

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

POWER RULES: HOW COMMON SENSE CAN RESCUE AMERICAN  
FOREIGN POLICY

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**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Introduction:**

STROBE TALBOTT  
President, The Brookings Institution

**Moderator:**

CARLOS PASCUAL  
Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy

**Featured Speaker:**

LESLIE H. GELB  
President Emeritus, Council on Foreign Relations

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TALBOTT: Thank you so much for coming in out of the rain and the cold and the dark to be enlightened and I think have some fun. We allow that around here at Brookings.

It's a pleasure to see all of you. It's a particular pleasure to see Ambassador Strommen of Norway a good friend of the institution and too many of us here.

I am going to flip the usual order of the introduction here and say first just a quick word about my gratitude and I'm sure Les' that Carlos Pascual in the midst of a very busy week would join this program and moderate a discussion with Les when Les finishes making some opening remarks.

Carlos is the Vice President of our Foreign Policy Program. He is also instrumentally involved in an ongoing project we have called Managing Global Insecurity, which is about global governance and how to do it better.

And while it's by definition global in scope and is basically about the responsibilities all 6.6 billion human beings have for governing themselves better, it puts special emphasis on the role of the United States and hence has direct relevance to the book we're going to be featuring here this afternoon.

That said, Carlos and his colleagues have produced a pretty darn good book of their own called *Power and Responsibility*, which is available -- he'll even sign copies of it -- in the Brookings bookstore.

And you'll notice it does have the word "power" in the title, as does Les Gelb's book, *Power Rules*.

I was particularly eager to have a chance to participate in this discussion this afternoon because I go back with Les a very long way.

I might add so does the Brookings Institution. He was a senior fellow here from 1969 to 1970 -- what '73 I think -- the beginning of 1973 -- and he brought a lot of distinction to the premises.

He authored a book that was a Brookings bestseller and remained so for a couple of decades, if I'm not mistaken, called *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*.

That's not all that Les brought to the premises. He also brought the Watergate burglars to the premises. Chuck Colson and his band of merry men had reason to believe that Les was hiding away in a safe in his office the Pentagon Papers and it was only because of the vigilance of our intrepid security staff, consisting of one person, that we didn't get firebombed or but maybe Les can correct or elaborate on the story.

In any event, speaking more personally, I've had the pleasure and exhilaration of considering myself a friend and a colleague and a protégé of Les' for a long time.

I have moved kind of in a parallel track with his, as he has gone from being a whiz kid to a wiz geezer and had a lot of fun with him in many parts of the world.

As you all know, he was an official of the Department of Defense and also at the State department back at a time I was covering that building for Time Magazine. And I can tell you that while Cy Vance was very well served by any of the number of colleagues he particularly cherished both the friendship and support that he had had from Les.

Les of course went on to be a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, a columnist on Foreign Policy and International Affairs for the New York Times.

He was not just the president of the Council on Foreign Relations but really a transformational leader at that outfit. And he has been a leader of our neighbor next door, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where he has been a trustee for a long time.

I have read his book, twice, both times in earlier versions than the printed version, but I've checked the printed version and it's up to the standards of the earlier drafts. I -- those of you who will get it, buy it, have him sign it are in for a treat.

It is an extremely contemporary book, but it also radiates a sense of history, including a connection to somebody who not all of us think of as one of the great heroes of state craft but Les makes a pretty good case for it, and that is Machiavelli.

So in the spirit of Machiavelli's most famous work, I will simply say that I am glad to turn all of you over to somebody that I regard as a gentleman, a scholar, and a prince among men. So over to you, Les.

MR. GELB: You're going to pardon me. I'm gonna come

down there and talk. I can't sit and talk or stand and talk. I find that at this wizened whiz kid age, I fall asleep on myself.

(Laughter)

MR. GELB: Strobe Talbott is a national treasure. If I elaborated on that, he wouldn't speak to me for the next year.

Carlos Pascual has written a terrific book on international institutions, just the kind of issue we need good hard thinking about and it's an honor to be here with my colleague and friend, Strobe.

And how lucky Brookings is to have him.

You've got to read my book. This book will enable you to defeat all your foes and make any sexual conquest imaginable. It's all there in the rules section at the end of these chapters.

It's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life, because, as with any concept that's at the root of what you're doing, of your business, you never think nearly hard enough about it; you just use it. You say the word over and again.

And it dawned on me as I was going through the process of writing several other books, before I got around to writing this one that I didn't really command the very concept that's at the core of our business of international relations; and power still is the principle coin of the international realm.

That somehow, particularly over the last couple of decades, power has gotten hijacked by members of my profession -- the foreign policy experts and the politicians -- and the meaning has gotten lost and,

therefore, the effectiveness of American power has been drained away. And we've got to bring it back.

That's one of the things drawing me on -- that drew me on to finish this book.

The other was just general concern about the state of my profession: of the foreign policy profession. How politicized it all has become.

When I worked at this institution in the dark ages and wrote that Brookings bestseller that was at least the bestseller for two decades. I'm gonna check and think, maybe it was three. Brookings hasn't had a Brookings' bestseller in a long time -- maybe the budget report. This was a very different world.

There was Brookings. Carnegie Endowment was more in New York than it was here in Washington. Council on Foreign relations had no think tank of any appreciable size. Heritage Foundation was just beginning. AEI.

These were all blips but there was no government in waiting. Essentially, the serious work on foreign policy came out of universities, and I think it was more serious than what we get out of think tanks. And I say that as somebody who ran a major think tank for 10 years.

The people in the business were getting away from solving problems and more toward describing problems and more toward creating problems by politicizing the debate, by arguing on television and in op-ed

pieces, which became the new form of communication for foreign policy rather than books, serious articles.

They began advocating policies and courses of actions, courses of action that the United States couldn't take. They were beyond our power.

And our foreign policy debate has kind of crumbled under the weight of the foreign policy community not playing as responsible a role as I believe it did in the past.

The idea of power had a lot to do with it. So I wanted to go back and look at it. What was happening to power, how we were thinking about it? And not surprisingly to people like Strobe, I came to the conclusion that almost everything written in the last twenty years was wrong; that the world was not flat; that power was not soft or hard for that matter; and that we were not in the post-American era.

Take that as the starting point and I'll tell you a little bit about my book. The world is not flat. I wish I had that as a title for my book. It seems to be that if you have a title that grossly misstates the facts of the world, it's a bestseller. I'd like to rename my book "The World is Flat."

The world is not flat; it's just palpably not flat. Globalization did not equalize power in the world. Power is still highly pyramidal by any and all standards.

It doesn't mean that the gap between us at the top and others at or near the bottom is as great as it used to be. It isn't as great as it used to be. There is a narrowing.

But power is highly pyramidal with the United States still alone at the top, as any practitioner will tell you.

There is a new kind of second tier of powers. What I call the Eight, consisting of Germany, Britain, France, Japan, China, Russia, India and Brazil. And they matter a great deal. I'll get to that later.

And then you have all of the states arrayed below them. And you can pretty well calibrate what each can do, and only the United States can do on a global basis. Only we have global reach on all dimensions of power.

So the notion that the world is flat is just highly distortive of the distribution of power today; and it takes too much responsibility off the backs of the United States and our leaders.

Secondly, power isn't hard or soft. You know we've got into this frame of mind, largely because we won the Cold War. And at the end of the Cold War, there we were, the United States alone at the top of the mountain. And the conservatives or the right wing drew the conclusion, we're alone at the top, the basis of our superiority was military power, let's use it and threaten to use it, and others will do our bidding.

And they believed it. In fact, they practiced it for eight years.

And then the left also saw us at the top of the mountain alone, and instead of making war, they wanted to make love and essentially invented soft power, which to me is a contradiction in terms. Power is not a soft thing. Persuasion, understanding, leadership, morals all good, and we ought to use that.



President Obama is, in fact, using all those things now. He's practicing what I call scene-setting power.

He's dispelling a lot of the anti-Americanism. He's getting rid of the ill feelings toward the United States that we didn't understand problems in other societies, we didn't care about them and we just wanted to order every other nation about.

And you have to get rid of that, because those feelings create resistance to American power. It was just plain dumb of the Bush administration to antagonize the world that way and perhaps they didn't even realize they were doing it or cared that they were doing it, but they did it. And it increases the resistance to power.

But, people who think that power is persuasion have very little experience in international affairs. Because I can hardly think of an example where we persuaded leaders of other countries that we understood their interests better than they did.

They understand what their interests are. They have their resources, their internal political problems, their international situations, and what changes them is not our being smarter than them and presenting arguments they never thought of, by putting carrots and sticks and other things on the table that help them recalculate their interest.

Force is a physical act. Persuasion, leadership they're all emotional or rational acts. Power is in the realm of the political and psychological.

It's using your resources and your international position to make people think about what you can do to help them and to harm them and thereby get them to recalculate their interests and do something they didn't want to do.

That's what it is. It's a very narrow band, and unless you focus on it that way, you don't use it well. And we haven't focused on it that way; and we haven't used it well now for two decades.

This is not to say that we haven't done some good things. We have. But for the most part, we've run amok and astray because we didn't understand what power was. We lost sight of it.

We also lost sight of the fact, never got the point, in fact, that power was much more complicated to use in this world than it was in Machiavelli's world. In Machiavelli's world he told the Prince you only have to learn one thing, one thing -- the art of war.

He actually says just that in *The Prince*. It's about conquest. In those days and for 450 years thereafter, for the most part, if you conquered a leader or you conquered a capital, you conquered the tribe or the nation. That was the end of it.

Nowadays, you can conquer capital cities, toss leaders aside and not be able to conquer the country at all. And it has happened to us time and again in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Military power is the storm and the U.S. has still efficient military power to storm a capital, throw most governments out of power, but no longer the military force to conquer a nation.

So the effect of that storm, the historical role of that storm, has diminished enormously, and we have to think about it differently in today's world.

It's more about economic power which is like the tide. It's not something you wield like military power or even diplomacy. It's something that chips away at the shores of other nations and over time, affects how they calculate their interests.

It's a much more difficult instrument of power to use than force or diplomacy.

Power has also moved from the European axis to the Asian axis and we know this well, but we haven't focused as much on the consequences. The Europeans were much more used to and eager to wield international power. They like doing it. They wanted to be actors on the world's stage.

It's different with the Asian countries now coming of age. They're not playing nearly as active a role worldwide as their European counterparts have done throughout the centuries.

And then finally you have a much more dispersion of power with and with nongovernmental organizations, with business and alike. It's a much more complex atmosphere, where power needs more time to take hold; more patience -- which is not good for America either. We're not good at patience.

And presidents if they use our power well will learn how to will have to learn how to buy time. Finally -- finally, this is not the post American era.

I know it's very popular to say that there used to be an era of American dominance, where we could call the shots and now we're in the post-American era, where just, you know, the maybe first among equals. It's just not so.

First of all, we were never the dominant power in the sense we could dictate to others; never. During the Cold War there was, if my memory serves me right, another super power and we didn't dominate it by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, we suffered some severe defeats.

Even when the Soviet Union fell and we were talking about creating a new world order, we didn't create a new world order because we didn't have that kind of power to order others around.

So we've forgotten the past: it was never that. And we've misbegotten a future, thinking that it's still isn't our responsibility to lead.

Every nation around the world still looks to the United States as the only leader in solving major international problems. Like it or not, that's the reality. We're still the only one who can exercise that leadership, whatever front you're on.

Now again it isn't to same degree as before, but it's still there. That responsibility is ours.

You want a global warming treaty, the U.S. has to lead. You want a new free trade agreement, it's the United States that has to start the bidding by making concessions. You want security action in places like Kuwait or Sudan, if the United States isn't there to do it, nothing much happens.

That is the reality of it. But what we've got to understand, and I what I hope President Obama does understand, is that even though we are the sole leader in solving major international problems, we need equally indispensable partners -- at least those eight I spoke of and in most cases, other nations as well.

We're the indispensable leader. We need equally indispensable partners. And the central operating principle of power in the 21st Century has to be mutual indispensability and it has to be based on America moving to solve mutual problems.

We've got to recreate that sense that that's what we do. We get together on common problems and we help solve them, taking the interest of others into account as well as our own.

If we do that, I think we can deal with this incredible array of world crises and what I call drownings -- nations that are just drowning because they just aren't able to cope with the problems their country faces. We can deal with them on the basis of mutual indispensability. If not, we're in for a very rough ride. I'm open to your questions, thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. PASCUAL: Why don't you come to the middle, and we'll let you have a --

MR. GELB: All right.

MR. PASCUAL: -- central place.

I'm going to selfishly take a couple of minutes here and have a little bit of discussion with you and then before going out to the floor.

First, thank you for doing this book. Thank you for engaging with us in this conversation and thank you for forcing us to have a discussion about what power means today and how in fact to actually make it effective. And your coining of the term mutual indispensability, I think, is actually a terrific way of encapsulating in a very short form, the dilemma that we face in the international system. That on the one hand, how power is absolutely critical. Secondly, as you said, the United States is critical to the exercise of that power but three, we can't actually achieve the objectives that we that we want alone.

And, you know, Dick Holbrook wrote a very nice advance review of your book and really it sort of underscored that this was the right direction which to begin to think about American foreign policy.

Let's help Dick Holbrook here for a second and apply mutual indispensability to Afghanistan and Pakistan. The president has come out and put forward a new strategy or the foundations for a new strategy. There's a military dimension to it. He said the civilian dimension to it is absolutely critical. He said it had to be a regional context. Is he practicing mutual indispensability? Have we gotten it right? Have we understood

what needs to have to happen there? If you apply mutual indispensability in this context, are we doing enough for other gaps of where we should be heading?

MR. GELB: No, no, and no. I don't really understand what president Obama is doing in what we now fondly call AFPAC, and I don't think he is really operating on the basis of mutual indispensability fully, although there are signs of it here and there.

I was I was among those who were worried or concerned about his statement of AFPAC strategy a few weeks ago and I was on a few counts.

One, he said he had narrowed the objective to just denying Afghan soil to use by international terrorists. As he put it, insuring that they didn't use the Afghan soil again and then as you read on in the speech, you see that in order to ensure that, he's go to do all the same nation building enterprises that he condemned Bush for trying.

I do not believe we can do nation building in a country at war, the way Afghanistan is and with a government as corrupt and inefficient. I think it is an impossible task.

It's up to them to do it.

Secondly, he said it was a policy based on benchmarks. He said, "This is different from before because no more blank checks, no more open ended commitments. We have benchmarks."

There were no benchmarks in the speech, not one. There still aren't any benchmarks. They are working on and I would ask

rhetorically, how can you have a policy based on benchmarks, without the benchmarks?

And the benchmarks to me are critical, absolutely critical, for setting standards both for the Afghans and the Paks and also for ourselves as to whether we've taken on something in a way that will lead us to fail when we can't afford to fail.

And third and finally, if you listen to Dick Holbrook and the other members of the administration explain the grand strategy, they say we can't win in Afghanistan without winning in Pakistan; and we haven't got the foggiest idea what to do in Pakistan.

I would suggest, at the end of that sentence, add a "and, therefore" -- what conclusion do you draw? Now, you know, having served in government and always starting to look at a problem as if I had the responsibility, if I had to solve it, I don't toss away what they've done. But I think they've got to be pressed and they've got to be pressed by the - - by Congress first and foremost, but also by the news media on these grounds. And these are serious grounds.

You know the democratic leadership of congress today complained bitterly about the Republican leadership of the congress in the early years of the George W. Bush administration for not holding serious hearings on Bush's Afghan policy or his Iraq policy.

Well, I said the same thing to them a couple of weeks ago. You're not holding serious hearings on Afghanistan policy or Pakistan policy. Do it for the sake of your constituents and for President Obama's



sake, because you will raise tougher more direct issues and should, than he will hear in his own national Security Council table.

So, I am concerned. He is working with others, but he framed this policy not in conjunction with others but essentially at his own National Security Council meetings. What I'm talking about mutual indispensability is this: yes, the United States has to put together a policy or a strategy, but then we take it to the other countries we need as partners and you begin to work on it and shape it. Because they will have insights that we don't have and we need their participation. We need their power added to ours in order to deal with the problem. And I don't believe that happened.

MR. PASCUAL: The -- it was fascinating to one of our colleagues here at Brookings, Bruce Reidel, was on a leave of absence and worked in putting together the strategy piece for President Obama and one of the things that was fascinating to watch is that they had essentially four weeks to pull together the strategy because then they had to go through the first level inter-agency deputy's review and then the principle's review and then review with the President and then actually had a week to take it back to the Allies and get initial comments from them.

So it was really quite instructive to listen to Bruce talk about a little bit more about this, but again the, one of the things that you point out is that it was very much a strategy of American leadership yet at the same time, the time that was available to really work it with the rest of the

Allies was quite limited.

LESLIE H. GELB: I would have taken more time.

MR. PASCUAL: And of course, you know, the reality that we face is the calendar and the reason that they set this deadline was because of the NATO Summit and the expectation that with an issue that was this big, that one had to speak about this at the Summit, that if you didn't it would just seem like such a looming void there that nobody was talking about what has become the biggest issue in the alliance.

MR. GELB: But that was the deadline we created for those reasons. I did not hear a single NATO member demanding that we come up with a whole cloth strategy in time for that NATO meeting. I think that was a self-imposed goal.

MR. PASCUAL: So your sense is that on some of these issues, that you have to begin to redefine the calendar based on what you can do and what is realistic as opposed to --

MR. GELB: Absolutely. You have a problem this immense and the AFPAC problem to people in the foreign policy business, like many of you gathered here today, like you, like Strobe, it's probably the hardest we ever been confronted with -- hardest.

And frankly I don't give a damn that there was a NATO in four weeks. I would have gone and explained the situation. Say here is our understanding, here's where we going to go, here's the track we're gonna take, we'll come up with an approach; we'll consult with you and it's gonna go beyond the meeting for the NATO anniversary.

And while some of them would complain, I mean some of them complain about anything. Sarkozy complained about Obama's tie. I mean, he's such a jerk. I hope there's nobody here from the French Embassy to defend him. But some of them made cracks that were just absurd. So, of course, you'll get criticized. But you're going to get criticized in the long run more for a policy that doesn't work and has holes in it, than for delaying the announcement of a strategy that's more viable.

MR. PASCUAL: Let me build on that and take it a slightly different direction. One of the issues that we've often discussed on this stage, Strobe and I have had recently had a conversation about some of these issues with Tom Pickering and Rich Armitage on the question of priorities --

MR. GELB: Mm-hmm.

MR. PASCUAL: -- and the, you know, the common sense approach that most people would take is that you can only do a certain number of things. You have to set priorities

MR. GELB: Right.

MR. PASCUAL: You have to focus on those issues and here we have this world filled with crises. And one of the things you suggested mutual indispensability is that it becomes an approach to be able to have a sufficient base of power, to potentially be able to address a range of issues at the same time.

But, as you were working through the book and were considering these priorities and tradeoffs, the economic crisis that we

face, the foreign policy crises we face in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Iran issues, North Korea, the issues of global poverty, how do you see mutual indispensability playing into this question of priority setting?

MR. GELB: Well your question is so tough that I need to stand up and give another 20, 30 minute lecture on that one to do it any justice.

I mean, that's exactly the right stuff to be asking and that's exactly the right kind of questions that I hope that the Obama administration is addressing.

See I think you're a power on the order of the United States, and we really need to be effective. The world needs us to be an effective leader; that you absolutely must prioritize. You must make choices. It's essential to getting anything done. I know there is a school of thought -- we all have heard very often -- oh, you have your maximum power in the first 100 days; get everything done then.

I think that's a lot of malarkey. You have power if you succeed. You lose power if you fail. And the main job of the President is to succeed.

In fact, I would take time in the initial 100 days, first half year or whatever, little successes that I made appear big successes, because it would give me power to take on other tougher issues.

But that's what the power is. It's doing it fast. It's succeeding. It always has been. It always will be.

Now what do you do? The first thing is you have to treat it as an issue of grand strategy. And you put it just a right way, Carlos, not surprisingly; that you have to think in terms of there being a trade-off between economic circumstances, the dire economic circumstances, we face and a dozen international crises.

And to me, I would go to strength, and I would go to strength every time. I think that's what both power and common sense dictate. And going to strength means fixing the economy first.

And fixing the economy is not just a matter of words. It's not a matter of making grand speeches at the White House.

The question is what happens to those words as they get translated into the machinery of the bureaucracy and to the political system. They require a kind of attentiveness and continuing presidential involvement and power that you can't do if you're involved in a dozen international crises as well.

Let me give you a couple of examples. Everyone agrees now -- alas, much too late -- that we need better regulation. I mean, how come we didn't need better regulation all along? It's catastrophically stupid. And we know exactly why we didn't get it -- get better regulation. In order to do it, you can't just mandate better regulation, because everybody in this business knows that the people in the financial community have 50 IQ points of the people who do the regulating.

You have the smartest ones making all the money and the other was doing the regulating. But now we have a unique historical

opportunity. A lot of those people from the financial community being laid-off, and they ought to be offered jobs as regulators. And they'll take them, because there are no other jobs. And they're smart enough to catch their fellow crooks.

But you have to build that capacity.

We're about to spend -- another example -- we're about to spend a lot of money on infrastructure, and I think that it's absolutely essential -- technological infrastructure, physical infrastructure -- for economic development and for homeland security, both.

But here's the situation with infrastructure. They finished an airport near your hometown, Strobe, an airport -- a main runway in Cincinnati airport -- \$1 billion. Somebody made off like a bandit at \$1 billion worth of runway. And there is a bridge that was completed in New Jersey, not a new bridge, a repaired bridge -- \$250 million. That's the price of infrastructure today, and it means -- how shall I put this -- that there are people from Wall Street who have found a new life in infrastructure.

The rake off on the part of crooks, politicians, and the labor unions is more than we can sustain if we are to have a real infrastructure program.

So in order to do the economy seriously, you have to dig down into how you're going to manage the expenditure of infrastructure funds.

So it's not just saying we're going to spend \$350 billion on

infrastructure or we're going to do more regulation. And that leadership has to come from the White House. It has to come from the White House.

And that means if you go to strength and try to fix the economy, what do you do about the areas of weakness, the international crises? And I'll -- just give me two more minutes --

MR. PASCUAL: Yeah.

MR. GELB: -- to go on about this, because I think that we have to think about this kind of answer -- I don't know if it's the right answer, so we have to think about it.

There are certain problems we can't solve with direct action; certainly not alone, and even with other states. You know, you could send a great diplomat like Strobe Talbott around the world to gather up more troops for Afghanistan -- and vast new funds for economic and military development in Pakistan and you ain't going to get the money, because most countries around the world just think it's a sinkhole; that you don't have much chance of solving the problem; that if the Afghans and the Paks (sic.) aren't prepared to get their own act together; if the moderate and pragmatic people in those societies won't deal with the crazy opposition, the extremists, and fight back and provide good government -- if they won't do it, we can't do it. That's what they're telling us.

And that's why they're not participating. And that's why we didn't go out and consult them, because we knew what answers we were going to get -- not the ones we wanted to hear.

So I think we have to concoct a policy based on things we

can do, which don't consist of turning Afghanistan and Pakistan into democratic free-market paradises. That just isn't going to happen.

What do we know how to do? We do know how to help people in countries in trouble who want to help themselves. We're good at that. Other nations are, too.

We know how to divide and rent, which is how you deal with the Taliban. You divide them and you rent them. I don't know what the divisions are in the Taliban, but you find out once you put cash on the table.

Thirdly, we know how to deter. We deterred throughout the Cold War. We have to think about it in a different context. Now it's more difficult because it's harder to deter these terrorists than it is to deter governments. But we need then to deter -- we need then to hold their governments accountable for the actions of terrorists acting within their spheres.

And we can do that. We know how to do deterrence -- financial and military.

And forth, we know how to do containment. We can go to the nations that border Afghanistan and Pakistan -- India, China, Russia, and, yes, Iran -- because we have common interests there in containing both the drug trade and extremism. And you can build a containment policy.

And this is how I would like the United States to go. We've done it. It's not as if I'm saying something revolutionary.



At the end of World War II, President Truman, George Marshall, Dean Acheson faced a very similar choice. And what they decided was this: the Soviet Union had 5 million troops in Eastern Europe, and the foreign-policy community was jumping up and down -- you can't let them do that. If they take over Eastern Europe, they'll take over Western Europe.

But we contained them and we deterred them. And we won the Cold War.

Mao took over China. There were Americans who wanted to go to war with China. But we didn't. We contained them. We deterred them, if they had any intention of attacking any neighbor in the first place.

The last I looked China is our biggest lender. We lost the war in Vietnam. And three years later, thanks to the absolutely dazzling display of American diplomatic power by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger -- triangular diplomacy, the Sinai agreement, the reestablishment of America's position in Asia. Our position in Asia with stronger three years after we took our last Americans off the rooftops of the embassy in Saigon in 1975 than it was at any other time since the end of World War II.

So do know how to do things. We do know how to make strategic choices, and this is precisely the time to do that, because we can't afford the same margin of error that we have enjoyed for the last 40 years or so.

MR. PASCUAL: Let me open it up to the audience and ask

you to introduce yourself. Keep your questions focused, and we'll begin right here. Thank you.

MR. GELB: I'm sorry for that long answer, but your --

MR. PASCUAL: No, don't. But it was a --

MR. GELB: -- question deserves a long answer.

MR. PASCUAL: -- I'm glad you went on. It was very instructive.

SPEAKER: Yeah, you said (inaudible) of this book is President Obama. Have you give him this book and you think will he read and also get back to you?

And you say U.S. can solve mutual problems --

MR. GELB: Yes.

SPEAKER: -- and now the Doha Round get nowhere, and that's because one big reason is agricultural dispute between U.S. and EU.

MR. GELB: Yes.

SPEAKER: Do you think Obama have a particular will to exert leadership to solve this problem? I mean, get Doha Round?

MR. GELB: Right. On the first question, we were just talking about it. I had lunch at the White House. I was hoping that Joe Biden would walk behind the President reading from my book, and that this would be caught on world television. And, of course, the audio part of it as well as the video part. I have no evidence that he's read the book. He has the book. I wish he would read it. I wish he would read it.

You know, he -- I think he is a brilliant man, who is very, very thoughtful, and a huge improvement on where we were. And we need him to succeed, and I hope he will.

He's not experienced in foreign affairs. And if I had to choose between intelligence and experience in foreign affairs, I'd choose experience, because a lot of it depends not on -- not so much on the answers -- and the foreign-policy answers in most cases are pretty obvious -- what you can do and what you can't do, except for lunatics. It's true.

So it depends on experience -- knowing how other countries are going to react, knowing which buttons to push, knowing how long it takes to get certain things done, because, as I said, you want to succeed. Otherwise, you lose your power.

I wish he would read it. I wish other people in the administration would read it, too. It's the kind of argument I've been having with them and their predecessors for a long time, because they get caught up in these problems from hell, and they want to do everything. And they want to do everything today. And they don't realize, you know, it's fine.

Our policy towards Cuba is so stupid it's unbelievable. And, you know, to even cloak it in morality is idiotic, because we say, oh, we can't deal with Cuba while there are political prisoners.

I know of a few other countries that also have political prisoners that we deal with -- we have very close will Asians with them.

It's a stupid policy.

But, you see when you do the right thing to allow the Cuban-Americans to go back and send money to their family that's all very good stuff. But you have to realize that then you open the door to a response from the Cuban government, and you'll get a response. We've gotten one already.

And then you've got to respond to their response. And there you are all of a sudden in a situation. You're going to say no and close the door all of a sudden? And you undercut your own initiative. And you take time away from solving the big problems.

So I wish he would read the book. They would all profit from it.

MR. PASCUAL: Now one of the things he raised was the question of the Doha Round. I come back to it --

MR. GELB: Right.

MR. PASCUAL: -- just because this idea of mutual indispensability obviously fits in that context. We can't -- no one country can solve it on itself. You need a negotiated solution.

MR. GELB: Right.

MR. PASCUAL: We've had two G20 meetings. They've all said the right things about the horrors of protectionism and --

MR. GELB: Right.

MR. PASCUAL: -- how it will drag us down further, and yet the ability to actually get progress and movement on Doha seems to be

beyond our grasp.

MR. GELB: Right. We're all against the other guys whores. We like our own whores.

The farmers are a very small percentage of modern industrialized countries, and they're very powerful politically. And nothing is going to happen until you have a president who's willing to step up to that issue and except in the context of focusing on the economy and having these pieces put together, you won't have the rationale or the political courage to do it.

And the Doha Round will go nowhere. There may even be some nice talk about things happening, but it is not going to happen now. There's no basis being laid here for dealing with that problem with our farmers and nothing being done in Europe as well.

MR. PASCUAL: Okay. Let's go to the back of the room, if we have any questions? No? We'll have two questions right here. Please.

MR. NOVIK: My name is Dmitri Novik. You said that it's not military power, not diplomacy is enough to lead and to win.

MR. GELB: No, I didn't say that.

MR. NODUK: No. And, as I remember, Clinton said we need to lead with power of example, not by example of power.

MR. GELB: Mm-hmm.

MR. NODUK: And it's from this statement, we need to be first strong in this country before strong outside this country. So it means

that if outside country looking upon the United States and see terrible education system, no healthcare for everyone, it's not motivation to emulate behavior from another country, and it's like --

MR. PASCUAL: Dmitri, I need you to bring it to a question.

MR. NODUK: -- yeah. My question is this: it's very powerful statement what is first -- egg or chicken. And it's in every situation like foreign affairs --

MR. GELB: Mm-hmm.

MR. NODUK: -- it's the same story. So maybe we need to more emphasize on improved situation in this country, and then we'll be successful.

MR. GELB: I think so. That's exactly what I was trying to say in my own inarticulate way.

MR. PASCUAL: You have an agreement. Gary?

MR. MITCHELL: Les, thank you for the book. Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report. And thank you for the book. Like Strobe, I have read it twice.

And there's one sort of piece of it which is an important one that I want to be sure I understand, so let me phrase that question this way: you have an very succinct definition of power, which is getting people or groups to do something they don't want to do, manipulating the ones on resources, and position to pressure, and coerce psychologically and politically.

And then you say -- you talk about how power is neither soft

nor hard. It's power.

And yet, later in the book, you talk about leaning power and galvanizing power and one other form of power. So it -- I'm wondering if this is just a question of semantics or whether what you are saying is that there are forms of or gradations of power, which, in an era of mutual indispensability, have to be employed in new ways. And maybe you could speak to that?

MR. GELB: Yeah. I think you're saying it just right. And maybe I wasn't clear enough in the book.

By galvanizing power, I mean the power of the United States to galvanize these power coalitions to solve problems -- putting together groups of states, indispensable partners, to get things done. That's what galvanizing power is.

And I say to do that, we're going to have to learn to do something we hardly ever like to talk about in the United States, namely, compromise. Compromise. You don't even hear a politician ever say it. You don't even hear foreign policy experts using the word. It's a dirty word.

So to use that galvanizing power, yes, you do have to compromise.

What we gain out of it is, as the lead power, we can set that direction.

As far as leaning power is concerned, it is putting together all these various resources the United States has and leaning on a country

rather than yelling or openly pressuring them, because, when you do that, you get the counter reaction in their politics.

It's inevitable when you're being pushed around openly, you're going to resist. And your constituents will demand that you resist.

So what I'm saying in this book is in many cases, we ought to use our power -- think of it as leaning power. It's leaning on other countries with what we can do to help them or what we can do to harm them.

And just let them feel the effects rather than our shouting the effects. That's why I call it leaning power.

MR. PASCUAL: Good. I don't -- one more question back here.

MR. GELB: They're techniques.

MR. ORTEGA: Good afternoon, Dr. Gelb. Thank you for your time. My name is Luke Ortega.

And I'm interested with regard to the mutual indispensability argument in Afghanistan and Pakistan. I'm curious as to whom we need to convince that we are mutually indispensable with? Is it merely the countries that surround it with this containment idea? Or are there actually actors in Afghanistan and Pakistan that were trying to convince of that? And if so, whom?

MR. GELB: Yeah. As I said, inside Afghanistan I would look for capable allies to support. And if they deliver, give them more support.

But they're not a part of the -- of this mutual indispensability



concept, which is directed at other nations, other states. And here I'm thinking particularly about the neighbors, but not exclusively the neighbors.

I think Western Europe -- some Western European nations and even Japan would be interested in helping as well. Nobody wants to see the unbridled spread of extremism. I don't believe there's a country in the world, including Iran, that wants to see the Taliban and in charge of Pakistani nuclear weapons or friends of the Taliban in charge of Pakistani nuclear weapons.

And so we can gather up a coalition I think to work on containment there, because, you know, the situation in Pakistan is so grave and our ideas for how to improve that situation so poor, given the situation inside Pakistan, that we have to rely more on thinking about deterrence and containment with other allies in the region.

And as I said, we've done it before.

MR. PASCUAL: Okay. We'll take one last question. Here. Please.

MR. MONIK: Thank you very much. My name is Kris Monik. I'm a German journalist based here in Washington, working for the German Daily Zu Deutsche Zeitung, which kinds of translates in South German Times.

MR. PASCUAL: Can you hold the mike a little bit?

MR. GELB: Can you talk a little slowly.

MR. MONIK: Yeah. I'd like to kind of follow up and ask the

question that's kind of -- yeah -- lightweight gorilla in the room.

You mentioned several times what President Obama and his foreign-policy team already delivered, like Afghanistan, but also that -- and you also said that the -- there is a growing impatience, especially in my profession, I guess, in journalism.

Now the 100 days are almost over when all we journalists need to write about what did he achieve so far.

MR. GELB: Right.

MR. MONIK: And there's a -- I'm afraid there is a looming power over me, which are my editors, and they're going to ask me, and I would like to ask you for advice.

What is your judgment after 90-plus days of Obama foreign-policy so far?

MR. GELB: Yeah. I was going to write a piece for the Daily Beast called the "97-day Report Card." Why wait for the 100 days, when everybody is going to say the same thing. So I'm not going to great Obama. You've already heard my grades, which are not in letters.

I'm very hopeful about this group. I think they're very talented, and they're led by a man who has great potential for growth.

I want to grade the graders, because they're all giving him grades already, which is too soon.

So here are the grades I give the graders: the graders who say Obama has done fantastic things. He's ended anti-Americanism in the world. He's made people love us again. I give them a B or a B-

because they're only looking at the easiest part of the job, which is what Obama has done, to show that he's an intelligent man and wants to understand their culture, their history. That was the easiest part of it.

But it didn't solve any of the problems. All the hard things are yet to come. So they get a B.

The ones who say Obama has shown great weakness, and he's given away important American interests, they get an F, because I can't think of anything he's given away. I can't think of any weakness he has shown that worries me. I think this is the usual drumbeat from a right wing that has gotten hysterical very quickly, and I hope they secede from the union.

MR. PASCUAL: Les, I don't think we can have a better note to end on. And I want to congratulate you on your book, "Power Rules: How Commonsense Can Restore American Foreign Policy." There are copies available outside. I think you're going to be willing to sign a few copies?

MR. GELB: Sure.

MR. PASCUAL: So I hope you stop, buy a couple copies, bring it to all your friends, bring one to President Obama, and thank you, Les Gelb, for being willing to spend this time with us.

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