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IS THE AMERICAN WORLD ORDER SUSTAINABLE AND NECESSARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY?
AN ADDRESS BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO (R-FL)

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Opening Remarks:

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United States Senate

Featured Speaker:

THE HONORABLE MARCO RUBIO (R-FL)
United States Senate

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TALBOTT: Good afternoon to all of you. I'm Strobe Talbott and it's my great pleasure to welcome you all here to Brookings today and a particular welcome to those of us who are going to be viewing this event on our webcast. And we've got a lot of other media here as well, which, of course, is a great compliment to our two guests of honor. We're also especially pleased to have five distinguished members of the diplomatic corps here today, as well as four Brookings trustees.

And it's always an honor to have a member of the Senate come down from the Hill to Think Tank Row, so it's a double honor when we get two senators. And the fact that they represent different parties testifies to their bipartisanship, which is a rare, if not endangered, commodity in this city today, one that we here at Brookings do our best to foster and protect.

Senator Marco Rubio is a member of the Senate Foreign Relation Committee. He is a member of the Select Committee on Intelligence, and he has already established himself as a vigorous advocate of intense and widespread U.S. engagement in leadership in the world. He is an internationalist, and from that perspective he is going to be talking to us today about American foreign policy and the challenges facing American leadership.

He will be introduced by Joe Lieberman, who is a longstanding friend of this institution and, I might add, a very good friend of quite a number of us here today. And Joe, we're going to miss you when you leave the Senate, but I have no doubt that you will remain a forceful voice in the national and the international arena.

When Senator Rubio finishes making his remarks, Marvin Kalb of our Foreign Policy Program is going to moderate a discussion here on the podium and then

engage as many members of the audience as he can for the remainder of the program. So, Joe, over to you. (Applause)

SENATOR LIEBERMAN: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thanks, Strobe Talbott. Thanks to Brookings. And a special thank you to Bob Kagan for orchestrating and inspiring this event today. I am really honored to have been asked to introduce Senator Marco Rubio, a rising star in the next generation of America's foreign policy leaders.

Marco came to the Senate at a moment in our history when America was looking inward, focused on our economic woes. It would have been very easy for him in that political climate to have given attention only to domestic issues. And I would guess that many people advised him to do exactly that, including probably a media consultant or pollster or two. But instead, Marco sought membership, as Strobe has said, on the Senate Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees and has devoted much of his time and energy to foreign policy and national security. He has not done so because there are votes to be gained, but because of his steadfast belief in the importance of American leadership in the world and his understanding of how much that leadership determines our security and well-being here at home.

Marco Rubio's foreign policy is principled, patriotic, and practical. It grows, I believe, from his own life's journey from tyranny to freedom, but also from his dedicated study of history and contemporary challenges. His foreign policy, as I've come to know it, puts him in a proud bipartisan tradition that links together our greatest Republican presidents like Ronald Reagan and our greatest Democratic presidents like Harry S. Truman. It is a tradition that recognizes that America is defined not by the land under our feet or even by the blood in our veins, but by our founding values, first among

them being freedom and equality of opportunity whose promotion and protection will always be our first national purpose. It is a foreign policy tradition that is bipartisan and idealistic and recognizes that there is evil in the world, that we should not be afraid to call it by its name; that we have enemies who cannot be negotiated into peace, but must be confronted with our strength. And it is a bipartisan foreign policy tradition that recognizes that the survival of liberty and prosperity in our country ultimately depends on the expansion of liberty and prosperity throughout the world.

In word and deed, Marco Rubio has become a leading advocate for freedom fighters and political dissidents throughout the world, from Venezuela to Iran, from Syria to North Korea. You can regularly find him on the floor of the Senate speaking out for those whom dictators seek to silence. At a moment when America faces many serious challenges, both here at home and throughout the world, and when it has become fashionable to suggest that our best days are behind us and we ought to pull back, Senator Rubio brings to the public arena a contagious personal optimism and an abiding and patriotic faith in America's destiny.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to introduce to you Senator Marco Rubio of Florida. (Applause)

SENATOR RUBIO: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Senator Lieberman. You know, one of the best things about working in the Senate is the opportunity to learn and to know from colleagues whose statesmanship is an example for the rest of us. In my brief time in the Senate, I've had the chance to know Joe Lieberman and learn from him. He represents a view of America's role in the world and the tradition of Democratic leaders like Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman through John F. Kennedy and "Scoop" Jackson. In my every experience with him, it's been evident that

Joe Lieberman is a statesman who takes positions on every important national issue because he believes they best serve our country's interests and values. So, thank you, Joe, for your introduction and, more importantly, thank you for your example. I'm privileged to serve with you.

I want to thank Brookings for this opportunity. I wanted to contribute today a few thoughts on the current debate over America's role in the world in this, the 21st century. And I wanted to give this speech today to share with you my observations of someone who has a long-term interest in foreign policy, but now finds himself in the role of foreign policy-maker.

I'm always cautious about generalizations in politics, but until recently the general perception was that American conservatism believed in robust and muscular foreign policy. That was certainly the hallmark of the foreign policies of both President Bushes and of President Reagan. But when I arrived in the Senate last year, I found that some of the traditional sides in the foreign policy debate had shifted. On the one hand, I found liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans working together to advocate our withdrawal from Afghanistan or staying out of Libya. On the other hand, I found myself partnering with Democrats, like Bob Menendez or Senator Casey, on a more forceful foreign policy. In fact, the resolutions I co-authored with Senator Casey on Syria and the resolution I co-sponsored with Senator Menendez condemning fraudulent elections in Nicaragua were held up by Republicans.

And so, I recently joked the other day that today in the U.S. Senate, on foreign policy, the further you move to the right, the likelier you are to end up on the left. And I found this sentiment to be true not just in the Senate, but back home as well. For example, many of my loyal supporters were very highly critical of my decision to call for a

more active role in Libya.

Now, the easiest thing for me to do here today is to give a speech on my disagreements with this administration on foreign policy, and I do have many, but I wanted to begin by addressing another trend in our body politic, one that increasingly says that it is time to focus less on the world and more on ourselves.

Now, I always begin by reminding people of how good a strong and engaged America has been for the world. And in making that argument, I have been recently relying heavily on Brookings fellow Bob Kagan's timely book, *The World America Made*. He did not pay me to say that. (Laughter) He begins this book with a pretty useful exercise. He asks readers to imagine what world order might have existed from the end of World War II until the present if America -- absent American leadership. Could we say for certain that it would look anything like America's vision of an increasingly freer and more open international system where catastrophic conflicts between great powers were avoided? Democracy and free market capitalism flourished? Where prosperity spread wider and wider, and billions of people emerged from poverty? Would it have occurred, if after the war, America had minded its own business and left the world to sort out its affairs without our leadership? Almost surely not. As Bob persuasively argued, every world order in history has reflected the interest and the beliefs of its strongest power just as this world order still largely reflects ours.

Now, of course, many of these things were not achieved by us on our own. They weren't achieved because we succeeded in all our international endeavors. They weren't achieved because everyone always agreed with everything we did. And they weren't achieved because we were the most popular country on Earth.

They were achieved because the United States had a vision, the will and

means to do the hard work of bringing it into existence, and then of maintaining it. We had the will and the means to defend its norms and institutions and the security of our partners, face down its challengers, assist other people in attaining their liberty, keep trade routes open, and support the expansion of free-market capitalism that accelerated the growth of the global economy. And we did it without coveting other countries' territories or seizing their assets or robbing them of their opportunities.

The purpose of the institutions we established, from the United Nations to the World Bank and the IMF, was to spread peace and prosperity, not to certain narrow American interests. Other nations consented to our leadership because they saw what the economic and political values of the American worldview had achieved for us and they wanted the same for themselves. They followed us because they believed that our way, the American way, the principals of free people and free markets, was the best way to advance their societies. But as Bob also points out, we haven't ever really solved this role. And despite our worries, doubts, and occasional resentment, we're proud of it and we should be. As Bob's book highlights, a number of facts are worth repeating here today about the post-World War II world America made. For example, the global GDP has risen 4 percent annually since the end of World War II, 4 times faster than the average in past centuries. Four billion people, mostly outside of Europe and North America, have been lifted out of poverty during that time. The number of democracies in the world have proliferated nearly tenfold. And we have had the longest period of peace between the great powers ever.

Now, before anyone accuses me of claiming that America has ushered in the Biblical promise of a new Heaven and a new Earth, let's stop and remember that the world America made is better, but it is not perfect. But it is vastly more peaceful and

prosperous than any other age in recorded history. So, this is the world America made.

But what is the role for America now? Is now finally the time for us to mind our own business? Is now the time to allow others to lead? Is now the time for us to play the role of equal partner?

Well, I always start by reminding people that what happens all over the world is our business. Every aspect of our lives is directly impacted by global events. The security of our cities is connected to the security of small hamlets in Afghanistan and Pakistan and Yemen and Somalia. Our cost of living, the safety of our food, the value of the things we invent, make, and sell are just a few examples of everyday aspects of our lives that are directly related to events abroad and make it impossible for us to focus only on our issues here at home.

The next question I'm asked then, is why doesn't someone else lead for a change? Why do we always have to be taking care of the problems of the world? Isn't it time for someone else to step up? And I always begin my answer to that question with a question of my own. If we start doing less, who's going to do more? For example, would a world order -- or China, at least as we know China right now, as the leading power, be as benignly disposed to the political and economic aspirations of other nations as we are? Now, look, I still have hope that behind the curtain of secrecy that veils the Chinese state that there are voices that advocate for the peaceful and responsible rise of that nation, voices that reject the idea of a global power as a zero-sum game. We hold out hope for a new China of tomorrow, but for now we must deal with the China we know today, a China which enjoys its closest relationships with countries like North Korea and Iran. So at least for now, it would be foolish to be confident in the idea that China can be counted on to defend and support global, economic, and political freedom or to take up

the cause of human rights.

By the way, the rest of the world has -- especially their neighbors -- have figured that out too and they would prefer not to take that risk.

The short answer is that at least not yet anyways, there is no one else to hand off the baton to, even if that were a good idea. On the most difficult transnational challenges of our time, who will lead if we do not? The answer, at least today, is that no other nation or organization on earth is willing or able to do so.

So, finally I'll be asked, if we still have to lead, can't we at least be equal partners with somebody else? In fact, shouldn't we rely on other nations to carry more of the burden? After all, we all know that they resent us telling them what to do, right? Well, in this new century more than ever before, America should work with our capable allies in finding solutions to global problems, not because America's gotten weaker, but because our partners have grown stronger.

It's worth pointing out, by the way, that this is not a new idea for us. Our greatest successes have always occurred in partnership with other likeminded nations. Now, America has acted unilaterally in the past, and I believe it should continue to do so in the future when necessity requires, but our preferred option, since the U.S. became a global leader, has been to work with others to achieve our goals.

So, yes, global problems do require international coalitions and on that point, this Administration is correct, but effective international coalitions don't form themselves; they need to be instigated and led, and more often than not, they can only be instigated and led by the United States. And I believe that's what this Administration sometimes fails to understand. Yes, there are more countries able and willing to join efforts to meet the global challenges of our time, but experience has proven that

American leadership is almost always indispensible to its success.

You can see this in the actions of -- or sometimes lack thereof, of the World Trade Organization or the UN Security Council, and when American influence is diminished, for example, by the one nation, one vote formula of the UN General Assembly or the UN Human Rights Council, we see absurd and often appalling results. Multilateral international organizations can be a forum for forming international coalitions, but as we have repeatedly seen over the last few years, the more difficult the problem, the likelier bad actors will spoil meaningful solutions within the current system of international organizations.

For example, we can't always rely on the UN Security Council to achieve consensus on major threats to international peace and security. As we've seen on North Korea, on Syria, on Iran, China and Russia simply will not join that consensus when they do not perceive the problem as a threat to their narrow national interests.

Instead, they exercise their veto or threat of a veto to thwart effective and timely response. The Security Council remains a very valuable forum but not an indispensible one. We can't walk away from a problem because some members of the Security Council refuse to act.

In those instances where the veto power of either China or Russia impede the world's ability to deal with a significant threat, it is the United States that will have to organize and lead coalitions with or without Security Council resolutions.

And this concept, by the way, is neither novel nor partisan. President Clinton acted exactly in this way in Kosovo with the support of Congressional leaders like Senator Lieberman. Everywhere we look, we are presented with opportunities for American leadership to help shape a better world in this new century.

And we have to view these opportunities through the context of the fact that in every region of the world other countries look apprehensively at the growing influence of newly emerging powers in their midst and look to the U.S. to counter balance them.

In some instances, these emerging strategic realignments are not inevitably destined for conflict. For example, if China chooses to conform its rise to the international order, there is much to be hopeful for in the Pacific region.

On the other hand, there is no reason for optimism about Iranian designs on regional dominance in the Middle East. And it's indeed in that region where multilateral cooperation is most urgently needed right away, whether in bringing an end to the bloodshed and the Assad tyranny in Syria or in helping Egypt overcome economic hardships and move towards the establishment of a true democracy, or in addressing the threat posed by a nuclear Iran. America shouldn't try to solve any of these problems alone, but neither will any of these challenges be addressed without strong and creative American leadership.

Now other nation has the influence, relationships, or the reputation for seeking lasting solutions to intractable problems than the United States has. Iran's nuclear ambitions, by the way, are more than just weapons. Iran wants to become the dominant power in the Middle East. But given Iran's history of human rights abuses, fomenting sectarian conflict and sponsorship of terrorism as a tool of state craft, the world must never allow that to happen.

Fortunately, preventing a dominant Iran is a goal we share with virtually every other nation in the region. Now, certainly we welcome Russia and China's cooperation in facing this challenge, but the prospect of a nuclear capable Iran is so

unacceptable that we must be prepared to act with or without them.

And we have a host of willing partners in every region of the world who share our concerns and are relying on our leadership to compel Iran to abandon its ambitions. Now, preferably, we can succeed through coercive means short of military force. We should be open to negotiations with Iran, but always remember that they should not be deemed a success when they only lead to further negotiations.

Stronger pressure shouldn't be postponed and the expectation of our forbearance will encourage Iran to act in good faith. Nothing in our experience with Iran suggests that it considers such gestures anything other than a lack of resolve on our part.

Ultimately, however, we must remember that their ambitions so far have come with a high tolerance for pain; therefore, even as we work through the United Nations and with the international community on sanctions, and on negotiations, we should operate on a dual track. We should also be preparing our allies and the world for the uncomfortable reality that unfortunately, if all else fails, preventing a nuclear Iran may tragically require military solution.

The goal of preventing a dominant Iran is so important that every regional policy we adopt should be crafted with that overriding goal in mind. The current situation in Syria is an example of such an approach. The fall of Assad would be a significant blow to Iran's ambitions. On those grounds alone, we should be seeking to help the people of Syria bring him down.

But on the Foreign Relations Committee, I've noticed that some members are so concerned about the challenges of a post-Assad Syria that they've lost sight of the advantages of it. First, Iran would lose its ally and see its influence and ability to cause trouble in the region would be correspondingly reduced, but Hezbollah would

lose its most important ally too along with its weapons supplier. And the prospects for a more stable, peaceful, and freer Lebanon would improve.

Secondly, the security of our ally, the strongest and most enduring democracy in the region, Israel, with whom we are bound by the strongest ties of mutual interest and shared value and affection would improve as well. And so would the prospects for peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Finally, the nations in the region see Syria as a test of our continued willingness to lead in the Middle East. If we prove unwilling to provide leadership, they will conclude that we are no longer a reliable security partner and they will decide to take matters into their own hands, and that means a regional arms race, the constant threat of armed conflict, and crippling fuel prices here at home due to the instability.

The most powerful and influential nation in the world cannot ask smaller, more vulnerable nations to take risks while we stand on the sidelines. We have to lead because the rewards of effective leadership are so great.

Forming and leading a coalition with Turkey and the Arab League Nations to assist the opposition by creating a safe haven and equipping the opposition with food, medicine, communication tools, and potentially weapons, will not only weaken Iran, it will ultimately increase our ability to influence the political environment of a post-Assad Syria.

The spread and success of political and economic freedom in the Middle East is in our vital interest and it will certainly present challenges, as newly enfranchised societies elect leaders whose views and purposes oppose and even offend ours.

But in the long-term, because governments that rule by the consent of the governed just be responsive to the material needs and demands of their people, they

are less likely to engage in costly confrontations that harm their economies and deprive their people of the opportunity to improve their circumstances.

The expansion and success of political and economic freedom is critical to our interests in every region of the world and nowhere more so than in our own hemisphere. It's no coincidence that the rise of economic prosperity in the Western Hemisphere is directly related or directly coincides with the democratic gains of the previous two decades. Mexico, Peru, and Colombia are three examples of nations that have weathered the global economic downturn in a stronger position than ever.

Our goal for our region should be pretty straightforward: our coalition of neighboring democratic nations that trade freely and live peacefully with one another. Other than overcoming our own past indifference and the lack of focus on this goal, there are two other challenges. The first is Venezuela and the other ALBA countries whose overt -- and their overt anti-Americanism.

Now, they make a lot of noise and we can't ignore their anti-democratic abuses or their growing closeness to Iran, but our greater challenge, really, is a second and more subtle one and that's the effort of some nations to replace our influence with their influence and to use protectionism and unfair practices to pursue that aim.

The anecdote for both of these problems is to reengage energetically in the region. First, we must be a clear and consistent advocate for freedom, and to be free isn't just limited to elections, it's a way of governance. In Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador, elected leaders have used their power to undermine fundamental freedoms by attacking the press, the courts, and their political opponents.

Second, we need to commit to being a reliable partner as our neighbors cope with significant security challenges. Both Mexico and Colombia, they need our

continued commitment to win their respective wars against criminal organizations. And we must also make it abundantly clear that we will not tolerate Iran exporting violence and terrorism to our hemisphere.

Third, we must reject protectionism and instead embrace the ultimate goal of a free trade area of the Americas. The recently approved free trade agreements with Colombia and Panama was a good step. We need to move forward to bring both Canada and Mexico into the transpacific partnership.

And fourth, we should move aggressively to form a strong energy partnership with Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, and a post-Chavez Venezuela. A stable Western Hemisphere displacing an unstable Middle East and an increasingly belligerent Russia as the center of the world's energy production would create countless jobs for Americans and energy security for the world.

In Asia, the question of whether China's rise will be peaceful and respectful of their neighbors is one of our biggest long-term challenges, but we must make it abundantly clear that we are firmly committed to our defense agreements and firmly committed to our allies to the freedom of navigation on our seas, and the growing strategic importance of Asia actually heightens, not diminishes, the importance of Europe.

U.S.-European cooperation is a valuable compliment to our work with our East Asia allies. See, all of us, Asians, Americans, Europeans, have a common interest in seeing China evolve in a peaceful and democratic direction and we have a common interest in seeing China abide by the rules of the international economic order.

The United States, Europe and East Asia represent 71 percent of the world's economy. That's a lot of leverage and we should use it to address problems,

such as China's disregard for intellectual property rights, gross human rights violations, its unfair trade practices, its currency manipulation, and the looming presence of China state-owned industries.

In addition, this U.S.-EU partnership is critical to a more realistic approach to Russia. I know some here might disagree, and certainly the President would, but I feel like we've gotten precious little from Russia in return for its concessions on nuclear weapons. The reason is because Russia's domestic politics shape its foreign policies.

An autocratic Russia tends to be more anti-Western and to act in ways that make it harder to integrate Russia into the global community and the free international order.

Now, Putin may talk tough, but he knows he's weak. Everywhere he looks he sees threats to his rule, real and imagined, and so he uses state-owned media to preach paranoia and anti-Western sentiments to Russians. He faces a rising China to the east and hostile Islamic forces to the south, but he tells his people that the biggest threat they face is from NATO.

Some of our allies in Europe increasingly feel that our recent reset with Russia tended to ignore, and in some cases, undermined them. We need to reenergize and lead a united coalition with European nations to tackle issues ranging from missile defense to the continued enlargement of NATO. Furthermore, if we are successful in forming a Western Hemisphere Coalition that takes advantage of the shale gas revolution, we will be able to help our European

allies, reduce their coerced dependence on Russian energy, as well.

A reenergized US/European coalition can help empower those forces within Russia, working to end corruption and open their political system. And if that happens, then we will be closer than ever to the bipartisan American vision endorsed by both the Clinton administration and the Bush administrations of a Europe, whole and free.

Faced with historic deficits and dangerous national debt, there's been increasing talk of reducing our foreign aid budget, but we need to remember that these international coalitions that we have the opportunity to lead are not just military ones, they can also be humanitarian ones. In every region of the world, we should always search for ways to use US aid and humanitarian assistance to strengthen our influence, the effectiveness of our leadership, and the service of our interests and ideals.

When done so effectively, in partnership with the private sector, with faith-based organizations and with our allies, foreign aid is a very cost-effective way, not only to export our values and our example, but to advance our security and our economic interests. One of the programs that I am proudest of is the effort that began under President George W. Bush with robust congressional support, and it's continued under President Obama, and that's to combat AIDS in Africa.

Millions of human beings are alive today because the United States, and others in the global community, are paying for their anti viral medication. This investment allows us to say, without any hint of exaggeration, that by 2015, the world could see the beginning of the end of AIDS, something that was unthinkable just a few years ago. We need to continue this kind of foreign aid investment, not just in PEPFAR, but in malaria control and vaccine programs and in agriculture initiatives so that we can make similar strides in preventing hunger and establishing a healthy global community.

This was by no means intended to be a comprehensive analysis of our challenges and opportunities around the world, after all, we could dedicate entire speeches to the emergence of functional states in Africa, or the challenges supposed by the Arab Spring. My purpose was not to catalog our interests in every corner of the planet, my purpose was to argue that the world is a better place because of America's engagement in it, and it will continue to get better only if we continue to engage.

Now, I disagree with the way in which the current administration has chosen to engage, for while there are few global problems we can solve by ourselves, there are virtually no global problems that can be solved without us. In confronting the challenges of our time, there are more nations than ever capable of

contributing, but there is still only one nation capable of leading.

And I disagree with voices in my own party who argue that we should not engage at all, who warn that we should heed the words of John Quincy Adams not to go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. I disagree, because all around us, we see the human face of America's influence. It actually begins not with our government, but with our people.

Millions of people have been the catalyst of democratic change in their own countries, but they never would have been able to connect with each other if an American had not invented Twitter. The atrocities of Joseph Kony would be largely unknown, but in fact, millions of people know about it because an American made a film and distributed it on another American innovation, YouTube.

And even in our military engagements, the lasting impact of our influence on the world is hard to ignore. Millions of people have emerged from poverty around the world in part because our Navy protects the freedom of the seas, allowing the ever-increasing flow of goods between nations. And long after the last American soldier has left Afghanistan, God willing, there will be a millions-strong and productive and independent Afghan women, because today, they are the first girls in generations to attend school, thanks to the generosity of the American people.

We do these things because we're a compassionate people, but we

also do it because it's in our national interest. Because perhaps more than any other nation on Earth, we understand that a world that is freer, more just, more peaceful and more prosperous poses less of a threat. Now, look, I know this is a time of great uncertainty, a time when many wonder if America is in decline.

And, once again, as Bob Kagan points out in his book, however, there have been other times when we felt less than confident about the future. We need to look no further than the decade of my birth for an example; in the 1970s, we experienced setbacks against communism in Asia, the collapse of trust in government, the oil shock, Stagflation, high interest rates, Soviet expansion, the hostage crisis in Iran, and disco music.

Americans were worried that something had permanently changed for our country, we couldn't be certain our standard of living would improve generation after generation, and even less certain that we could maintain America's primacy in world affairs. Then, as now, a serious school of thought emerged to confirm these worries, and it gained attention in our national debates.

We had a nice run, but nothing lasts forever, the argument went, our problems are too numerous, our resources are too depleted, our economy too dependent on dying industries, our public institutions too inadaptable, and our rivals too potent for us to keep pace with, much less stay ahead of. And now, they said,

back then, the most important responsibility of public officials is to manage our decline intelligently and to mitigate its consequences at home and abroad.

We know now, of course, that that's not how it turned out. By the end of next decade, few were speculating about what the world would be like without American leadership, because we were, once again, in a unique interpolar moment when American power and influence seemed virtually unchallenged. Well, now we're worried again, and that's understandable, the pace of change in the world is so fast, and the challenges we face are so numerous and serious that many Americans worry that we can't sustain our way of life at home, much less maintain the burden of leading the world.

The financial crisis, the steep drop in the value of our homes, a deep recession and excruciating slow recovery, high unemployment, stagnant wages, record budget deficits and public debt, a lack of confidence in the ability of our government and political system to solve problems, soaring energy prices, too-long wars, new and complex threats to international peace and stability, and the rapid rise of China as an economic competitor and a rival for global influence.

There are plenty of reasons to worry. And yet, with all these problems, there's absolutely no reason why America cannot remain a global super power in this new century, as well. We have a huge head start in dealing with the

challenges of transforming; we have the advantage of concentrating more of our energies, resources, productivity and innovation on figuring out the future.

Our continued power is possible, but it is not self-perpetuating, it will require us to do what every generation of Americans before us has done; confront and solve the pressing domestic challenges of our time. It may not seem that way, if you follow the daily news coming in from around the world, but this new century is a time of great promise.

It is not the promise of a perfect world, not one without injustice, violence, conflict, hunger or disease, it is the promise of a better world, better than the one we have today, better than the one we have ever known, a world where democratically elected leaders govern as responsible democrats, and avoid armed conflicts with their neighbors, a world where oppressing women or selling children is not culturally acceptable anywhere, a world where AIDS is a disease of history, and starvation is no longer part of our future, a world of extraordinary innovation.

The generations born since the spread of the worldwide web are the most skilled collaborators ever. And now that everyone, everywhere, can talk to anyone, anywhere, at any time, they can talk to each other and come up with new ideas that are still unimaginable to us today. Above all else, the 21st century provides us the opportunity for more freedom, a world where more people are free to

grow their economies, free to pursue their dreams, free to become prosperous. This is the promise of this new century, but it will not happen if we are not engaged, it will not happen if we do not lead.

Why does it have to start with us, some say, why do we have to do it? We find our answer in the words of a non-American in an address to Congress in 2003, British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said; "I know it's hard on America. And in some small corner of this vast country, out in Nevada or Idaho or these places I've never been to but always wanted to go, I know out there there's a guy getting on with his life, perfectly happy, minding his own business, saying to you, the political leaders of this country, 'Why me, and why us, and why America?'

"And the only answer is, because destiny put you in this place in history in this moment in this time, and the task is yours to do." And so it is, for this century is a time of tremendous challenge, but it is also a time of tremendous promise. This is, indeed, the world America made, and it is freer and more prosperous than it has ever been, and it can be even better. As Americans, we cannot make that happen ourselves, but the world cannot make it happen without us.

Thank you very much.

MR. KALB: Thank you very much, Senator Rubio. This program is

being webcast, I want to repeat that again, and if you want to reach us by Twitter, the hashtag is B L Rubio. Now, we do not have a great deal of time, and I know that you're both in a rush to get back to the Hill. But, Senator Rubio, I'd like to, you start by speaking of your long-time passion for foreign policy, and clearly, in your speech, you've demonstrated that, and you've made this point about the continued role of a strong America, and a leadership sponsored by America.

How concerned are you, however, because this also comes through in your talk, about the rise of a new isolationism, perhaps sponsored by a number of people in your own party? That's why I'm raising it.

SENATOR RUBIO: Well, I'm not sure that this inward-looking tendency has been new, I think, as Bob points out in his book, and I point out in my speech, and many of you have written, it's also been a tendency of America to not want to get engaged in the world if we don't have to. We don't really enjoy getting engaged around the world and telling people what to do. We've done so because history has called upon us to do that.

So I think that, combined with some of the domestic issues that we're facing today, and the challenges that I outlined lead to the natural tendency of saying maybe it's time to look inwards once again. I think it's the responsibility of policymakers like ourselves to remind people that there is no such thing as just an

American problem.

That every aspect of our lives is directly impacted by things that are going on around the world, I think that's always been true, but that's increasingly true, given the global nature of our of economy today. And so I think that's why it critical for us to explain to people that, in fact, everything they're going to do today, from the price of the food they're going to eat to the quality of air they're going to breathe is directly related to decisions being made overseas.

MR. KALB: Okay. Let me, then, be specific and ask you about Afghanistan, which is a subject you barely touched on in the talk. But if you take a look at the latest polling data, it's clear that more and more Americans are getting fed up with the continued American involvement in Afghanistan.

Are you confident that the Afghan armed forces will be able to pick up security for themselves in a time frame that is "acceptable" to the US?

SENATOR RUBIO: Well that partially will depend on us, and largely depend on them. But partially, it will depend upon the commitment that we make to ensuring that that comes about. So, for example, I think there's been tremendous progress in some of their elite forces, some of their special forces that conduct specialized operations, and there's great reason for optimism there.

As far as the rank and file of their military forces, there's more concern.

And part of the concern -- or part of the instability about its future -- is because folks in the region are not quite clear what our long-term commitment is. In essence, if you're in the region and you think the Americans and NATO are going to be gone in a few years, you start hedging bets, you start figuring maybe this might not be smart for me to be too cooperative.

Because the people who are going to be running this, the Taliban, in a few years in their mind, are going to make us pay the price. So part of it is this long-term agreement that, hopefully, the details will be announced soon, that you may be more aware of, hopefully will start to give some certainty about the role that the countries are going to play in that region.

MR. KALB: I think what I'm trying to get at is, in other words, you're saying that our remaining in Afghanistan is more important than the desire of the American people to get out.

SENATOR RUBIO: Well, I think the desire of the American people is a reflection of the fact that we've lost lives and treasure there, and you cannot put a dollar figure on that in terms of the number. People have seen loved ones lose their lives or be injured, and so clearly, people are reflecting that. There's a certain level of natural fatigue at conflicts.

I think it's critical, once again -- and I don't believe the timeframe in Afghanistan is an indefinite one -- but again, I think it's critical for public policymakers to clearly explain, and persuasively explain, to the American people why our engagement

there is so important.

Not only does it honor the sacrifice and the work that's already been done, but strategically, it's important on a number of fronts. In addition to having a functional Afghanistan that no longer is the place where future attacks against the United States could be coordinated from, for example, our presence in a strong and stable Afghanistan will provide us many more options to deal with increasing uncertainty in Pakistan or in other nations in the region.

MR. KALB: And you think a strong, stable Afghanistan is a good, strong, stable possibility?

SENATOR RUBIO: I don't think it's going to become Canada, but I certainly think that it has the opportunity to create for itself a functional nation state. But again, a lot of that will be dependent upon our commitment to helping them get there.

MR. KALB: You spoke about the importance of American leadership, especially in the Middle East. Let me ask you, and try to bring in Senator Lieberman as well -- you speak about the U.S. helping to create a safe haven, providing food and medicine, communication equipment, and then you add "potentially weapons."

Now the word potentially does not seem to me a clear definition of American leadership. So what do you mean "potentially weapons"?

SENATOR RUBIO: Well, since my speech --

MR. KALB: And what kind?

SENATOR RUBIO: Sure. I'll answer that first. First of all, we have to ensure that whoever it is, if ultimately we equip them or our allies equip them, we understand the nature of who they are, their ability to protect these weapons from falling into the wrong hands. They have to show us some increased structural capacity.

In essence, you can't just give that over to a force that's largely disorganized, and can become -- you know, the weapons could fall into the wrong hands in a global marketplace.

So I think we need to see some progress in terms of the development, and more organization around --

MR. KALB: How long?

SENATOR RUBIO: Well, it all depends. I mean, it all depends on how long it takes for them to organize, but it's a catch-22.

MR. KALB: But where does American leadership come in?

SENATOR RUBIO: Well, American leadership comes in helping them get organized. One of the criticisms that I hear is we don't know who the opposition is. They're not well-organized, or they're not well-coordinated. And I know you had a chance to visit, so you may want to comment.

Some of that is what we need to help them with. I mean, certainly they're disorganized and not well-organized, because two years ago, none of them were involved in this endeavor. This is something that sprung up from the grassroots. So I think you've got to help create that capacity before you ultimately make a decision like weapons.

And let me just say, it doesn't have to be the United States. There are other nations in the region that I think would be willing to step into that void, and help along with this effort. And you may want to comment --

MR. KALB: Senator Lieberman, I'd like to ask specifically--you have spoken about support of the use of American airpower in Syria. Am I right?

SENATOR LIEBERMAN: Yeah, that's correct.

MR. KALB: Okay, what about boots on the ground? Do you go that far?

SENATOR LIEBERMAN: No, no, I don't. There's no need for American boots on the ground, because there's very broad willingness among the Syrian opposition to take the fight to Assad.

I will tell you that -- and I admire Marco for how explicit he's been about Syria, and how we're called in to do something. This is a classic exhibit, an illustration of exactly what Senator Rubio was talking about, which is almost everybody in the region, except Iran, believes that, one, Assad's brutal slaughter of his own people has to stop, and two, if he falls, it will be a devastating body blow to Iran, which almost everybody else in the region wants to see happen.

But no one else in the region will assert any leadership unless we do. That's what they told John McCain and me when we were there. And I agree with what Senator Rubio said. At some point, we have to work to get the opposition better organized. They've come a long way in a year, having grown up in a country where Assad didn't allow any opposition to take shape.

But at some point, we simply have to say, we're going to help them, we're going to give them weapons to defend themselves, and that will make them strong and more organized.

MR. KALB: Wait a minute. We are going to get them -- the U.S.?

SENATOR LIEBERMAN: We and the rest of our allies. There's a lot of willingness to be involved here, but no boots on the ground. And frankly, in our direct conversations with the political and military leaders of the Syrian opposition, really, what they asked for -- effectively all they asked for was weapons. Give us the weapons to defend ourselves. We're not going to give up, but we will not be able to bring down

Assad unless the rest of the world helps us.

MR. KALB: You've both talked about the link between Syria and Iran, and I want to take up a phrase from your speech, Senator. You said, "If all else fails, preventing a nuclear Iran may require a military solution." Do you have in mind the use of American military power to bring down that nuclear Iran option?

SENATOR RUBIO: Well, when we get into tactics of --

MR. KALB: Oh, this is beyond tactics.

SENATOR RUBIO: I'm always very cautious about talking -- I'm very respectful of the role the President has as Commander in Chief. My point is, my bigger point is, that ultimately, we would hope negotiations would work. I mean, we don't have a really good track record of negotiations with Iran, but you would hope that would work. You would hope the sanctions would either discourage them from continuing, or empower some voices within that regime that are arguing that they shouldn't go this far.

That's what we hope, and we should try everything we can to avoid that. But there is the reality. I think we have to come to the conclusion that an Iran with nuclear weapons is an unimaginable thing. We cannot sound permissible, and that no option should be off the table because of that.

I think the President's basically said as much in the comments that he's made. So certainly yes, look, I think we are the most powerful military force in the world, and it's difficult to imagine a successful engagement that doesn't have significant U.S. engagement.

But once again, I mean, while that should be discussed, we're hopeful that a negotiation will work. I'm not necessarily overly optimistic about it. My bigger concern is that a reliance on negotiations would lead us to somehow postpone sanctions

or walk away from some of the other things we're working on.

MR. KALB: One final question, because I know you're both anxious to get back to work, as we say up on the Hill.

SENATOR RUBIO: Not really.

SENATOR LIEBERMAN: This is much more engaging than postal reports.

SENATOR RUBIO: I left that out of the speech.

MR. KALB: One country about which you've spoken very warmly is Israel, and people talk about the possibility of Israel taking direct military action against Iran, perhaps even sometime this year. Would you, as a great supporter of Israel, back Israel in that kind of operation?

SENATOR RUBIO: Well, look, the leaders of Israel have the same obligation as leaders of any country have, and that is to ultimately provide for the national security of their own people. So I'm not in a position to sit here and dictate to Israel's leaders what they should or should not do.

Let me just say this. I think that the clear, and more concise, and more persuadable the American position is on this issue, the less likely they may be to do something like that in the short term.

But ultimately, I think we need to be very clear, as I've outlined in the speech, that while we would prefer for negotiations to work, and for the sanctions to convince them, it may require, tragically -- as I use the word, because we always want to avoid armed conflict as often as possible -- but the notion that Iran would have a nuclear capability is so horrifying that no option should be off the table. And I think the clearer the United States is on that, the better off the region of the world is going to be.

MR. KALB: Okay. We've got time, I'm told, for two questions. I see about 20 hands immediately.

But let me start here with Gary, and in the middle there, you. Go ahead.

MR. MITCHELL: Senator, hi, and thank you for your remarks, by the way. I'm Garrett Mitchell, and I write "The Mitchell Report."

And two things struck me at the outset --

MR. KALB: Gary, please, on the short side.

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah -- that you cite Bob Kagan's book, and as you know, it's on Obama's table also. And as I listen to the litany of things that you talked about, it seems to me that on the sort of fundamental issues, there's not a lot of space between your vision and the vision, for example, that President Obama is talking about.

So my question is, after having been here for a couple of years and looking at this, do you get the feeling that the distance between your vision, for example, and the President's vision is on the fundamentals, or is it at the margins? And is it a reflection of the notion that to govern is to choose.

MR. KALB: Let me take the second question as well, then you can answer those. In the middle there, please. Thank you.

MR. MALATORRES: Hi. Chris Malatorres at the Center for Global Development.

You spoke about the western hemisphere, and your hopes and concerns. And I know you kind of omitted -- or you didn't talk about -- Haiti and kind of U.S. involvement, and I was hoping you can -- and I know it's an issue that was kind of close to you, and you've been very vocal about. I hope you can maybe talk a little bit about your hopes for Haiti and future U.S. engagement.

MR. KALB: Thank you. Go ahead.

SENATOR RUBIO: The second one I'll just take first, because I visited Haiti in January, and so I'm hopeful that the situation there will continue to improve.

Obviously they have some structural issues in that country, particularly in governance issues. As you recall, their Prime Minister has now been forced to resign. The President's been ill. There's been all kinds of rumors floating around about what the future of his government may portend. We always hope that there will be establishment, that the democracy there will take even deeper roots and become functional.

Right now, that country has an -- I shouldn't say overabundance of NGOs, but certainly a deep NGO presence in the country, and the government sometimes feels threatened by it.

So the most important issue in Haiti, apart from the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, is the establishment of long term, sustainable prosperity, and how do you begin that? And for Haiti, they're starting from scratch on virtually everything -- from their educational systems to the transportation systems.

But there is some good news beginning to emerge. There's an industrial park that the Clinton initiative has been involved in, where some American companies are looking to go to some of the underdeveloped parts of the country, and start to create industry, which hopefully will create jobs, which hopefully will start creating the fundamentals for an economy.

The other fundamental challenge Haiti has, however, is, you know, property rights, and who owns title to what land. I mean, it's hard to do business there. So I think we could hopefully provide some technical support in terms of creating a registry where people can register their property rights, and would safer in terms of

investing in that country, and the feeling that it's going to be protected under rule of law.

And then ultimately, it's education, which, it was striking to me, is it's such a strong societal value. You know, families in Haiti, even the poorest families, you see their kids that get to go to school dressed in the most impeccable uniforms, because it's a reflection of how they value education, and how important it is for them.

I know it's cliché just to say that, but if we can empower the new generation of children in Haiti to have a knowledge base where they can then be employable in skills and trade, et cetera, and we can combine that with the return of some of the diaspora that's been trained in the United States and in Florida, maybe you can begin to see a little bit of reemergence there, and a little bit of progress that so far has been slow coming for a country that really hasn't had a golden age -- certainly hasn't in the last two or third decades.

On the first question, about the differences in policy -- look, I always try to keep foreign policy nonpartisan as much as possible. I think it weakens our hand in the world. And maybe it's because I'm new here, but it's also been my perception that when you deal with foreign countries, and when you deal with foreign relations, the nation as a whole has a strong hand if our divisions aren't partisan -- or certainly, you know, irresponsibly stated.

That being said, I think there might be a fundamental difference of opinion, and I outlined that in the speech. It's not that we should be engaged, but rather, how we engage. And I think -- and maybe that's evolving, but I think the President's administration has somewhat often had an overreliance on institutions, global institutions, whether it's the Security Council, or the United Nations, to take the lead on some of these initiatives.

And I use Libya as one example. We did engage in Libya, and we engaged pretty significantly on the front, and probably for the first 17 hours, four days, and then we kind of backed off, and allowed our allies to go in and do much of the work.

And ultimately, it turned out fine. My argument was not that it didn't work out at the end. My argument is that if the U.S. had been more engaged energetically, the job would have been done sooner.

And what that would have meant is the following. You would have had less militias running around than you have right now, which would have been much easier to get a national, central government formed. Right now, they're having a real challenge getting these militias to turn over their weapons. You would have less destruction to the infrastructure, because the conflict would be less protracted. You would have less injuries and death, which ultimately is counterproductive for this society.

And we would have more influence on the outcome, even though I must tell you, I visited Libya probably about a month after the fall of Gaddafi, or three weeks, and I was taken aback by the amount of pro-American graffiti on the walls, and the people that would come up to us in the street and say, "Thank you, President Obama. Thank you, United States, for what you did for us." And clear recognition that the U.S. had been engaged and involved in the effort. And I applaud that. If we had done even more, I think we would have even more influence on the way it's going to turn out.

So look, they still have a bunch of challenges. They were going to have a bunch of challenges no matter what the nature of our involvement was going to be, but if we had taken an even stronger involvement early on, the engagement would have been shorter, cheaper, and I think, ultimately, more effective.

So that's an example of where I would disagree tactically on the direction

the President's taken, and even now on Syria, where I think the region is waiting for American leadership. The Friends of Syria are real. I think it's 80 countries now -- close to 80 countries.

But again, you need the center of gravity to instigate this coalition and move it forward with a defined plan in mind. And in the absence of American power, and American influence, and American leadership, it's hard to do that.

And so I think that's the case I would make to the administration.

MR. KALB: Senator Rubio, I wish -- I really do -- I wish we had much more time to continue this discussion, and we're very, very pleased that you did this speech here at Brookings, and so pleased that Senator Lieberman could be with us as well.

SENATOR RUBIO: I'm pleased you found my page. I couldn't have memorized the Tony Blair quote, so thank you.

MR. KALB: And thank you all so much for coming. If you would all be seated until the senators leave, that would be much appreciated.

Thank you very much.

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