



STRIKING A BALANCE: A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY

INTRODUCTION AND OPENING REMARKS

SPEAKERS:

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DR. RICHARD DANZIG: Welcome to the Center for a New American Security. I want to welcome the 1,400 of you who are lucky enough to get tickets for this event. And encourage you, please, to look down your noses at the several thousand who couldn't get in. (Laughter.) Thank you very much, particularly those of you who were patient enough to squeeze in here, even if you didn't have seats, and for those in the overflow rooms, we know you're here. It's a sign, I think, of the wonderful vitality of the Center for a New American Security, the quality of our speakers today, the central significance of the issues we're going to discuss that so many of you wanted so much to come.

I want to begin by thanking the people who made this possible. We have a dozen sponsors, and we have a slide here that lists all their names. I'm particularly grateful to these 12, without whom this event would not have been possible.

I also want to take a moment to express not just thanks, but a really extraordinarily deep gratitude to Kurt Campbell who's been the CEO of the Center for a New American Security since the day it started. Indeed, he with Michele Flournoy conceived it in a process that is now approaching Washington Street legend. Kurt, himself, being a Washington Street legend.

This is an amazing achievement which owes an enormous amount to Michele Flournoy and Jim Miller who, as you know, have gone into government as the under secretary and principal deputy for policy, and to really all the people at the Center for a New American Security, probably even including our board of directors, probably not including our present chairman, but it is a place that is a creation of a huge number of people who have contributed in a very large way, financially, as you've seen, intellectually, psychologically. But at the very core of it from the very beginning has been Kurt.

And I mention this because Kurt has been nominated as the assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific. He had his hearing yesterday. As chairman of the Center for a New American Security, I'm doing everything possible to prevent his confirmation – (laughter) – including anonymous letters, et cetera, describing not so much his character defects, but things I've made up by way of defects. (Laughter.) But the reality is that if the Senate so decides, Kurt may be confirmed soon and we may lose Kurt at the Center, who's really been not only the heart and soul, but really the brains and the body really of the enterprise.

I think for you from the outside, Kurt's intellectual contributions are probably quite evident. It's just amazing to me that he could write books and papers on diverse subjects of transitions and American security policy, and that he could foster such intellectual vibrancy within the place. He's also been the center of the enterprise in terms of raising money, and in a way that isn't public he's even given money at significant levels himself just as a manifestation of his commitment.

But what you probably would not see and that has been so central to what has been Kurt's extraordinary leadership just as a person inside the enterprise who cares about the

people within it, who has mentored, who has been a loving figure really at the head of the organization.

I'd talked with some people over the last few days about Kurt's departure and what it meant to them. And one of them said to me, Kurt came up to me six months ago and he said, you have an opportunity here with the departures of some of our people into government, you need to step up to it. We need to plan together how you might develop and succeed. And she said to me, and I did and I kept coming back to Kurt and Kurt kept at me to be better and better, and at the same time supported me in remarkable ways.

Kurt's giving to the place involved, I think, a depth of commitment to every detail. You know, if there was a scrape in the wall, Kurt wanted it fixed. If he didn't like the color, he wanted it changed. But he also gave room to people to develop and that's what's made it such an extraordinary place. So I'd ask you to join with me in just giving a round of applause to Kurt Campbell, who will hate it.

(Applause.)

I also want to tell you that in a way which is probably very unusual in national security affairs, we have actually been thinking ahead – I know this is not customary – about the fact that Kurt might be confirmed and who might succeed him and who might be worthy of this. And it's my great pleasure to announce to you today that if Kurt is confirmed, our intention is to appoint as CEO of the Center for a New American Security Nate Fick.

(Applause.)

This is, I think – I'm glad to know that Nate has family here. (Laughter.) This is, I think, a remarkable thing. We have a group of four people, all of whom here today, all of whom you will see today: Sharon Burke, Kristin Lord, John Nagl, and Nate Fick, who Kurt has brought along together as a team, and that team has come together in embracing Nate as its leader – a remarkable reflection of his leadership qualities.

John Nagl, who as president of Center for a New American Security plays an absolutely essential role, remarked to me that he had written in a recommendation for Nate to another organization that Nate was the only person he could imagine who was a decade younger than him who he would be very happy accepting as a leader. And this reflects, I think, a very widespread view about Nate Fick.

Nate, a graduate of Dartmouth, went into the Marine Corps, had a remarkable career, which you can read about in his bestselling book *One Bullet Away* – (laughter) – which is a very unusual reflection on his experience in Afghanistan and Iraq and the realities of combat and what a reflective thinks about that as he leaves it.

And then after being widely recognized for his extraordinary achievements inside the Marine Corps and particularly the achievements of his platoon and his achievements in Afghanistan, partly in training Afghans, Nate also achieved a kind of public recognition not just from his book – which also, by the way, was recognized the *Washington Post* as one of the best books of the year – I'm going to plug it a few more times in the course of the day –

(laughter) – but Nate became the subject of *Generation Kill*, the Evan Wright book that many of you have seen, and then the HBO series on our experience in Iraq in which Nate plays a central role.

Nate went on to the Kennedy School, the Harvard Business School, got degrees from both of them, and continued to write and reflect in this area. We're so deeply impressed with Nate. I have to tell you that besides all the things I've mentioned, when we thought as a board about who could succeed Kurt given the character that I've described for Kurt, it was a special thing to reflect on the ways in which Nate also is truly a leader. And when I described Kurt as somebody who was a counselor and, in fact, a father to us – to the organization, I have to note that I think – (inaudible) – in Nate's book at page 242 – you can buy copies outside – (laughter) – the line in which he said after he described the traumatic incident in the course of their – his platoon's experience: "We had to talk about what happened. I had to be psychiatrist, coach and father without anyone suspecting I was anything but platoon commander."

That says so much, and I would strongly encourage those of you who have the opportunity to encourage Nate in the great task we're asking him to undertake here at CNAS and to give us your support and participation in the time ahead. This will additional benefit for you that if you become deeply involved, contribute, et cetera, your chances of getting in the room next year are increased. (Laughter.)

So please, let me ask you to join us in welcoming Nate Fick.

(Applause.)

Nate has another characteristic in common with Kurt which is both of them would rather I didn't say all of that. But you join a large group in the world which would rather that I didn't say anything, so this is fine. (Laughter.)

Finally, it's my privilege to introduce to you Ambassador Nick Burns, well known to so many in this audience. Perhaps you encountered Ambassador Burns when he concluded 27 years of diplomatic service as our under secretary for political affairs at the State Department in which he had a central role in so many of the issues that concern us – Iran and Iraq.

But when you go back and look further in his career, you could have encountered him as, for example, ambassador to Greece, or ambassador to NATO. You could have found Nick Burns in the National Security Council at the time that Russia was going through – the Soviet Union was dissolving and Russia was going through this transition and there was Ambassador Burns playing an absolutely central role. You could have found him in Jerusalem earlier in his career. This is a man who has, in the broadest sense, represented America at the highest level in so many different contexts.

I'm especially delighted that he recently joined the Center for a New American Security board, along with Mike Zak and Denis Bovin, enriching – and Peter Schwartz, enriching our board at this time of transition. Nick is a great American figure. He's now a professor at the Kennedy School and we welcome him to this program.

Nick, thank you.

(Applause.)

AMBASSADOR R. NICHOLAS BURNS: Richard, thank you. Good morning, everybody. A pleasure to welcome everyone here. I've got a very simple task this morning. I'm going to be very brief. It's just to say a few words to set the stage for the discussions, but I'm going to be brief because I'm anxious to hear what Gen. Petraeus, our keynote speaker, has to say about his command. But I want to thank Richard for his leadership, thank the new leadership, including Nate and John. Congratulations to both of you.

I'd say this if you looked at the agenda for the day: we're going to be discussing some of the central issues facing our country and facing the Obama administration. How can we be successful in drawing down in Iraq honorably with success and leaving the country in better shape than we found it? How can we be successful in meeting this new threat – counterinsurgency threat in Afghanistan? How do we look at this mercurial, unpredictable, maddening regime in Pyongyang and its nuclear weapons program? How do we stop them from proceeding?

And then how do we restore America's image in the world, which was so badly affected by the events of the last decade or so? In light of his recent speech in Cairo, you might make the case that President Obama is reshaping America's image in the world all by himself. But it's an important issue, and our second keynote speaker, Judith McHale, will address that at lunch today.

But this organization, the Center for a New American Security, is addressing all these issues. I think it's had the fastest rise to leadership of any think-tank in memory. And my contribution this morning will just be to suggest the following: that you might see – we all might see the issues addressed today against the larger landscape that the Obama administration, the geopolitical landscape has inherited as he's come to office.

And I think as someone who is a diplomat for a number of years and teaches diplomacy, there are two strategic shifts underway in global politics that are affecting our national interest that we have to keep sight of and that frame the discussion today. And the first is the clear strategic shift in American vital interest to the Middle East, to South Asia, and to East Asia, away from Europe where it's been for most of the last 100 years.

Now, with apologies to all the Europeans present today, it's good news. Europe may be the most democratic, most united, most peaceful space on earth and it's because of Europe's successes, along with those of the United States, that we have had to turn our attention elsewhere.

But look at the agenda that our new president and his administration are facing. In the Middle East, trying to take advantage of the surprisingly positive elections in Lebanon just the other day; try to cope with the challenges in Iraq; try to recreate the basis of American relationship with the Arab world; and try to engage with Iran for the first time in three decades. We've had three decades of failed relations, frozen relations with that very important country.

In South Asia, to look not only at Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has to be the core focus of American concerns today, but at the positive strategic opportunity that the U.S.-India relationship and its construction by two presidents, President Clinton and President Bush. What can President Obama do to continue to lift up that relationship and make India, I think possibly within the next couple of decades, perhaps one of the most two or three important strategic partners with the United States worldwide.

And in East Asia, to rebuild our alliance with Japan; to protect and defend South Korea at a very difficult time; to renew our partnership with Australia; but also to manage the rise of China ahead. That's just a glimpse of the strategic challenges that our country faces and that we will all be discussing today.

I would just choose one of them that's not on the agenda, very briefly, Iran – to say I think that President Obama has positioned us pretty well in light of tomorrow's elections. No one knows how those elections are going to go. No one should trust the public opinion polls in Iran because they were notoriously wrong back in 2005 in not predicting President Ahmadinejad's victory. But a careful look at what's going on in Iran today indicates that at least there is a reform movement in that country. It is youth-driven. It's remarkable for its energy. And I don't know what's going to happen in the election tomorrow, but we should be open to the possibility of some change.

And it's been interesting for me as someone who used to work on Iran for the Bush administration, to see the flurry of op-ed articles mainly from the right in our own society over the last couple of days essentially saying diplomacy is naïve, diplomacy is weak, diplomacy can't win and can't succeed in dealing with countries like Iran.

I would say that President Obama is countering that. I think he's effectively put Ahmadinejad on the defensive prior to this election because of our ability now to open up the vista for the possibility of negotiations, and at least he's positioned us to take advantage of the possibility that we might see a glimmer of change in the wake of these Iranian elections.

That gets to the second strategic shift that we've got to be cognizant of and that shift is that in global politics today, the United States needs to rebalance the way we think about our national security. Perhaps it was inevitable in the immediate wake of 9/11 that we return to strengthening our military as we should have and as we did. And as a former American ambassador to NATO who worked with the military very closely, we should all want to have the strongest military in the world – and we do. And we strengthened our intelligence community for the counterterrorism battles that we have been fighting.

But we didn't take the step of strengthening our diplomatic apparatus. We did not take the step of increasing the number of men and women in the diplomatic corps, which is 6,500 strong. There are more lawyers in the Pentagon than American diplomats. There are more musicians in the Armed Forces bands of the Navy, Air Force, Army and Marines than there are American diplomats. And fortunately, now you see President Obama and Vice President Biden and Secretary Clinton backed up, I think, by the most convincing proponent – Secretary Bob Gates – say that we should strengthen our diplomatic corps. We

should rebuild AID, which is a shadow of its former self, and we should think of diplomacy as a fundamental and critical asset in our national security apparatus.

The title of this program is “Striking the Balance.” The balance can’t all be just on figuring out how to be successful militarily, although that is essential, or through intelligence. The balance also has to be how can the United States use – and historically, we’ve been very good at this – how can we use our moral power, our values, our political freedoms, our flexibility in decision-making to cajole countries to join with us, to be persuasive in countering foes like Iran and North Korea, and to see diplomacy as something as value, not as something that’s weak or naïve as we’ve been reading about in the op-ed pages of the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post and the New York Times when it comes to Iran over the last couple of weeks.

I would say that balance is one that this administration needs to strike. And as an early indication of where it’s going, I’ve been very impressed by the commitment that this administration, President Obama and Secretary Clinton, are giving to diplomacy, and perhaps that’s the greatest challenge for this organization for the Center for a New American Security to look at our national security not just as a function of what we do militarily, but what all of us do in the national security apparatus to make our country strong. I think it’s that balance that we’ve got to strike for our country. So I’m anxious to hear what Gen. Petraeus has to say, and the other speakers.

Again, thank you coming today, and Nate and John, Kristin and Sharon, congratulations on your new leadership.

(Applause.)

(END)