

Words of advice *for* the next president

*O*n March 27, former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger, James Baker III, Warren Christopher, Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell gathered in Athens to discuss current U.S. foreign policy with the goal of providing advice and counsel to the next presidential administration. The session was moderated by Terence Smith, of "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer," before an audience of more than 2,000.

Sponsored by the Dean Rusk Center, in partnership with the Southern Center for International Studies, the two-hour roundtable, titled "The Report of the Secretaries of State: Bipartisan Advice to the Next Administration," has been edited for broadcast on PBS stations across the country. This program can also be viewed on the law school's Web site at www.law.uga.edu. The following will provide you with excerpts from the forum.



AMERICA'S IMAGE ABROAD

POWELL: I think it will begin to change with a new president no matter which [one of the] 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. ... 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 go back to our traditional respective forms of dealing with people who have potentially committed crimes.

ALBRIGHT: I personally have never seen the world in such a mess. ... 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, [Terrence Smith] asked what does it matter to us, and I think it matters in the following way: Since the president and the secretary's 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. ... 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.

BAKER: I agree with [Secretary Albright] 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 – [the] kind of thing the next president is going to have to deal with.

CHRISTOPHER: I'm one of those who thinks that in order to be strong abroad, we have to be strong at home and that's just not mili-

tarily 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. ... On Guantanamo, Terry, I agree completely with Colin Powell.

BAKER: With respect to Guantanamo, let me say I totally agree with what Colin and Madeleine and Chris (referring to Secretary Christopher) 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.

KISSINGER: I agree with the impact that Guantanamo has internationally. ... And, I would like to see it closed. But I would also like to see what the alternative is, what the consequences are when it is closed because some of the people that apparently are there 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.

IRAQ WAR

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.



Opposite page: Participants in *The 16th Report of the Secretaries of State* were: (back, l. to r.) Colin Powell, Terrence Smith (moderator), James Baker, (front, l. to r.) Warren Christopher, Madeleine Albright and Henry Kissinger. Photo by UGA Public Affairs' Andrew Davis Tucker.

BAKER: [The Iraq Study Group] Report recommended that we start talking to Iran in the same way we talked to Iran about Afghanistan. This administration – 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 that. 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.

KISSINGER: On negotiation with Iran, 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. ... 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.

CHRISTOPHER: I have a few scars [from] 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 in Iran, many different channels for opening dialogue. 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 like Rafsanjani. So I think we need to explore every one of those vectors of power to try to find an opening. ... I think 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.

POWELL: I would like to align myself of the position that says 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. ... 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 the United States Marine Corps, they 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 drawdown will have to continue if for no other reason than 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 there 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, sooner or later. ... 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 an 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.

ALBRIGHT: 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. And, I think that we need to focus ourselves on how the next president uses that array of tools in the toolbox and allows a mix and match.

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

ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

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 a 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.

CHRISTOPHER: 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. ... And 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.

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.

CHRISTOPHER: Of course, I agree with you completely. That's why, that's why it's tough.

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. ... We were foreclosed from doing that. So what did

This was The 16th Report of the Secretaries of State produced by the Southern Center and helped to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Dean Rusk Center at Georgia Law. The center was named for the late Dean Rusk who served as secretary of state for Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. When Rusk returned to the state of Georgia in 1970, he was appointed to the Georgia Law faculty as the Sibley Professor of International Law. During his nearly 25 years of service at UGA, Rusk also served as the first chairman of the Southern Center and was instrumental in starting the secretaries of state roundtables during the early 1980s. He, of course, participated in several of the forums.

we do? We found some Palestinians from within the territories who were not officials of [the] 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 the – 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.

ALBRIGHT: But we were not able to deal with the PLO until you, Jim, as a result of your excellent work, were able, in fact, to bring them in. And then, ... 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 that are trying to deal with the issue, and they need to be able to show that they can deliver. ... 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, the 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 give enough strength to Mahmoud Abbas to be able to go forward, use some of the ideas that Jim has just stated in terms of working through some groups that are deniable ... or what Chris (referring to Secretary Christopher) was saying, with the Egyptians because there has to be some way to break this log jam.

POWELL: 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 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. ... 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.

AFGHANISTAN

KISSINGER: I find Afghanistan intellectually tougher than Iraq. ... When you say make Afghanistan democratic, ... it's a long project for 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 making life 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.

POWELL: In some ways, I think, as does Henry, that Afghanistan is going to be more difficult in the long run than Iraq. ... 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? ... 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 and will eat up its nation's democracy because of the corruption involved in it. You've got to do 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.

PAKISTAN

ALBRIGHT: I think Pakistan contains everything that gives you an international migraine. 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.

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

ALBRIGHT: One of the problems, 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.

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 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.

POWELL: We have to have a light touch. ... A light touch in the sense [that] 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.

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 [and] China, so we have to understand what we mean by stability there as well as democracy.

INDIA

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.

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. ... India is very concerned about the impact of radical Islam. ... They have the second largest Islamic population in the world, 160 million. ... And therefore, 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 – on strategic grounds.

RUSSIA/NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

CHRISTOPHER: I think 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. ... 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. START [the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty] has really stopped, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has really stalled – virtually dead in the Senate. ... The questions as to, you know, their own obedience 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.

ALBRIGHT: I think we all have agreed that 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.



Sponsored by the Dean Rusk Center, in partnership with the Southern Center for International Studies, more than 2,000 people attended this roundtable featuring five former secretaries of state in Athens. Photo by UGA Public Affairs' Andrew Davis Tucker.

fear that we're going back to the past. We're not. ... 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.

CHINA

BAKER: I think we ought to cooperate with [the Chinese] 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 [the] 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, ... and we are beginning to develop a little bit of a difference with them with respect to their military buildup. ... There are a lot of people out there who would suggest that somehow the United States and China are inevitably on a collision course. ... I don't happen to believe that. I think we could make it happen, ... and it would be a terrible, terrible mistake.

CHRISTOPHER: 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[s], 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.

KISSINGER: One fundamental thing to say about these three past 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 would 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. ... So this is not a country that now can undertake international adventures. ... We should not look at China as a military adversary.

POWELL: I cannot come up with a scenario, other than defending the Taiwan Straits and perhaps defending them out to some distances in the Pacific, 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. ... 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.

BAKER: In terms of Russia, the advice to the new president is – 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.

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. [It's] 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. ... Now 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. ... 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, I don't know where it would go, but we should keep open the possibility of a constructive dialogue and not focus it on one man.

POWELL: Two quick points. One, the Russian 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