



7-1-2008

The Report of the Secretaries of State: Bipartisan Advice to the Next Administration

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Repository Citation

Kissinger, Henry; Albright, Madeleine; Powell, Colin; Christopher, Warren; and Baker, James, "The Report of the Secretaries of State: Bipartisan Advice to the Next Administration" (2008). *Conferences and Symposia to 2010*. 48.

https://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/conf_coll_symp_symposia/48

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THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARIES OF STATE
Bipartisan Advice to the Next Administration
March 27, 2008
Athens, Georgia



Transcript of DVD

CHARLES BATTLE: Good morning. I'm Charlie Battle, chairman of the Southern Center for International Studies and we are especially proud to have been able to partner with the Dean Rusk Center at the Georgia Law School co-hosting this event. We're grateful for the support that Rebecca White, Dean of the Law School, and Don Johnson, director of the center, have given to us.

It's very appropriate that we are here today co-hosting this event with them because Dean Rusk, among his accomplishments, was chairman for many years of the Southern Center, was very instrumental in beginning this series and participated in many of them.

So without further ado, I would like to ask you to join me in giving a very warm Georgia welcome to our distinguished panel for today's discussion: Secretary Henry Kissinger, Secretary Warren Christopher, our moderator Terence Smith, Secretary James Baker, Secretary Madeleine Albright, and Secretary Colin Powell. Thank you very much.

TERENCE SMITH: I'm Terence Smith and welcome to the 16th Report of the Former Secretaries of State brought to you by the Southern Center for International Studies and the University of Georgia School of Law. The program is being held in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Dean Rusk Center for International Law. Joining us today in Athens, Georgia are five former secretaries of state. Three served in Republican administrations, two in Democrat: Henry Kissinger, who served under Presidents Nixon and Ford; James Baker under the George H. W. Bush Administration; Colin Powell who served during the current Bush administration's first term; Warren Christopher, who served during President Clinton's first term; Madeleine Albright who served in President Clinton's second term. Our goal here today is to tap the wisdom and extraordinary experience that we have around this table and provide some bipartisan foreign policy advice to the next administration.

Polls suggest that over half of the world's citizens believe the U.S. is playing a mainly negative role in the world, and that less than a third feel that the U.S. role is largely positive. So the question, what can or should the new president -- Secretary Powell, let me put this to you -- do to repair the US image abroad?

SECRETARY POWELL: Our image abroad has dropped significantly in recent years. The administration has gained the reputation of speaking too harshly, backing out of international agreements, and things of this nature. I think it will begin to change with a new president no matter which of these three candidates win. You get a reset at that time.

And if that new president begins by reaching out to all of our friends and allies around the world, and not only convey our points of view and what we believe in, but listen and hear what we are listening to, actually hear it and act on it and show that kind of comity to other nations of the world, we'll begin to turn that around.

TERENCE SMITH: You are suggesting that we haven't listened very well?

GENERAL POWELL: We haven't listened as well as we might have. One point I do want to make, though. There is still a solid reservoir of respect and affection for the United States of America. I think all my colleagues would agree with me when I tell you in every consular office this morning there is an a line throughout our system. And when people get to the front of that line and they look across that counter to our consular office, they all say the same thing: I want to go to America. And so I think that the situation we find ourselves in now is reversible and that will begin with a new president.

I think there are some things the new president can do right away that will begin to return to us a more favorable position. For example, close Guantanamo immediately, and by closing Guantanamo saying to the world we are now going to back to our traditional respective forms of dealing with people who have potentially committed crimes.

TERENCE SMITH: Because you believe that's been damaging to the image abroad. [TALKOVER]

SECRETARY POWELL: It has been very damaging.

TERENCE SMITH: All right. Secretary Albright, do you agree with that, that's a task for the new president?

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Absolutely. I personally have never seen the world in such a mess. I am the youngest one up here so the others may disagree with me. [LAUGHTER]

TERENCE SMITH: It's cruel of you to point that out.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Right. But I don't think I have ever seen it like this, and I think the next President is going to have a very big job. I think a lot of it does have to do with our actions, and Colin, I think, has described those. But, also, you asked what does it matter to us, and I think it matters in the following way: Since the president and the secretaries' of state job is to protect the national security of the United States, it hurts us if we are so disregarded or maligned because we're not able to get the kind of support we need for whatever the issues are, whether they are going into Afghanistan or dealing with the financial crisis or dealing with climate change issues. And so it does matter not whether we're loved. I don't care whether we're loved or not. I think, though, we need to be respected and not necessarily just feared for doing the wrong thing.

And I would hope that one of the first things that the next president would do, would not only close Guantanamo, and I totally agree on that, but also make very clear that we will rejoin or lead an effort on climate change. Because I think that's part of what has to happen.

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Baker?

SECRETARY BAKER: I think it's regrettable, frankly, that Madeleine is so young that she didn't live through the Cold War [LAUGHTER] because the world -- because the world was not a happy place to be in during that period of time. But on the other hand, I agree with you completely that the next president should lead an effort among the Nations to try and do something about climate change. A lot of the problems that face the country today are not discrete with respect to specific areas of the world. They are transnational problems dealing with terrorism and global climate change and trade and economic issues and that's what the next president -- kind of thing the next president is going to have to deal with.

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Christopher, tell us your view and tell us as well your view on Secretary Powell's suggestion on Guantanamo.

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER: I'm one of those who thinks in order to be stronger abroad, we have to be strong at home. Just not militarily, but economically as well. And I see our domestic economy as a severe problem for us around the world. The weak American dollar is kind of a metaphor for me for the weakness of America abroad, and that's beginning to hurt very badly. And I think one of the things the new president ought to do is to try to get our economic house in order.

When I joined the Clinton Administration in 1993, we were in economic doldrums at that time and countries like Japan were kind of looking, raising eyebrows about our condition over here and wondering if we would manage our economy and execute the questions around the world. After the Congress passed the Deficit Reduction Act in 1993, by a one vote margin, I just found a real perceptible effect on my ability to be effective abroad because once again the United States had credibility.

On Guantanamo, Terry, I agree totally with Colin Powell. [TALKOVER]

TERENCE SMITH: Let me ask the two secretaries on that -- on the Guantanamo issue.

SECRETARY BAKER: I would like to add that I do think that our image abroad has in recent months, at least, made a little bit of progress. I know the current --

TERENCE SMITH: Why do you think?

SECRETARY BAKER: Because the current administration, both the President and the Secretary of State have exerted extra efforts to try and repair some of those relationships, and I'm not denying the fact that the 50 percent figure is accurate. I think it is.

With respect to Guantanamo, let me say I totally agree with what Colin and Madeleine and Chris have said. I think it ought to be closed. And I think it -- I think it gives us a very, very bad name, not just internationally and maybe this is because I'm a lawyer, but I have a great deal of difficulty understanding how we can hold someone, pick somebody up, particularly someone who might be an American citizen, even if they're caught somewhere abroad acting against American interests and hold them without ever giving them an opportunity to appear before a magistrate and say yes or no or prove that they're not an enemy combatant, if you would. But, anyway, I think we ought to close it.

SECRETARY POWELL: None of us are suggesting these people should be turned loose.

SECRETARY BAKER: [No.]

SECRETARY POWELL: We're suggesting they ought to be brought into our established legal system to face charges, and be given access to the writ of habeas corpus and lawyers, and whatever else we give to citizens.

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Kissinger, do you agree with that?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I agree with the impact that Guantanamo has internationally.

TERENCE SMITH: The negative impact?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The negative impact, and I would like to see it closed. But I would also like to see what the alternative is, because some of the people would be very hard to put into an American judicial system. I would like to know what one does in situations in which there's a clear threat to the security of the United States.

SECRETARY BAKER: I don't think any of us are suggesting either that these people, the vast majority of them ought to be given the constitutional protections of an American citizen. We're not suggesting that.

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Albright?

[TALKOVER]

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: More to the point as to the dangers in the world. I have lived through the Cold War and I have no nostalgia for it. What I think, though, in a strange way it was more rational and there was the sense that there was some control over how we dealt with nuclear weapons. The problem that we have now, it goes little bit to what Henry was saying, there are nonstate actors that we don't know how to leverage our power against. We have the problem of the proliferation of nuclear technology and then a whole host of issues that are harder to handle for the international system.

I think that as we look to the next presidency, I think it's going to be difficult in the fact that the international system that we've all grown up with is out of kilter, and that the organizations are strained and that the alliance structures don't quite work the way we thought they would. Instead of living in the past, it's going to take a different approach where the United States understands that we have to operate in a different kind of a system. And I think it's going to take a lot of work of the next president, whoever that person is.

TERENCE SMITH: Let us turn to topic number one for the new president, whoever he or she may be: The Iraq War. A little bit of background. In March 2003, the U.S. and its allies invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein. Since then, however, 4,000 Americans, and possibly hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been killed. Over four million Iraqis have fled their homes. Despite a January 2007 surge, bloodshed continues. So let's talk about the choices that will confront the new president in January of 2009. What's -- what's a strategy, Secretary Christopher?

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER: Two and a half months before the war I wrote an op-ed piece opposing the war. Let me just read a couple of sentences from that, if I might: Even if the optimistic predictions of a quick victory prove to be accurate, we would find ourselves then absorbed with the occupation of Iraq in efforts to impose democracy on the fractious elements of that country.

It seems to me that after five years we've had, from the White House, Iraq on the front burner, Iraq all the time. And I think for the health of our country we need -- we need to get past that now. Secretary Baker led a commission that prescribed some very good remedies in that situation which unfortunately have not been taken, and I look forward to discussion around the table about how -- how we do -- get out of this.

I hope we learn the right lessons from this very tragic adventure that we've had abroad. And so I hope whatever the outcome here that we'll find ways to stay engaged in the world. But before we take an adventure like this again, we're very careful to have thought through the adventure and to have an exit strategy underway.

TERENCE SMITH: Let me turn to Secretary Baker and quote something from the Iraq Study Group which you co-chaired, in which the report read: Of all the neighbors of Iraq, Iran has the most leverage in Iraq and could help bring about stability. The report recommends that Iran be actively engaged without preconditions. So should the new administration approach Iran and how?

SECRETARY BAKER: Our report recommended that we start talking to Iran in the same way we talked to Iran about Afghanistan. [PAPERS SHUFFLING] This administ -- current administration, Colin was probably Secretary of State, talked to Iran about our common interest in a stable Afghanistan after we went in there, and Iran helped us and cooperated a little bit with us. Colin can amplify on it. We need to do the same thing with respect to Iraq. That's what our Iraq Study Group Report suggested. Because a dysfunctional Iraq, chaotic Iraq is not something that is in the interest of Iran. They don't want that. They'll have a ton of refugees, so there's every incentive on their part to help us the same way they did in Afghanistan, if we're willing to approach them without preconditions. Now, they may not do it, but what do you lose by giving it a shot?

TERENCE SMITH: All right. Does -- does anyone disagree with that?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I agree with Jim that one has to talk to adversaries but one should not treat it as a psychiatric problem, so that it's just a question of going into a room and creating goodwill. How well we negotiate with Iran depends in part on the objective balances that exist in the region.

The reason it worked when Colin was secretary is because we had a force in Afghanistan. We were changing the situation, but we recognized that Afghanistan could not be solved without the participation of

the neighbors, and in that context, it was possible to get an agreement with Iraq. If Iran considers itself a significant country that wants to be respected, we ought to find a mode of negotiation, because if things get tougher, we have to be able to tell the American people that we have done everything we can to explore a peaceful evolution.

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Christopher, you wanted to say something else?

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER: I have a few scars trying to negotiate with Iran over a 14-month period, and one of the lessons I bring back from that is that there are many vectors of power. Too often we think of Iran in terms of President Ahmadinejad and we fail to take into account the importance of the clerics, leaders like Khomeini and long-time leader likes Rafsanjani. So I think we need to explore every one of those vectors of power to try to find an opening and over time we need to have a comprehensive dialogue with Iran because if we talk about only those things we want to talk about, that might freeze the negotiations.

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Powell.

SECRETARY POWELL: I would like to align myself of the position that we should reach out and begin talks with Iran. In the first term of the administration I was talking to the Syrians on a regular basis. I went to Damascus several times. They're not always pleasant visits, but you've got to do it. And sometimes you achieve an objective; sometimes it was just an exchange of views, but you stayed in touch with these folks, and we kept low level conversations going on with the Iranians through 2003, and then subsequently that fell apart and then we stopped talking to the Syrians.

The Syrians and the Iranians live in that neighborhood. They're an essential part of any solution and we have to find ways of talking to them. On Iraq itself, if I may, the United States Army and United States Marine Corps cannot keep up this level of deployment. It is a serious problem. And so my best judgment is that no matter what is being said right now, the drawdowns will have to continue if for no other reason it is not sustainable with the size military that we have.

The other thing that I would like to say is that we have to have a clear understanding of what the problem is. Al Qaeda is in Iraq. It wasn't there before, but it is now. But even if you got rid of Al Qaeda totally you have the basic underlying problem which is not Al Qaeda. There is a conflict taking place between the Shias and the Sunnis and within the Shias for power and survival and for control of the country. And there's just so much we can do with the United States' armed forces to resolve that conflict or even contain it.

The Baker-Hamilton report discussed this in considerable detail and advocated a policy of let's start disengaging somewhat, not go away, not cut and run, and no president will find that to be a acceptable policy. I don't think it's sustainable for 140 or 150,000 American soldiers to just sit there forever fighting Shias one day, fighting Sunnis the next day. It has to be passed off to the Iraqis. Because all the crises we are talking about now are from this administration to the next. I can assure you that there are several crises awaiting the new administration shortly after they take over.

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Albright?

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: I teach a course and I say to my students that foreign policy is just trying to get some other country to do what you want, and that you basically -- the new president will come in and open the national security toolbox, And then figure out what is the appropriate blend of force and diplomacy.

Because as Secretary Powell was saying, it's very hard for us to stay there. But we also have to figure out what our -- how to use the United Nations on the sanctions, how to find what we have in common with the Iranians because we do. It's a big lesson as how we dig ourselves out of this hole of Iraq and a bad reputation has to do with using all the tools in the toolbox.

SECRETARY BAKER: Much of what has been said by Colin and Madeleine is called for in the 50-page Iraq Study Group Report. This was a bipartisan and we talked a lot about we -- we debated a lot exactly what's being debated now in our presidential campaign whether or not to set a date, set a date, set a date for

withdrawal, date to begin, a date for -- we refused to do that. I think one of the worst things we could do when we start talking about Iraq is to somehow say, well, we need to get out of there come what may. We're going to have to draw down. That is going to have to happen, but that's far different than setting a date and a precipitous withdrawal.

With respect to Syria, if you look at the Iraq Study Group Report, we thought, our commission thought, we could flip Syria if the United States made it clear to them that we could -- that we could bring them back into the community of Nations, if you will, and they could get on semi good terms again with the United States, we could flip them away from Iran. That may be something, hopefully will be something that the new president will want to try and do and really do it aggressively.

TERENCE SMITH: There's another quote from the Iraq Study Group Report that moves us a little bit. It says, "The United States cannot achieve its goals in the Middle East unless it deals directly with the Arab-Israeli conflict." So the question is, do you agree with that and what is it that you envision would come of that, Secretary Kissinger

SECRETARY KISSINGER: As a practical matter, one has to involve the Europeans and the moderate Arabs in order to get guarantees for the security aspects that have to be part of such an agreement. I think the borders and the Arab part of Jerusalem should be part of the settlement. It's tacitly understood there will still be big disagreements about it. But I think the outline of the agreement is pretty clear. Two unsettled issues are, is it possible for the return of refugees to be limited to the Palestinian side? And, secondly, what is the security arrangement that prevents an outbreak in the Palestinian state of events like Gaza? And that cannot be done by the local people alone. That requires some kind of international presence.

TERENCE SMITH: Well, Secretary Christopher, you talked earlier about needing to deal with difficult groups. Would you apply that to HAMAS, to Hezbollah, to nonstate groups that nonetheless are big players in this whole equation?

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER: Terry, let me back up a little bit and say that I think we must get back to engaging the United States at the highest level, not just parachute trips in but real engagement. Now, with respect to HAMAS, that's a very tough question. But until we get all the Palestinians involved, we probably will not have reliable peace.

Now, I was very glad to see that the current administration is beginning to reach out to HAMAS through the Egyptians, and that may be the right route to go because they're very difficult to deal with, and peace with half the Palestinians is not going to be very stable.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: But on the other hand it's not an unreasonable proposition to say that a party during negotiation should accept the existence of the other party.

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER: Of course, I agree with you completely. [TALKOVER] That's why it's tough.

SECRETARY BAKER: Let me suggest a way around that conundrum. In 1991 as we began to look at the possibility of convening an international conference to deal with the Arab-Israeli problem. We did not speak to the Palestine Liberation Organization. It was a terrorist organization. I never had one meeting as Secretary of State with Yasser Arafat. Madeleine kissed him, but we wouldn't do that. [LAUGHTER] But -- but we were foreclo- --

TERENCE SMITH: Brief romance.

SECRETARY BAKER: It was a very short romance, but we were foreclosed [LAUGHTER] -- we were foreclosed from doing that. So what did we do? We found some Palestinians from within the territories who were not officials of PLO but who supported the PLO and who, in fact, took their marching orders from the PLO and Yasser Arafat. We did this with the concurrence and approval of -- of our Israeli friends. It was a construct that gave deniability to all the parties. And we ended up getting all of Israel's Arab neighbors to come to the table for the first time ever to negotiate peace with her. And I think something like that might work today.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: I can't --

TERENCE SMITH: Go ahead.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: -- let this go. I did -- one of the things that distinguished me from all of you is that I did develop the art of diplomatic kissing, you know [LAUGHTER], but, the bottom line, though, is that we --

TERENCE SMITH: Jesse Helms and I

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Yeah, right. But we were not able to deal with the PLO until you, Jim, were able, in fact, to bring them in. And then, Chris, we were able to bring some result to the Palestinians dealing with the Israelis.

I think that we need to be much more supportive of Mahmoud Abbas. He and Salam Fayyad the prime minister are people trying to deal with the issue, and they need to be able to show that they can deliver.

TERENCE SMITH: Well, what do you mean by much more -- [TALKOVER]

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Well --

TERENCE SMITH: -- supportive? We're already supporting them.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: -- economically they have to show that democracy can deliver it to them. And part of the reason that HAMAS did as well as it did in the elections in Gaza was that they were performing constituency services and giving various things. Job creation, economic aspects of Annapolis. I was in the Middle East right after Annapolis and everybody was very excited about it.

The question is whether the pledges that have been made, whether there really has been a way to work through what that process was promising. People would love to see that happen. And I think that the question is how to use some of the ideas that Jim has just stated, or what Chris was saying with the Egyptians because there has to be some way to break this log jam. But I don't think we should give up on Mahmoud Abbas.

SECRETARY POWELL: I kissed Arafat, too.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: You kissed Arafat?

[LAUGHTER] [TALKOVER]

SECRETARY POWELL: For the benefit of the -- for the benefit of those in the audience, this is a very, very typical Middle Eastern way of greeting somebody. [LAUGHTER]

And we -- we tried hard in the first months of the administration to get something started, and I met with Chairman Arafat a number of times. And to be blunt, he couldn't deliver. He would look you right in the eye and say, I will do exactly what you have said, General. You're a general. I'm a general. I will obey. And as soon as I left the room, I knew it was just more nonsense.

And so we concluded in June of 2002 that this was not sustainable and the president made his famous speech in June of 2002 which said we need more and new responsible leadership, and they responded to that. And that's how Mahmoud Abbas has become now president, first prime minister, now is president.

But you have to be engaged. You have to find a way to deal with HAMAS. HAMAS was elected as the result of an election and we insisted upon it. A lot of people say you don't do that.

TERENCE SMITH: And that many regard as something that backfired. [TALKOVER]

SECRETARY POWELL: We put them in political power.

SECRETARY BAKER: Made them do it.

SECRETARY POWELL: Made them do it. And so you have to find clever ways to talk to them. Dr. Kissinger's reservations about talking to HAMAS, as somebody dedicated to the destruction of Israel, requires response in the kind that Jim talked about. You get a cut out. Maybe not just with the Egyptians but with some Europeans who agree to do it. Has to be done.

TERENCE SMITH: I would be remiss if I let this go by without going back to something you mentioned at the very beginning, which was the situation in Afghanistan. I think it needs some definition from people with your experience of what you believe the U.S. end goal should be in Afghanistan. Is it to eliminate Al Qaeda and the Taliban? Is it to establish a democracy? Is it to rebuild a nation? Is it all of the above? What is it and what should it be for the next president? Secretary Kissinger?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: You know, you're not obliged to start with me. [LAUGHTER]

TERENCE SMITH: You know, that was Hillary Clinton's complaint in a recent debate.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: You know, I find Afghanistan intellectually tougher than Iraq. I can describe in a way the Baker report has described what an outcome might be. When you say make Afghanistan democratic Afghanistan has been an independent country governed by various warlords balancing their domains and their jurisdictions and uniting primarily when some foreign invader came in and made it very hard for them.

We were involved in Afghanistan originally in the war because Al Qaeda's headquarters and training operation was in Afghanistan. So we have a national interest in preventing this from arising again. So should Iran, because Al Qaeda was threatening Iran. So should Pakistan, so should Russia, so should China. I must tell you, frankly, I don't know exactly what to do in Afghanistan except that I do not believe it's possible to democratize Afghanistan through a military operation. And then I would be content with creating a stable situation which its neighbors are willing to sustain and in which everybody agrees that the fundamentalist Islamic group will be suppressed.

SECRETARY BAKER: You're suggesting that stability should not be a dirty word. It can be an objective in foreign policy?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Yes. It's, I think, the only objective we can reach in the short term or the medium term [TALKING OVER].

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Powell?

SECRETARY POWELL: In some ways, I think, as does Henry, Afghanistan is going to be more difficult in the long run than Iraq.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: That's what I think.

SECRETARY POWELL: Iraq is a country that used to have institutions. It has an educated middle class. It has an economic base that has to be restarted. Afghanistan is still driven mostly by tribal warlords, as they are called, and it is not going to be a Jeffersonian democracy in the lifetime of anybody in this room. So what do we want? Henry touched on it. Jim touched on it. We want stability and security and a good relationship with us.

We have to do something to bring this about, have to do something about the drug problem that is eating up the country, something about banging down the Taliban and Al Qaeda. And you can't talk about stabilizing Afghanistan without talking about what's going on in Pakistan.

TERENCE SMITH: Well, precisely, and I indeed want to turn to that. Pakistan has faced significant violence and political turmoil in recent months, including the assassination, of course, of the Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. So I wonder what advice you would give the next administration in dealing with Pakistan and specifically the issue of President Musharraf. Secretary Albright? [TALKOVER]

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Well, first of all, I think Pakistan contains everything that gives you an international migraine. [LAUGHTER] It has nuclear weapons. It has poverty, extremism, corruption, and

a lack of sense of where its democracy is going. And it is of concern also because it is a staging area obviously for dealing with Afghanistan. I think, though, what I find very -- very supportive at the moment are the elections in Pakistan

I don't always agree that it has to be a Jeffersonian democracy, but there are signs that the people want to take hold of it. And I see no reason why the U.S. shouldn't be supportive of that, which is different than imposing some kind of sense of democracy. I think the U.S. and the next president should align herself with the fact [LAUGHTER] that there are -- or himself with the Pakistani people. And kind of a sense that the Pakistani people want to take their country back. It's a very complicated place and all those migraine symptoms are there, but I think there is hope with Pakistan.

SECRETARY BAKER: Do you think that the new prime minister of Pakistan should begin a dialogue with the militants?

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Frankly, Jim, you know better than I do even, is the fact that the military and some of the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's people dealt with a lot of the militants. So there's a lot of cross-cutting issues. But I think they're going to have to start talking to them -- [TALKOVER]

SECRETARY BAKER: I thought it was interesting to see that they are suggesting they're going to do that which is a new approach and one that on its face would appear not to appeal to us but it may have some utility. I don't know.

But I agree with everything Madeleine said. I think we ought to continue to do what we can to encourage the Paks to fight Al Qaeda and the Taliban in every way they can because they will not -- they will not get their country back if it ends up being turned over to that kind of government.

TERENCE SMITH: And with a figure like President Musharraf, what do you do? The United States has invested a tremendous amount of capital, political and otherwise in this figure, and yet as -- as Secretary Albright suggests his days, his leadership days may be limited.

SECRETARY POWELL: I think we have to act with a fairly light touch with respect to -- [TALKOVER]

TERENCE SMITH: Right. I mean, we're talking about what a new president might [TALKOVER]

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: A light touch is absolutely right.

SECRETARY POWELL: We have to have a light touch.

TERENCE SMITH: A light touch. What do you mean?

SECRETARY POWELL: A light touch in the sense I don't think we can tell the Pakistanis what to do with Musharraf or they should or should not negotiate with the militants. The Pakistanis are going to decide that within their system, their new system. And, frankly, if we start trying to lecture them and telling them what to do, I think that could well backfire.

Let's also remember the history of Pakistan, that every time they have gone back to a, quote, democratic civilian type government, it's come apart within a few years, and we're back to a military dictatorship.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No elected government has ever gone to the end of its term because there's been so much corruption so we shouldn't celebrate too soon. I agree that we should not try to manage the domestic affairs of Pakistan. So, yes, these elections are democratic. We shouldn't particularly intervene in how they evolve, but it's going to be a very complicated situation because they have nuclear weapons. They have an immediate impact on Afghanistan. They have an impact on India, China, so we have to understand what we mean by stability there as well as democracy.

SECRETARY BAKER: I think, and Madeleine made this point also, I think it is perhaps the most dangerous single country situation that the new president is going to face because it is at the crossroads of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and has a history of the nature you've pointed out, Henry, and also has a history of having fought wars with India over the last 50 years, maybe how many, three or four?

TERENCE SMITH: Well, that's a question: What should a new administration do in terms of dealing with India, its neighboring nuclear power?

SECRETARY POWELL: It turns out that we have a very good relationship with India right now as a result of the work of a number of people sitting here at this panel. And in the last couple of years, India has watched what's been happening in Pakistan and in Afghanistan and have not reacted the way they might have in the past years, so I think we have a more mature, stable relationship.

TERENCE SMITH: [TALKOVER] Oh, I'm sure they continue to watch every move keenly. Secretary Kissinger?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think the relationship with India is one of the very positive things that is happening and it's based in part because they have the world's largest democracy, but India is very concerned about the impact of radical Islam. They have the second largest Islamic population in the world, 60 million, and they know -- they know if the Islamic group becomes largely fundamentalists and radical it will spill over. So their objectives are very similar to us. No major power controlled in that area, no radical Islamic domination. And so we can cooperate with them both on ideologic grounds and on strategic grounds. It's one of the positive legacies that the new administration will -- will inherit.

TERENCE SMITH: Let's turn, if we may, to developments in Russia where President Putin is Prime Minister Putin. How should the next administration address Russia and this new configuration?

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER: Well, we ought to begin to see if we can't encourage some independence on behalf of the new president, Medvedev. There's just a little flicker that he might be willing to move away from Putin. That's one thing we should probe in a new president.

TERENCE SMITH: Willing? Do you think he's able?

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER: Medvedev?

TERENCE SMITH: To move away or show independence of?

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER: I think it's doubtful that he is. I think Putin is stronger. But more important, whoever is running Russia and probably Putin will be running Russia, I think it's essential for us to try to restore our nuclear dialogue with them. That's really fallen into the abyss and START has really stopped, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has really stalled, virtually dead in the senate.

The questions as to civil rights concerns, those are very tough but we ought to keep those on the table. If they are going to be part of the G8, and if they are going to be part of the European Union or the WTO, then we ought to demand from them the same kind of qualities and qualifications that we've demanded of others for entry into those bodies.

TERENCE SMITH: This whole issue of nuclear proliferation, of course, was addressed in part by the Nunn-Lugar efforts to reduce the stockpiles. Where does that stand and does it need renewed attention from a new president?

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: I believe it is important to look at a zero-based world in terms of nuclear missiles. I think it's very hard to get to, but I think it is very important to have it as an agenda.

I am very concerned that President Putin, doesn't matter where he sits, will continue to have a great deal of power. And that the Russians are playing a very dangerous game in terms of their oil diplomacy, or whatever one calls it, blackmail. But we have to be very careful about what we put on the agenda with the Russians. We need them on certain issues in terms of how to deal with Iran, for instance, or North Korea. And so we shouldn't load it down with issues that complicate our lives and are unnecessary such as radar stations.

SECRETARY BAKER: [WHISPERING - Kosovo]

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: And in Kosovo -- Well, I -- they disagree on that. But I think that it is very important for us to be clear about where we can cooperate and where we have to stand up for what we believe in.

SECRETARY BAKER: In terms of Russia, the advice to the new president can be very simple: We need the best possible relationship we can have with Russia. Madeleine pointed out why we need Russia. We're going to need, really need Russia if we're ever going to deal with Iran's nuclear problem.

We confronted them throughout the entire period of the Cold War and it wasn't the end of Western civilization as we know it. We ought to understand, Russia is going to have her own foreign policy interest. She's going to assert her views. And where they conflict with our vital interests, we ought to confront them. When we can cooperate with them, we ought to cooperate with them.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Let me make a point. One has to understand, I believe, that Russia is a country that has had a nervous breakdown. Here is a country that has lost 300 years of its history. It's not just the communist period. Everything for which they struggled and fought from the time of Peter the Great, they're right back to where they started. So that creates a tremendous problem for their leadership of how to give that country an identity.

Then they have a long frontier with China, which is sort of a democratic nightmare because there's 30 million Russians on the one side and a billion plus Chinese on the other. They have 25 million Muslims, about a fourth of their population right at that Islamic frontier. And then they have the new border with Europe for which they have no historic experience, so they're trying to find a new identity.

With respect to Putin, there's sort of an obsession in this country about Putin as a person. My view is that if he wanted to be dictator, he's chosen a really tough way to do it. Because the easy thing for him to do would have been to amend the constitution, since he controls the Parliament anyway, and give himself another term.

He's now brought in somebody as president, and he's prime minister. The position of prime minister constitutionally is below the president. I have yet to meet a Russian, a Russian who can explain to me how this thing can -- it's going to work.

This is not a very strong country. Their population is declining. They have a horrible health problem. They have huge tasks domestically, and we should keep open the possibility of a constructive relationship, because between them and us, we have 95 percent of the nuclear weapons in the world.

On missile defense, I think we should explore that proposal of linking the radar systems that they make. At any rate, we should keep open the possibility of a constructive dialogue and not focus it on one man.

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Powell?

SECRETARY POWELL: Two quick points. One, the Russia Federation is never going to be the Soviet Union again. They're doing too well by not being the Soviet Union. They've never seen this level of wealth creation in their entire history. And so we shouldn't have that kind of fear that we're going back to the past. We're not. And the other thing we have to remember is, we sort of criticized Putin or Medvedev, they are enormously popular. They have brought a sense of respect and stability back to the Russian people, and Putin didn't have to suppress the media or fiddle with the election. He would have been elected even under the Florida caucus system or something like that. [LAUGHTER]

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Can I make --

TERENCE SMITH: Prosperity is a popular political platform.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: I think what is interesting, though, because Colin is absolutely right. The question is why they figured they had to fiddle with the election, and why did they have to eliminate any opposition voice? So I think there are a lot of interesting questions about it. [TALKOVER]

TERENCE SMITH: Some interesting questions. Let me move us, however, to the east, China. So give us your perspective, if you will, of China today and how a new president and a new administration should address this relationship. Secretary Baker?

SECRETARY BAKER: Well, I think as we discussed with respect to Russia, I think we ought to cooperate with them when our interests are similar. We have similar interests with respect to North Korea's effort to obtain nuclear weapons, to the issue of global climate change, with respect to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, with respect to energy demands and security of energy supply. And we have differences with them in areas such as Taiwan and human rights, a little bit of a difference with them with respect to their military buildup. And -- and there's a lot of -- a lot of news coverage today of what's happening in Tibet.

There are a lot of people out there who would suggest somehow the United States and China are inevitably on a collision course. And -- and there's going to be an inevitable clash. I don't happen to believe that. I think we could make it happen. And it would be a terrible, terrible mistake

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Christopher?

SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER: I think the country is really indebted to Secretary Kissinger for having found the opening to China. I think we benefited enormously from that, Henry, and I think we ought to continue on that path.

One thing I would say that I found useful to remember when I was dealing with China, and that is we have vastly different political systems. Our system for all of its fault depends upon the consent of the governed. In China that kind of consent is really a hollow concept. They depend upon domination and that makes them very highly sensitive to any indication of dissent. The Internet is going to make it much, much harder for them to maintain the kind of control that they think they need.

TERENCE SMITH: I've got to turn to the man who went to China, what, 30-plus years ago to achieve that opening.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: One fundamental thing to say about these three decades is that it's the most consistent bipartisan American foreign policy. One point I want to make is when we discuss foreign policy, we as Americans have a tendency to think of our concerns and then to make it sort of a catalog of what we consider important. But we also have to look at the Chinese ideas of country with a long uninterrupted history of self-government, and that now with all the apparent achievements faces huge problems.

They have a coastline that is like Europe and an interior that's in a very underdeveloped state. They have cities that have huge infrastructure problems. At any one moment, they have a hundred million people moving from the interior, so this is not a country that now can undertake international ventures.

I want to support what Jim and Madeleine have said. We should not look at China as a military adversary. It's not conceivable to me in a generation that that could happen.

TERENCE SMITH: Secretary Powell, on the issue of whether or not China poses a present or future military threat.

SECRETARY POWELL: I cannot come up with a scenario where China would find it in its interest to any way to be aggressive towards the United States. They don't have that kind of history or tradition, and they're doing so well by not being in a hostile situation with the United States of America.

Two points, if I may. China's major problem, and I'll tell you, is not its pollution and all the other things we've touched on, but they still have close to 900 million to a billion people who have not benefited in the slightest from this wealth creation. They know it, and those people are getting mad.

And China knows that what they have to do is to continue to industrialize, to get these people off those farms where they are subsistent peasant farmers and will never do any better. And that requires political stability with the West and especially political and economic stability with the United States of America.

One final point and I'll be brief. The last three countries we really touched on, India, China, and the Russian Federation, the old Soviet Union, they were my adversaries for most of my adult life. And now these are the only three countries, really, in the world that have the industrial or population capacity to challenge the United States as a peer militarily, and none of them are in the slightest bit interested in doing that because they're doing so well in a new kind of world

So the new president is not just facing the usual horrible list of old problems like the previous administration. He'll have his own new problems, but I think the new president will also have great opportunity to make it a better world.

TERENCE SMITH: Right. I want to just ask Secretary Albright how you address the emission of greenhouse gases from China. How do you reach an understanding that they can live with in terms of economic development of their country and that we and the rest of the world can live with? I mean that quite literally, live with.

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Well, it's obviously one of the most difficult issues, and anyone that has been to China recently, it is difficult to breathe, and I don't make a lot of predictions, but I think the Chinese will win most of the medals at the Olympics because nobody else will be able to -- [LAUGHTER] -- But the bottom line, I think, is that we need to look at its energy deficit basically, and that a lot of its foreign policy is based on trying to get energy supplies. And the question is whether we can persuade them that economically they will be better off if they leapfrog the mistakes that we have made on clean technology and to bring them along so that they see that they're gaining out of it instead of the arguments that they make, which is we're trying to stop them from developing by saying you can't use your industrial strength the way that we did in the past.

But it is a difficult position and it has to be appealed to on the basis of that they are the ones that are suffering from environmental degradation of what Colin and Jim were talking about.

TERENCE SMITH: I want to ask a final question that is very dear to the mission of the Southern Center, and I think important to all of us and that's whether or not today's citizens are getting the education they need in geography, world history, politics, economics, culture, languages. In order for this country to succeed and take a sophisticated approach to its role in the world., what do we do about educating this traditionally insular continental country, and its youth especially, about the rest of the world?

SECRETARY POWELL: We have a challenge on how to handle the economic growth that's taking place all over the world. We have a challenge on how to handle the energy issue associated with that growth. We have a challenge in how to protect our environment when we see that economic growth and the energy needed for that growth. But the other problem we have is that we three hundred million Americans have got to do a better job of educating our youth. And we in this country right now are seeing one-third -- all of our youngsters not finishing high school. We are seeing 50 percent of minority kids not finishing high school, and we have accepted this. The greatest universities in the world, the K through 12 system is in desperate need.

And I'm telling you, when you look at India, when you look at Russia, when you look at Eastern Europe, when you look at Latin America, all these places that used to be isolated behind curtains or in totalitarian regimes, they're now all investing in education. And America has got to get back to the task of educating our youngsters for a 21st Century world. [APPLAUSE]

TERENCE SMITH: We've come to the end of our program, and I would like very much to thank Secretaries Kissinger, Baker, Powell, Christopher and Albright for their participation in this Southern Center for International Studies Conference. I would also like to thank the University of Georgia and other sponsors for helping make the program possible. And last, but not least, I would like to thank all of you, our audience. I'm Terence Smith, thank you both, thank you all very much.