of the rule that once you've worked in the highest reaches of government, you'll be enormously productive when you get out of public service. In addition to building a flourishing firm, Albright and Associates, she published three books since leaving office, most recently *Memo to the President-Elect* which came out last year and which I highly recommend as one of the most insightful and also a very pungent and funny book about the American presidency and the current international scene. And if there's anyone from Amazon listening, I suggest that Secretary Albright's memo be put in a boxed set

with Monsieur Védrine's *History Strikes Back* and it would benefit readers tremendously because there's a lot of complementary wisdom in these two books different though they may be.

One of the greatest pleasures of doing an event like this is that it brings together two eminences who are truly close friends and became so at a level of public life that is not exactly known to be conducive to friendship. Let me underscore this by reading something from a "Business Week" story that described the feelings of European leaders about the departure of their Clinton administration colleagues. The author wrote in January of that year that, "The dream seems already wistful about the surprisingly close relationship he forged with Albright. The two who unusually used the highly informal "tu" to address each other had what the French minister suggestively calls an "intellectual affair." To echo Shakespeare, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments." Monsieur Védrine, the podium is yours.

MR. VÉDRINE: See, that is what really truly interests me : what is to be done. We are not living in a world after the United States, post-U.S., for example, so I think it is important for the United States to ask themselves what -- time and time again the United States will stay the number-one power in the world for years to come. Now on the other hand, I was forced to define something, a procession, as regards to the clash of civilizations. Do you remember how this happened? I thought

there was always some truth to this idea of a clash of civilizations. We can always counter this idea. We can counter the argument of a clash of civilizations. We can say that it is not a problem of civilization, but it has to do with a lack of culture which maybe is in fact the same thing. But I think that when we're talking about Islam vis-à-vis the West, we should realize that there is a real risk and that we should mobilize in order to stop this series of events.

Now this is something that made me stand apart from the crowd that said I am against this and that. I was a member of the group created by Kofi Annan who believed that this was the case. We were sort of heretics because of our thoughts. We did not agree with the general universal idea of a clash of civilizations. Now I thought perhaps there was a risk, in fact a clash of civilizations, but it's enough of a risk to take seriously. I didn't believe that there was certain enough to be believed and I didn't agree with the definition by conservatives of the clash of civilizations. So I am hopeful and I am interested to see what happens at the end of the Bush administration.

I am looking forward to seeing the United States to use their intellectual and economic powers to redefine and reinvent the concepts. I believe that as soon as Obama and their term move away from the Bush dogmatism and build their own ideas. We don't know exactly what they will build, but they will do something different. We hope that (inaudible)

dogmatism. Perhaps they will be more pragmatic. And there of they do that we will find the answer to the problem, what should we do with China, what should we do with the Arab world, with India? How are we going to regulate the international market? What I have seen now of the Obama administration in the appointments and several groups are included in these appointments, so little by little we will see what this new approach will be.

He is lending a friendly air to others discussing and having debates with the opposition and we see diplomacy was created time immemorial in order to discuss with your opponents. That is the goal of diplomacy. So we see that a new moment, a new movement is afoot. We are discussing with other parties throughout the world. We are discussing not only with the West, but also with China, a vital economic partner, and we are beginning together to create a new U.S. foreign policy. You see I should mention that Obama was not elected primarily because of this. Americans elected him because they thought that he was the most fit to solve the economic crisis and because of other reasons, because he might save the United States from a total fiasco.

So you see there are expectations I believe. More from the European point of view and the French point of view in particular, we are spectators and we are enthusiastic about Obama. He was approved by 95 percent of (inaudible) it seems to me and a complete success because

of his personality, his political career. He seems to embody the European dreams as well and he is liked there for that. We think that Obama will defend U.S. interests throughout the world, that he will do so intelligently, practically, having heard all different points of view, but he will defend the U.S.'s interest throughout the world. Now we don't know to what extent he will be able to restore the U.S. leadership in this multipolar world. He is going to try to make sure that the U.S. can stay a leader in the world.

This is truly something that is very interesting. You can look at it as if it were sort of a (inaudible) Europeans perhaps would like to become more important partners with the United States in order to write a new chapter together. We want to have, for example, new (inaudible) vis-à-vis Iran. Then so well and good, it can be done. We can share our experiences or points of view and write this new chapter together. Perhaps this can change. I think that Europeans should, even though they're not sure how to do so, they should make it clear that they have ample experience and know how and that they can provide good inputs into these processes in this realistic approach that I have written about which is something that interests me quite a lot.

One aspect that Madame Albright and I discuss about all the time is what are we to do about the Wilsonian realism? Now when I say we have to be realistic, we have to have a realistic approach, because unrealistic approaches have not worked because the West's desire to

impose its will on the rest of the world has not worked. It has not garnered the necessary legitimacy. Then what are we to do? We could defend this realism by saying that human rights today or advocating them today are not being as effective as they used to be. For example, in India and the Arab world, how is that working over there? We cannot know exactly what the conclusions to these aspects will be because the Western leadership has been guided by a positive attitude. We know also that several countries in the world are not in favor of (inaudible) structure. We have this in China and other countries where this is not really something that appeals to them.

I do not think that we can continue to think that we can impose human rights and democracy throughout the world as if something had happened. One just looks at the Bush experience. Let's not forget what happened during the Bush administration. Let us analyze what happened. How was the administration organized? How did they make their proposals? And why did their attempts fail to provide results?

Now the (inaudible) the Bush administration is something that should be studied. Does it completely discredit the idea of coming and starting a democracy in a country, for example, China? We can't pretend that it all worked out well in the past several months or year. We can see what happened in Burma, how we acted and what happened, and then we can take that experience and use it to our advantage with China.

You see we need each other. We need the Russians in order to participate in other negotiations with (inaudible) for example. We have to think about our actions because today we might be exerting pressure in a country whose help we may need in the future in order to negotiate with a third one.

But ladies and gentlemen, I am saying all these things in order to say that we have to look at the past and analyze it. This is not just the case where we talk about democracy. I do not question democracy nor democratic values. The same goes for all human rights. I wouldn't say, for example, that democracy is not something that we can use in Asia. No, that is not what I'm saying. Now what I am saying is what are we to do with -- what are we going to do in terms of imposing our ideas with human rights. Where we see human rights and trying to spread human rights throughout the world is a natural response to our progress. It is the role that we have evolved that has made us think that we should spread our ideas of human rights. We think that torturing people is not right and so we should prevent it. For example, I don't doubt that is important. Now we should ask ourselves do Westerners have the authority, legitimacy in order to help others progress? Does it work? There are differences between the West and the East. The West has usually colonized. There was also a period of colonization. Now can the West do what it thinks it can do? Can the U.S. for example do this more

effectively than France or the U.K., for example, through different points of view and different approaches?

Now I would just like to perhaps conclude in a few minutes and then discuss a little bit more in depth in the Q and A session, but I think that we should take advantage at this very moment, the end of the Bush administration, in order to understand what the problems were during that administration. We can study what the principles were, how can the principles be used in the future, and if they should be used, and perhaps if we could find some common ground between the U.S. and the European approach. Now I don't know if it was here at the Brookings Institution or not that we talked about a possible union between Europe and the United States, but whatever the case may be, if we want to have tighter bonds between the U.S. and Europe during the new administration, taking advantage of the positive outlook that we have of the Obama administration, then we should not turn our eyes to the past being nostalgic. We should rather look into the future and say can we have common approaches to solve our future problems? What can we do with the Middle East and other areas? We should look at the reality and to ask ourselves questions on how to solve our problems.

Once again I am very pleased to be able to participate here to provide you with a critical eye of what has happened with a proactive approach of what we have done over the past 20 years to study what has

worked, what has not worked, and to assess the progress or lack thereof of the Bush administration. You see in the Bush administration there are many aspects. It has been sort of a caricature and it did not meet all the expectations of the West. Perhaps they were too simplistic. It was not a wise administration perhaps. And hence the trouble of Iraq war. Even though some say that the arguments to justify the war were grounded, they were false, but anyhow a lot of people seemed to agree with them. There are many Westerners who were against the Bush administration but who thought anyhow that it was a good idea.

We have to remember what has happened in our immediate past. You see I think that we do not talk enough about what happened in Iraq. This is perhaps a mistake. We should understand what the causes that triggered the war and what happened during the war. You see these are two different mistakes, what triggered the war and what went wrong during the war. We should study these two aspects.

I will stop here because I am looking forward to what Madeleine will have to say about this. But I would be pleased with a more realistic United States. I would be pleased to see a more wise and enlightened European Union, a European Union that could admit that the balance of powers has not disappeared. Well I think that the answer is to have new policies as regards to the rest of the world. I think perhaps the most important aspect of my point of view, I think the most important

aspect is perhaps the West's policies vis-à-vis China. I think we need a completely different set of tools to address our relationship with the Arab world. I think that the Middle East is an area where we the West have done exactly the opposite of what we should have done. This is risky. We are risking a true clash of cultures. Now if you look at our global world surveys for example, 90 percent of the Muslim world has a horrifying opinion of the West, and the same goes in the other direction, a large percentage of the West has a negative view of the Muslim world. Now these are the facts and we must have policies that can overcome this difficulty.

I believe that all this should be considered when drawing a realistic set of policies and restoring the U.S. leadership. Now I say that the U.S. leadership can be restored. I do not mean to say that I want this to happen. I think it can be done. I think that we can have the combination of an intelligent and realistic U.S. leadership in a multipolar world because we can't do anything about a multipolar world, this reality. It is an unstable world. We should try to ensure that we can forge alliances in the multipolar world in order to make better progress throughout. I think that in the future the United States might try to play its multilateral card to counter the very multipolar threat. Now the United States would like to restore its U.S. leadership and this is probably very likely to happen. We also have the multipolar world which is a response to

U.S. leadership and the U.S. can play a multipolar card because it is a very powerful country and it can do it. Perhaps it will just play this card but it will not comply with the other rules that are needed in a multipolar world, it will just pretend to do so. You see it may be easy for the United States to act in this fashion. You see I think that it is very easy for example to speak evil of the Bush administration, but I think it would have been easy to rectify its flaws. The multipolar issue is something that is so bothersome for us, the West. What are we to do with China, India, and other parts of the world?

Well I hope this has provided you with a clear overview of my book and my thoughts and (inaudible) I would like to say that I hope that this book will lead to a true exchange of ideas between the members of the new administration and Europeans including my country, France. But I'm not just saying France. I'm saying all countries. There should be a true and frank dialogue between the United States and Europe at large, a dialogue where we would discuss what will be our joint response to the problems that I have mentioned. So if we're not capable of coming up with new solutions as Europeans then obviously people won't be listening to us because in this case this discussion will take place just here just between the presidency, the State Department and the different think tanks. This will be an interesting discussion per se but I think that we also want the Europeans to contribute to this, so that this discussion not take place just

in the U.S. but also in Europe having an open a discussion as possible.

So that's where I stand right now. Thank you very much.

MR. BENJAMIN: Secretary Albright, I know that you and Minister Védrine have talked at some length about some of the points that he has made so I hope you will let us in on your conversation because you have a deep understanding of how each other thinks and I would like you to draw out for us what you think are the strengths and perhaps some of the commonalities and differences that exist.

MS. ALBRIGHT: Thank you very much, Ben. I'm delighted to be here and delighted to have this opportunity to continue my long ongoing discussion with Hubert Védrine. We first met at the first G-8 meeting in the summer of 1997 in Denver and I was somewhat senior to him having become Secretary of State earlier in the year and we really did work together very closely throughout the entire time that I was Secretary. I think what is so interesting in listening to Hubert now is the pleasure of having discussions with him when we are no longer in official positions because what would always happen would be that I would speak on behalf of the United States, he on behalf of France, and we had some differences in that regard, and then we continued our discussions in our less official way I think we found that we could differ and agree on a whole host of issues. And I have to say that something that I said after I left office and Hubert was out of office was a group of former foreign

ministers. It is a group that grows by virtue of what it is, but it is we only choose people that we want to talk to. It's called a number of things, the Ex Mins, or some have called it Madeleine and Her Ex's. There the discussions are really terrific because we do not speak --

MR. VÉDRINE: The Ghost Group.

MS. ALBRIGHT: The Ghost Group. But we have an opportunity to have discussions such as these without our national positions.

I had the honor of I have to say that I agree with a great deal of what Hubert has now said about U.S. policy. I can't say I agreed when he said similar things when I was directing the policy. I was hyper Madeleine which in French does not sound quite as bad as it does in English. But there definitely I think always was the sense that came from Foreign Minister Védrine that the U.S. was not playing its role appropriately often and often being much too domineering and filled with hubris, and yet at the same time a sense that when the United States was not playing a role of any kind that we were not fulfilling our obligations. Therefore it was not easy, and it was only as the result I think of tremendous friendship that we actually got through a lot of very complicated discussions, and one of them had to do with Kosovo because there was really I believed the sense that the United States needed to do something to stop the ethnic cleansing and at that stage Hubert Védrine

and many of the Europeans felt that what we needed to do was to be clearer about the responsibilities that the United Nations had or that you had to have a mandate. And it's interesting that he now speaks as a hyper realist when in many ways and not so much a defender of the international community and I was viewed as the person that was breaking out of the system in order to use force to stop what I considered genocidal acts, and yet in the end because we had these discussions it was possible to get agreement on it. And by the way, I did develop something that maybe was a girl thing, but it was a daily telephone conference call among the major allies and we were able throughout up to the lead-up to the Kosovo war and during the way itself to talk every single day. And there was a very broad-ranging discussion and Hubert would always say Paris wishes to speak and there would be different views and we were able to talk about them and I think you saw the elegance of his mind as he was describing issues now and the clarity of trying to explain what the right thing to do was and we did in fact I think come to many practical agreements.

I think the thing that I find hard in all of this is the dichotomy always between idealism and realism, and I have always thought that it was a false dichotomy and it has partially to do with the fact that I don't know what I am. Hubert was talking about Wilsonian democracy. I was born in Czechoslovakia, a country that would not exist had it not been for

Woodrow Wilson as they saw, and everything in terms of modeling on an American constitution. The only difference between the Czechoslovak Constitution and the American is that the Czechoslovak actually has equal-rights language in it in 1918, but there was this kind of sense of modeling on American democracy. So I grew up as a Wilsonian, but then I kind of think I'm pretty realistic so I decided that I was an idealistic pragmatist or a pragmatic realist and so this dichotomy does not work for me and I do think it's important in purposes of trying to write about what's going on, but that's my major issue.

I find interesting there's differentiation between multipolarism and multilateralism and the weakness of some of the mush of multilateralism that I think we've all seen, but in understanding that the issues that are out there are going to require cooperation. And a point that I think is worth making, and let me just say flat out that I speak for nobody but myself, I do think that Barack Obama as I see him and the Obama administration is going to be an administration that consults and cooperates internationally, that is interested in -- Americans don't the world multilateralism. It has too many syllables and it ends in an ism, but all it means is that it's partnership, it's working together, and the issues that are out there require cooperation. And in my book, I have listed five big umbrella issues which are how to fight terrorism without creating more terrorists, how to deal with a broken nonproliferation system, how to deal

with the negative aspects of globalization, that's the gap between the rich and the poor, how to deal with the energy-environment-food price nexus, how to restore the good name of democracy, and then added to it the global financial crisis, so it requires cooperation. And the point that I would make to Hubert, and he has made this point today but I think it's going to have to be proven, is the Europeans are going to have to step up. It's one thing to complain and to say you don't talk to use enough, but a lot is going to be asked now. I think in response to the genuine consultation it's going to mean that the Europeans or the Oxidant as Hubert calls it is going to have to cooperate and have to really step up and do its share.

Just briefly on the democracy issue because this has been going on forever, and we did have this great discussion which I say a little bit in the forward for those of you that don't read forwards, is that on our first meeting in Paris, and it was after the G-8 and we were having our bilateral and I was saying about the great friendship between the United States and France and Lafayette and democracy, and Hubert looked at me and said, "For God's sakes, Madeleine, don't be so sentimental. The only reason we helped you was that we hated the British." So that was the beginning of our human rights and democracy discussion.

And it's gone on over the years. And I have to say that I am Chairman of the Board of the National Democratic Institute. I believe in democracy. I believe it's the best form of government. I believe that

everybody is capable of democracy. I do think that the Bush administration has given democracy a bad name. I hope very much that Iran ultimately is a stable democratic country, but there is no leader that looks at Iraq and says I want my country to look just like that. And so something has to be done in order to support democratic movements in countries, but not to impose democracy. Imposing democracy is an oxymoron, but I don't want to give up on the idea that we are all the same, that people whether they're Asians or Muslims or whatever are not capable of running their own lives, and I do think -- Hubert and I had lunch together and we talked about this and I think we're not as far apart as we would think. I also believe that what we have to show now is democracy has to deliver, people willing to vote and eat, and while it may sound socialist, it is in fact true that there is a reason why people will reelect governments or reelect people and it's because it does deliver, and so that combination goes together. And democracy requires table institutions and the rule of law and a whole set of concepts that go with it, but I do think that one of the major aspects of what has to happen next for America is to help to restore the good name of democracy and then operate within a multipolar as well as multilateral setting in which we deal with those big umbrella issues.

MR. BENJAMIN: Mr. Védrine, I'm betting you have a response.

MR. VÉDRINE: Well, maybe I could expound a little bit on that. I don't have to answer because we don't disagree in this regard, you see. Perhaps I could expound a little bit. You spoke about democracy, but, no, there really isn't a true debate about democracy. Nobody is questioning it. There's a debate about the process of democratization, a policy that is going to lead to a transformation to implement democracy. There's a debate about that, but not about democracies as such. But you see we don't disagree, Madeleine. I think we agree, rather. I think that in general nowadays we agree more than we used to when we were in office.

MS. ALBRIGHT: I think the real question that we have for everybody is what is the role of the United States. We're sitting here in the U.S., we probably have different discussions, but what is going to be the role of the United States in the next 8 years or 12 or 24? But basically because I think that's been the question, and it was not easy I think to determine what the role of the U.S. was after the Cold War. The 1990s were a very (inaudible) a kind of a testing time. The Europeans were not stepping up. We couldn't figure out to do something that nobody had ever done before which is how to devolve the power of our major adversary, Russia, and how to deal with the rising new states. And then 9/11 happened and there was a whole host of issues that created a different role for the U.S. which I think a lot of people have found offensive. And so

now there is a question of how to restart the 21st century with a very different kind of a president and approach.

MR. BENJAMIN: Having read the book and found it fascinating, I would ask Mr. Védrine, there's a tension in your vision of what this trajectory is going to be even if we get things right. In other words, even if the United States and Europe do work effectively, and I hasten to point out that you're unsparing in your criticism of Europeans in terms of their own willingness to as Secretary Albright said step up and contribute, but you talk a lot about the dealings between the West and the rest as we've discussed it and as it's often termed. Is this managing decline, managing multipolarity, in a way that works to everyone's advantage or preserving a Western leadership that has a kind of Western universalism and missionary element to it that is inextricable from the Oxidant? What's the best-case scenario for you?

MR. VÉDRINE: Well, the decline is not going to be fatal, so it is (inaudible) idea where the West is going to decline completely, but I think first off we have to have a realistic assessment. The West is not standing in the way we thought it stood a while back. The West is no longer the master of the world. I can mention some examples to illustrate this. There are some simple examples. For example, France cannot convince the President of Tunisia bitterly about their policies about making faster process towards democracy. There are many examples. We could

cite Afghanistan, different countries, and French-speaking countries in Africa. These are allied countries that we could help in their trajectory towards a democracy. There are different stages in the process of democratization and we can reach all these stages, but in several cases we have not. So you see there's a fascinating contrast between the idea that we have dreamt up in our mind and achieving that idea in reality.

You see, we speak about values, the values of democracy and how we all share these universal values and we don't think that there is any sort of relativism. But when our universal values are not considered as universal values, we are confronted with a practical problem, a philosophical problem. You see, so we should start off with a more realistic approach and then we should do something to prevent a decline. If now we might be somewhat clumsy, we could continue to act the way we have acted with the Arab world. What is to be done with China, for example? What is China? Is it a good potential partner? Is it our competition? Is it a humanitarian partner? Is it a threat to us? Perhaps it is all these at the same time. Now we have to, for example, see what to do with China and to negotiate with them. If not they are going to use us to their advantage as sometimes has happened previously. You see, there are several powers in the world and each and every one of them think in their own ways that they segment the world in different ways, Europeans, the U.S., the Middle East.

Now if we act in an intelligent fashion we will not have the rest against the West because we will be working together. Now we can look at our history of what has been done with China and Russia for example. Now I think that we have not written the answer to your question yet. I think that we have to be realistic here in the United States. We have to give an increased dose of realism in order to confront the future problems.

Perhaps universal values will eventually be recognized as universal by every country. Maybe some ideas will be accepted throughout more than they have in the past. I'm not exactly sure what will happen. But I think that what we have to start off with after 8 years of the Bush administration is precarious at best.

MR. BENJAMIN: I'd like to ask you, you mentioned in the book in several places, and you've mentioned here as well, that we need a radical new departure in terms of dealing with the Muslim world, and in particular you point out that when talking about Huntington and the clash of civilizations thesis that you don't really believe it in most cases, that in the case of the Muslim world this is a real risk and we do need a dramatically different approach, and I was wondering if you would sketch out for us albeit briefly what this approach might look like.

MR. VÉDRINE: Well, contrary to what is generally said about the Israeli and U.S. rights over the past 20 years, I believe that the

Palestinian issue is of key importance. It is not a solved problem, but it is of key importance. We all know that the -- the fact of the terrorist issue it is merely a pretext, but how to deal with the Muslim world is of key importance.

Now for many years we have wanted to say that it was of marginal importance and that it became of key importance because many people in the world, Europe and elsewhere, were against Israel and that we have to discredit the U.S. efforts in finding a solution. This is something that Madeleine and I have talked about, that we had to intervene in Arab countries, help them with their democratization, and that then they would become Western. Now this might seem somewhat absurd. I think that this reasoning was false. In fact, I think completely the opposite. You see that unfortunately (inaudible) somewhat exaggerated. I think that this idea is still important for the Arab world and I think all of us know what the answer to the problem is. This is the sole conflict in the world to which everybody knows the answer. I think that the United States was completely wrong to not find an answer to the problem. You see, the United States could have reached a balance of power between the West and the Middle East. I think that what we need to take a look at is a combination of different factors and the different personalities of people who will be in charge of this issue. There was Rabin, there was Arafat, there were other personalities. I think that we need to take a look at this

because we don't want to be looking at this in terms of international law or the fate of the Palestinians. I think that we need to look at this in terms of the interests of the various parties and I think that decisions will have to be made in the U.S. or in Israel. Those are the only two few places where these decisions might be made. The Europeans don't have this leverage to pull off a decision. They don't have this kind of influence in the Arab world either. So I'm convinced that such a process would actually be possible.

Of course you need to have the will to do this. If you have an American leader and an Israeli leader who think that it is in the interests of their countries that it is something that is feasible, it would take about a year or two, I think that the issue lies within the Israeli system. They have an electoral system which is really scary. When you think of it which makes it possible for any extremist group to block any movement and there is also the issue of settlements, then so the theoretical issues lies in Israel. And then there's the issue of implementation of an agreement in Palestine. Anytime an agreement is signed in Palestine then the leader who signed it will be assassinated, there will be two or three people like this, and then that's how the process will move forward. And so again if the Americans thought that it was in their interests to get rid of this problem they would be able to do this. Again I'm saying that it would take about 2 years.

In this case, the impact would be that the various Islamic fundamentalists would be playing defense. This would be really a significant strike against them. Their pretext would still exist however. We need to acknowledge that. But still you're switching things around. It makes it possible for moderate Arab governments to work and engage with the West a lot more, the Arab world would become pro-American. There is no good reason why the Arab world would be against the U.S. The only reason why they're looking at Europe is because they're desperate and so as a European I should probably not be saying this, I should be just making things up about the role of Europe, the significant role of Europe, but I don't believe in that. I don't think that it's true. I think that everything lies within Israel within the relationship between the U.S. and Israel and then find a way to have a nationalist Palestinian leader emerge, Hamas will be demolished by this evolution, Abbas will be totally overwhelmed because he doesn't have the aura that's necessary, and somebody like Pabuti or somebody who would have been released for this would be the leader, but you sort of need a customer service issue after this. So that's why I never advocate talks between the Palestinians and Israel is because look at where the Palestinians are. I mean, they are totally destroyed. They are totally overwhelmed. And so Israelis need to have a national debate, the U.S. needs to support this national debate and

then you need to have this customer service like a Marshall Plan or something of the sort.

And again if there is an American president who did this he would simply become the most popular personality in the Arab world. Of course there would be issues to be addressed, and I've got to say I've no idea what Obama's priorities are or views are. Once Obama does away with this idea that you don't talk to your adversaries which is what Bush advocated, this is really the opposite of diplomacy. Again diplomacy was created in order to have talks with enemies, not friends, not just friends, it was in order to come up with a substitute or war. And so you have discussions with those people who question your values, who question your principles, but it is in this case a weapon, and you can't have just bombing, you can't have just the military might, you need to have diplomacy too. So I think there would be that. Then there would be Iran, just being available to Iran would help create differences or reveal differences within the Iranian system, so this is something that needs to be done. We need to create leverage for ourselves.

And I would also like to address the issue of Afghanistan since Obama said that he wanted to increase the number of people in Afghanistan, and I think that Obama is too smart to think that it's all about sending more troops to Afghanistan. I think that gradually we'll have to come up with a political approach, a more regional approach, taking into

account Afghanistan, Pakistan, therefore India, therefore Kashmir. And so all of a sudden even though that wasn't the point of the administration, we have this very difficult situation which hadn't been foreseen beforehand.

So if you really want to have American leadership around the world, you cannot overlook the Arab-Muslim world, and then there's a whole host of issues that will derive from that because if you give more leverage to moderate Arab governments to engage with Western governments without being so afraid of what the Islamists are going to think, because again that's the situation we're in today. There's a sort of trap that we're in today and I say this on my own behalf only. I'm not speaking on behalf of any organization. I'm just saying what I feel about these issues. And I know that this belies a number of assumptions that people have, and I don't understand why the U.S. would not play this card because this card is definitely in the stack of the U.S.

MR. BENJAMIN: Is this card that easily played?

MS. ALBRIGHT: It is not easily played, but I think it will be played. I think that, again I also speak for myself alone, I do think that it is essential for the United States to become deeply involved in trying to deal with what is going on in the Middle East in the largest term that Hubert talked about in terms of a regional approach to it. The Bush administration had a roadmap which they didn't take out of the glove

compartment and so the bottom line is there has to be an active American role. I believe that.

I also do think that dealing -- just the terminology with the Muslim world doesn't really work. There is no such thing as a monolithic Muslim world. And many Americans believe that most Muslims live in the Middle East. They actually live in Indonesia and in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and it's a much more complicated group of people that don't all agree with each other. And I do think that some of how some of the issues that are problems among Muslims has to be dealt with by Muslims. But what is difficult in playing whatever cards there are, if you look at what's going on now, there is not total agreement among the Arab countries in terms of what is going on in Gaza and those that are like Egypt in some ways trying to play a role are having internal problems, true also probably in Saudi Arabia.

So I think this is the most complicated issue we have. I do think that dealing with the -- there was an interesting op-ed peace today, it's not the peace process, it's the war process, but having to really deal with what is going on in the Middle East is crucial, but it is not the only aspect of how the West deals with Islam. We have to understand it better. And I do think that President Obama has a huge opportunity to do that because of his own knowledge and because of his appreciate of diversity.

I do think the Europeans have a problem with Muslims. In his book Hubert talks about what should be done vis-à-vis Turkey and the European Union and generally issues of how the Europeans deal with Muslims, and I don't think the U.S. should be the one that is always told that we're doing it wrong. We are a much more diversified, diverse society and in many ways much more tolerant.

MR. BENJAMIN: We could answer questions all day.

MR. VÉDRINE: Of course there will be a time for questions, but Madeleine, you were just talking about the differences amongst Muslims and in your book you provide us with a very interesting overview of what's going on in different parts of the world, but simply instead of using this as a reason for not doing anything, we could use these differences in order to impose a solution. And regarding the Near East, a lot of these Muslims are actually not playing a role at all because they are terrorized by Islamists and also they want the Palestinian issue to be addressed because it is this issue which is triggering or leading to this hatred of the West and makes it impossible for these leaders to engage with the West. So we need to help them even though they can't really do much. So we need to do this and I think (inaudible) that actually and that is pretty characteristic and typical of what's going on with Islam.

MR. BENJAMIN: You know they're very good friends because they read each other's books. We should open this up to the

audience. So please put up your hand and a microphone will magically come to you. Please identify yourself, and as is our custom here, please ensure that there is a question mark at the end of your question.

MR. FARROW: I'm Jack Farrow from Globalpost.com and I want to ask both states-people how they think the new secretary of state is going to fit on the line of realist versus idealist and whether there's any room in her interpretation versus the new president.

MS. ALBRIGHT: She's written on this in terms of also feeling that it is a false dichotomy and that one has to have idealistic goals and realistic approaches. Something that I've said that I think works for her is that it's a little bit like a -- foreign policy like a hot air balloon, you need the idealism to lift it up and the ballast to make it go in the right direction. And so I do think that that she has at least in articles, I think the one in "Foreign Affairs," kind of said that she thought it was a false dichotomy.

MR. VÉDRINE: I'm not in a very good position to answer your question, of course, but you used this word dichotomy, and we're not really talking about dichotomy, we're talking about bringing these notions together, idealism and realism, a mix. There's a term in French which is actually quite helpful I think. It is the pessimism of intelligence and optimism of the will and it's that same idea really when you think of it. It's just phrased differently. It's a combination of these various things.

MR. BENJAMIN: Next question?

MR. CHEN: Chow Chen, freelance correspondent. Mr. Védrine, if I understand you correctly, your so-called realistic policies (inaudible) is changed from before (inaudible) on the rest of the world and this is an attitude issue, and how do you change the attitude? And you are saying that U.S. restore leadership and it implies that the U.S. has lost leadership. To gain the leadership, U.S. cannot do it alone. How could the French and you to help U.S. to do this? Thank you.

MR. VÉDRINE: This idea of restoring leadership is something that Obama said. It is what the president-elect said, restore leadership. So it's not, you know, people just making this up or assessing that the U.S. lost its leadership. If you look at surveys throughout the world, you have confirmation of this, the fact that the prestige or reputation of the U.S. is terrible. And of course this is (inaudible) because as soon as Obama was elected I'm certain there was a huge hike in these percentages of people who have a good view, a favorable view of the U.S. And so I think that a lot of it has to do with the Middle East and generating trust and then we'll see what happens. And you were talking about France. I don't think France has much to do with this. I don't think France can really help out here. France is not -- or any other European country for that matter could not be operational in this respect. And so I think that when we talk about leadership a lot has to do with leadership within the

U.S. and restoring leadership within the U.S. and again referring to the economic issues and crisis. We will also be seeing leadership in the attitude of other countries around the world who will be testing the U.S. But you need to be careful here because the other -- we talk about a multipolar world, the other poles are going to try and come up with more leverage and at the same time they don't want American leadership to disappear entirely. Most of these other poles would rather have the U.S. dominate rather than have to deal with the neighboring pole. That's the strength of the American system if you will.

So there is no direct assistance from an ally. There's a more complex relationship here. I think it's not the U.S. being available to its allies, being in a better position to listen to what the Europeans are saying, but for this the Europeans need to demonstrate that they can be partners, not just people that either question what's being done or that are just being protected by the U.S. That's the way the relation needs to evolve. And if there is such a development, such an evolution, if you stop having the Europeans who are just complaining, if you have Europeans who are capable of stepping up who share the responsibility, but of course decision making needs to be shared by the U.S. You never have one without the other. If we manage therefore to bring all this together, then the West will have a much more significant role vis-à-vis China. So it's all about things leading to other things, and I think that in this respect the U.S. -- the

Europeans can contribute to the restoration of intelligent leadership by the U.S. if the U.S. is willing to accept this and if they come up with joint responses to their joint issues, I mean with their relations with the rest of the world. So it sounds very difficult, but that's what it's like really.

MS. ALBRIGHT: I think what is going to be difficult, just to be perfectly practical about this, let's posit that one of America's biggest problems right now is Afghanistan and that as campaigner, Senator Obama said that he was going to add troops in Afghanistan and that's what General Petraeus has been saying, and the question is will France contribute more troops in Afghanistan or will there be endless discussions about what the command structure of NATO is and who is the deputy et cetera. And by the time one has all those discussions within the various committees and whether France is rejoining NATO in the command structure and all the various things that I remember as part of the discussion, and what is the relationship between NATO and the E.U. in terms of who contributes what where, by then who knows where the Taliban will be.

So I think that it's a very real question, that we can all talk about the importance of more U.S.-European cooperation on name the subject, but that great diplomatic word, the modalities of getting there are so long-winded that it doesn't happen in time to make a difference. And I

think those are the issues that the next Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense et cetera are going to have to deal with.

MR. VÉDRINE: Afghanistan is a great example. It is a great example of this more general issue that we're talking about. Of course Obama will be asking the Europeans to do more. That's actually what he said in Berlin, and it's actually the only part of his speech in Berlin that was directly relevant for Europeans, basically come and do more in Afghanistan, and I think that this is not possible. It's not possible if there isn't an explanation not only under the command structure but also on the purpose, the objective, because there are two totally distinct, totally different objectives. There is the reaction and the response to 9/11 where everybody agreed that the American response was legitimate. This was self-defense, this was understandable from a security standpoint, and if you are talking about that then you would stay as long as it takes in order to really crunch al-Qaeda. This is extremely important and lasts as long as 50 years regardless of the country, actually, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

But there is another type of purpose which has started to emerge over the years in order to satisfy the various public opinions and this brings us back to our other topic, and that is to say we are in Afghanistan in order to bring democracy, in order to rebuild Afghanistan, open schools for little girls and all that. That's an interesting topic actually because of course everybody agrees with that. Everybody is in favor of

that. I mean you have to really be a monster not to be in favor of that. But at the same time it's unrealistic. We're just incapable of building something that doesn't exist. I mean, Afghanistan, a central state that doesn't exist, to create an economy that used to be entirely based on drug trade. So I think that we're confusing different purposes and that's what we need to look at. There's a security purpose which is realistic and which is something that we can agree to and then there is this much more idealistic, much more humanitarian, maybe a more loftier objective of democratization. But if we're talking about democracy for the various 'stans - Afghanistan, Pakistan and all that - we will need 2 million people for 10 years. We're not talking about 120,000 troops, we're talking about 2 million, and we need huge needs, and this wasn't even possible in the colonial period. Afghanistan resisted that. So in this case we're really dealing with this sort of caricature of a disconnect between what we would like to do and what is actually feasible. And from a human standpoint of course I'm not against that second possibility, that second purpose, but again it would require such a commitment that it's not realistic.

MR. BENJAMIN: For further discussion I guess. Time is running out so what I would like to do is get three questions bunched together back here, up here, and right on the aisle there and give our speakers the opportunity to pick and choose among them and answer

them as they will, recalling Governor Palin's remark that she would answer the questions she wanted, and off we go.

MR. : Thank you very much. Georgian television. New conflicts in the world are in post-Soviet territories are (inaudible) between Russia and Georgia. Secretary Albright, how do you think what can Obama's new administration to help Georgia (inaudible) this problem? And next question, how do you think it's possible to rebuilding Georgian territorial integrity now in this situation? Thank you very much.

MR. : (inaudible) India (inaudible) Asia Today. Thank you, madam. You have both great books and great views and very educational, and also happy new year. I think from what we have now discussed and what you have discussed, I think I have a question tomorrow for the White House and the State Department. Now the question for you is, both of you, Mister Minister, as far as talking about Afghanistan and dealing with the Muslim world, India has the second-largest population of Muslims, even more than entire Pakistan. But somehow Pakistan has become a hub of terrorism, but not India. Now how are you going to deal with Pakistan in the next administration, because this is where most of all the terrorists are going into Pakistan and also going against India? How President Obama will be dealing with this situation because he is very much worried about and we are living today in

a most dangerous world and that is the part or the most dangerous part is Pakistan today.

MS. : I am (inaudible) a student at Georgetown University. I have a question for Mr. Védrine. You talked about Europeans taking for granted the international community and perhaps even the international order with the United Nations as the source of legitimacy and really the central institution for international peace and security. My question is how do you propose the U.S. to take a leadership role in reforming the institution to become as relevant as possible in this multipolar world? Thanks.

MR. BENJAMIN: Why don't we go in reverse order? Secretary Albright, you can go first and then we'll give Minister Védrine the last word if that's okay.

MS. ALBRIGHT: Let me again say I speak for myself. I do not speak for the incoming Obama administration. I do think that the Georgia issue is one in which a very few countries, Nicaragua, have recognized the independence of Abkhazia and Ossetia and that there really has been a sense that the territorial integrity of Georgia is important. Georgia is about to face elections again and it is in a very delicate state and as a believer in democracy I hope very much that those elections show the democratic resolve of the people of Georgia.

Those of us that are outside the government or academics or people in the government also, there's almost a daily lottery about what is the most dangerous place in the world. I have said in my book that Pakistan has everything that gives you an international migraine. It has nuclear weapons, it has extremism, poverty, corruption, a very weak government, and is located in an area that is very important in terms of what is happening in Afghanistan, and then obviously the most recent problems with Mumbai. So I know that this is going to be very high on the administration's agenda as a very, very serious problem, and we are dealing in the case of India and Pakistan with friends and countries that have been and are important to us. I say this again as myself.

MR. VÉDRINE: Well, you said that we could pick our questions. Right? And once we're done, that's the other question. Right?

MS. ALBRIGHT: I wanted to answer yours.

MR. BENJAMIN: Yes, we are very good hosts here. You can choose and answer whatever you like.

MR. VÉDRINE: Well, that works out just fine doesn't it? As regards Pakistan, you see I understand that the Afghan issue cannot be solved through a (inaudible) standpoint nor by itself. We need an all-embracing approach. We need to (inaudible) political aspect, the military, and other issues. Now Pakistan's priority is not the fight against the terrorism. Their priority is to fight against India. Isn't that so? And to

protect themselves from India. Now if we want to ensure that Pakistan can choose their policies and not believe that they should look at Afghanistan for anything, then we should solve the basic underlying issue, and that is what is actually very difficult. I think that the Obama administration will be able to go even further in solving this problem. Otherwise Pakistan will say that, yes, we are fighting against terrorism, but they will continue to be obsessed with the regime they have. If possible the regime will oppose India's. Now we can pressure as much as we want Pakistan. We can change their president periodically, but I don't know how much this would help us. I hope that the Obama administration can adopt a regional approach with a Baker-Hamilton sort of approach taking into consideration the regional aspects and build a regional network. I think this in this effect the nuclear agreement is very important, the U.S.-India agreement. Unfortunately it wasn't signed. I say unfortunately because this could have been important as a precedent, but that's an entirely different issue.

Now with regards to U.N. reform, I am somewhat skeptical on this aspect because permanent members, some, do not want to see an increase in the number of permanent members. The Security Council is not representative of the world today where we know that the U.S., France, and U.K. don't want to change the number of permanent members, and China, Japan, and India would like to be permanent

members, and some countries don't want to see Germany taking a seat on the Security Council. So there seems to be an impasse. It is for that reason that I am somewhat skeptical when it comes to reforming the Security Council even during the Obama administration. I think that rather we will make progress on practical matters, from the G-8 for example. The G-8, the G-20, will be the platform that we will use to discuss new regulations, and this is what we will do until we finally find an obvious solution to the problem of enhancing the Security Council. We can start off I think with the G-8.

Well, if possible I would say one more thing here. We have been talking about democratization and this is a subject that concerns me. I think that we must bring together the very idealist approaches and having a more all-embracing approach instead. Now it is incumbent upon us, the industrialized countries, to ask what can we do in every instance to solve the problems. We must have an understanding of the different situations of different countries to know where they lie in their progress towards democratization. We should study what are the factors that are helping the democratization or the ones that are hampering it. For all those countries that have had a democracy but lost it, we have to see how we can restore it. You see it's different if a country has at some point been democratic or hasn't been. We can see how (inaudible) should help them establish democracy. You see with modern medicine we don't treat

two people with the same illness in exactly the same way. It is done on a case-by-case basis. The same should be done with the democratization process of countries.

Well, let's take China for instance. This is the big example that everybody talks about nowadays. Now quite recently we saw a document that was published in China. It is a text for democracy which represents the ideas of today's population, but we see in China how there is the emergence of the middle-class, the ever more prevalent presence of the internet, and how is this going to work out in the future? So in the particular case of China, we have to see what is going to be done with the people that wrote that document. I think all of them are in jail now, but what is to be done. At some point any effort regardless of how helpful it might be might be counterproductive. We have to find ways of encouraging democracy, to do it starting from within, and not to force it upon them in an overpowerful fashion.

MS. ALBRIGHT: We will clearly continue this discussion.

MR. BENJAMIN: Food for thought. I want to thank our speakers very much. We've had a really engaging and probing, optimistic, pessimistic, skeptical, and hopeful discussion, and all I can say is if you two ever have a free afternoon, please come back to Brookings because we'd love to do this again. Please give our speakers a warm hand. Please stay in your seats while they leave and let them make their way

out. There are also I should add copies of Mr. Védrine's book outside for anyone who wants to read it, and I heartily enjoy you to do so because it's a fascinating book. Anyway, thank you very much for coming.

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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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