

BBC LIVE AT CARNEGIE OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY – ONE YEAR ON

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2009

5:00 P.M.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

HOST:

ROBIN LUSTIG

PRESENTER, BBC WORLD SERVICE AND RADIO 4

SPEAKERS:

JESSICA TUCHMAN MATHEWS

PRESIDENT, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

ASHRAF GHANI

FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN, INSTITUTE FOR STATE EFFECTIVENESS

ROBERT KAGAN

SENIOR ASSOCIATE, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

DOUGLAS PAAL

VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDIES, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

PAUL SALEM

DIRECTOR, CARNEGIE MIDDLE EAST CENTER

Transcript by Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.

ROBIN LUSTIG: I'm here at one of Washington's most prestigious foreign policy think tanks, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which is celebrating its centenary this year. With me is a panel of top Carnegie analysts and an invited audience.

A year isn't a long time when you're a U.S. president, so when Barack Obama moved into the White House almost exactly 12 months ago, he lost no time in describing what he called his new approach to foreign policy. This is how he spelled it out to staff at the State Department just two days after his inauguration –

(Begin audio segment.)

PRESIDENT OBAMA: The inheritance of our young century demands a new era of American leadership. We must recognize that America's strength comes not just from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth but from our enduring values. And for the sake of our national security and the common aspirations of people around the globe, this era has to begin now.

(End audio segment.)

MR. LUSTIG: Well, nothing perhaps defined the Obama approach more graphically than the way he reached out to the Muslim world. As the son of a Muslim father who had spent part of his childhood in the world's most populous Muslim nation, Indonesia, he was perhaps ideally placed to do that. Last June in Cairo, he laid out his – (inaudible).

(Begin audio segment.)

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I've come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world – one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap and share common principles; principles of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.

(End audio segment.)

MR. LUSTIG: But if there was one foreign policy issue that dominated President Obama's first year in office, it was the war in Afghanistan. He spent several months working out what to do there and he finally announced his decision in a speech at the West Point Military Academy last month.

(Begin audio segment.)

PRESIDENT OBAMA: As commander-in-chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home. These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan.

(End audio segment.)

MR. LUSTIG: So now let me introduce our panel of guests here in Washington. They are Jessica Tuchman Mathews, the president of the Carnegie Endowment; Robert Kagan, who served in the U.S. State Department under President Reagan, and who's been described as one of the world's "top 100 public intellectuals"; Douglas Paal, the Carnegie's vice president for studies, who's worked in both the State Department and the CIA; and Paul Salem, who runs the Carnegie Endowment's Middle East Center.

We're also joined from Kabul by the former Afghan finance minister and presidential candidate, Ashraf Ghani. And it is in Afghanistan that I want to start. Ashraf Ghani, when you look at President Obama's first 12 months in the White House and when you look at what he has said his policy is in Afghanistan, how do you rate him?

ASHRAF GHANI: Well, thank you very much and it's a pleasure to be with you. There are a number of points. First, there has been a need for intense presidential engagement because the first policy formulation that was offered in March proved unworkable. And there was a period of missed opportunity between March and December.

Now, we are seeing that the new strategy that has been put in place needs to be implemented. And in this regard, I think one has to acknowledge immense courage on the part of President Obama because he has not held his decision on Afghanistan hostage to congressional elections, which was the common perception. But without the intense –

MR. LUSTIG: Do you think – sorry to interrupt you, but do you think the strategy that he has outlined will do what he intends it to do?

MR. GHANI: The major issues are two there. One, the internal misalignment between the security part of the strategy that is quite well worked out and the political and economic that yet need to be worked out.

USAID is not the instrument of building functioning economies; it's a contract management organization. And it's ironic that the initiative on counterinsurgency has come from the military; not

from the State Department. And here, we are seeing that there is misalignment between the goals and the civilian capabilities that are required. Because if we take the noble speech of conducting a just war and arriving at a just peace, how do you do that? That is the fundamental challenge. And the nature of the just peace that is to be arrived at in Afghanistan is not yet clear.

Second is the nature of partnership. President Obama has two very difficult partners: one in Pakistan – both in the military and the intelligence services that have been dominating policymaking – and the other in Afghanistan – a government that has not had the capabilities to be able to focus and come to terms with the 18-month duration. So that is the challenge of partnership.

And then we need to take account of the reaction of the insurgency that is not national but regional and global. And because of this, there is uncertainty regarding how the strategy would unfold. And I think it is going to require fairly intense presidential engagement in the year to come to steer this process through.

MR. LUSTIG: Okay. Stay there with U.S. for one second. I want to turn to Jessica Mathews here in Washington. Do you think President Obama has now embarked on a policy in Afghanistan, which will do both what his administration wants it to do and what the American people want it to do?

JESSICA TUCHMAN MATHEWS: I doubt it. I think that what was clear from the outcome of this “rethink” was that if you put together the military situation in Afghanistan with the sanctuary across the border in Pakistan, with the policy situation in Kabul where you have a government that has neither competence nor legitimacy, and the political constraints here at home that Obama had no good choices.

What he did was to pick a middle ground, to redefine victory, to lower the goals, to try to buy time to make the situation there better, but nuance is a very hard sell in this country these days for anything, much less a war. And I had an old boss, a great politician, who used to say that the middle of the road is where you find the dead animals – (laughter) – and it may be the right place but it’s politically a very dangerous place.

And I think that though he made some adjustments in the strategy militarily, it didn’t make enough. I fear, Robin, that Afghanistan could easily become the defining issue of Obama’s presidency and if that happens, it’s likely to be a tragedy.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan, you said when we spoke on a discussion like this a year ago just before President Obama’s inauguration that you feared then that he was putting too much emphasis

on winning in Afghanistan and that he would have to lower expectations. Do you believe he has now done that?

ROBERT KAGAN: I don't think I "feared" that he had done that. I was worried that he would find himself in the position of having done that. I like the idea of trying to win in Afghanistan and I actually think that he has, first of all, been very courageous.

I'm not sure I totally agree that he's taken the middle road. I think he probably took the sort of higher-end option. There was a higher end than that, obviously, but he put in a substantial number of forces.

I cannot predict the future. I'm more optimistic, perhaps, than Jessica is; that at least on the military front, that this could substantially turn things around. Now, that does not solve the political equation, although it helps, and it does not solve the problem of Pakistan.

Although the alternative – and I totally agree with Jessica that there were no good choices here – the alternative which I think some suggested, that somehow we could sort of basically wash our hands of Afghanistan, I think that was really not workable. So he was in a bind and I think he made a fairly courageous decision.

MR. LUSTIG: Ashraf Ghani, there was an opinion poll published just a few days ago which suggested that more Afghans are now optimistic about their future than was the case a year ago. How much, if any, of that optimism do you think is due to a perception of what President Obama has now decided to do?

MR. GHANI: Part of that optimism is very much a response because uncertainty takes a huge toll in Afghanistan. And there were two areas of uncertainty – one, the outcome of the presidential election that has now been settled; and second, the question as to whether President Obama would disengage or continue to engage. Now that it is clear that engagement is taking place, that is stabilizing a range of expectations.

And simultaneously, compared to 2002, expectations in Afghanistan have been lowered very substantially. At that time, people really expected a major transformation because world leaders stood and made beautiful speeches without the corresponding mobilization of resources and strategies and vision. But the Afghans took them seriously. Now, it's a very realistic sort of sobering moment where the shift to responsibility to Afghan leadership, at least, has been put on the table very clearly, and needs to be worked out.

MR. LUSTIG: Okay. Ashraf Ghani in Kabul. Thanks very much for that. I want to move on now to look at how Mr. Obama has dealt more generally with the terrorist threat. He said when

he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize last month, and I quote, “I face the world as it is and I cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. But make no mistake; evil does exist in the world.”

Bob Kagan, it struck me when I heard those words that they could have been uttered by President Bush.

MR. KAGAN: Well, that’s a very nasty thought for you to bring up but, look, the truth is, they could have been uttered by practically any American president since the founding of the nation. You know, Americans do talk in terms of good and evil. And a lot of people think it’s about religion; it’s really about they have a pretty binary view of the world in general.

And so what was interesting to me about President Obama’s Nobel speech was how much it fit into a long tradition of American presidents talking about these kinds of issues. It did not represent a substantial departure from a long tradition. And I think as a result, it was very well-received.

MR. LUSTIG: Jessica Mathews, did it strike you that when President Obama spoke on that occasion about the way in which he perceived the terrorist threat, he was essentially saying what any U.S. president would have said?

MS. MATHEWS: I think so. I think he’s found about the right balance, which is to recognize and to try to kind of lower, again, the expectations that this is one of these historical waves that has swept over us. It’s going to be a generation or two to burn out. It will only burn out when Muslim leaders make it burn out; he can’t do that.

What he can do, and what we can do, is to fight it as well as we can; constantly improve bit by bit by bit without throwing away the values that define us; that we hold dear – rule of law, due process of law, civil liberties, individual freedoms – and to project those values clearly to the world. I think he’s gotten it about right. And we just have to be smart in this country at not defining success as perfection. There will be attacks and that we have to recognize.

MR. LUSTIG: Doug Paal, let me bring you in here. What’s your feeling about the way in which Barack Obama has dealt with and has spoken about terrorism during his first year at the White House?

DOUGLASS PAAL: Well, I think it was an important move to end the terminology “war on terror” because it creates enemies where there aren’t enemies, and it was getting in the way of what we need to do.

MR. LUSTIG: But is that just terminology or does it mean something more than that?

MR. PAAL: I think it's a symbol of a broader approach which emphasizes not just the military response to the terrorist threat but emphasizes, as well, and appropriately, the intelligence and police work that's necessary over decades, as Jessica just said, to deal with this problem.

MR. LUSTIG: So you think there is more of a recognition of that part of the fight – if that's what it is – than was the case before?

MR. PAAL: I do. I believe that's right.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan, do you?

MR. KAGAN: Well, no, not especially. And I think – I mean, what's interesting about – if you look objectively at what the Obama administration has done, they have ramped up the military aspect of the war on terror. They've increased the forces in Afghanistan; they've substantially increased the drone attacks in Pakistan.

There's a lot of kerfuffle in the United States about what happens to captured terrorists when they enter the American legal system. The Obama administration, to some extent, is obviating that problem by assassinating them more frequently than the Bush administration was. So I think whatever else is true, the Obama administration has not in any way diminished the emphasis on the military and arguably, in some areas, has increased reliance on the military.

MR. LUSTIG: You're listening to "The World Tonight" with Robin Lustig, at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington.

When I was here just a year ago, I spoke to Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor back in the 1970s. He was also an advisor to Barack Obama during his presidential campaign. I've been speaking to him again 1 year on to see what he makes of the president's record so far.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: (Via recording.) First of all, he did deserve the Nobel Peace Prize because he redefined America's policy, America's relationship with the world, in a very broad sweep, and in a historically very timely and relevant fashion.

But when it comes to actual implementation, I think one has to acknowledge the fact that he has been bogged down; he has not been as actively decisive as one would wish, and he has faced enormous domestic difficulties, stemming from the financial crisis and also from his very ambitious health-care program. And that has slowed him down quite a bit.

MR. LUSTIG: Let's look at a couple of specific issues: the overriding one of course is Afghanistan. Do you think there is a real risk that he is digging himself more deeply into a problem from which he's going to find it ever more difficult to get out again?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well first of all, I'm not sure that I agree that Afghanistan is really the crucible. I think in some respects of far greater historical and strategic significance is the dilemma posed by the stalemated Middle Eastern peace process. But I agree that Afghanistan is important. My sense is that what he's trying to do is to set limits on the scope and duration of American involvement but not attempting to do anything particularly dramatic which could give the wrong impression, particularly to our adversaries.

MR. LUSTIG: Let's look then at Israel-Palestine if you think that is possibly an even more important issue. When we spoke a year ago, you said that if he became actively engaged as president then you thought there was a chance that he could push the peace process forward. He hasn't, has he?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: You're quite right – he has not. I assume the reason for that is largely because of the dilemmas he has faced with the U.S. Congress. But we'll know fairly soon because I think unless he moves in the course of the next two or three months then I think the opportunity to make any progress will have been missed.

MR. LUSTIG: If there is, then, still a question mark hanging over how much Barack Obama is going to be able to achieve in the foreign policy sphere as president, we're now one-quarter of the way through what may be his first term and what may be his only term of office. How long should we give him?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: It seems to me that this is the year in which he has to prove himself. Beyond being an inspiring orator, he has to demonstrate that he's also a compelling statesman. That is the challenge that he faces, and that is why I think he has to move from hope to audacity.

MR. LUSTIG: Former U.S. national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. So let's talk now specifically about the Middle East – we'll come on to Iran in a moment – but first Israel-Palestine. Paul Salem, I want to bring you in here. Are you, like Zbigniew Brzezinski, disappointed at a lack of Obama engagement in the Israel-Palestine issue?

PAUL SALEM: Well, I think he did engage, but he was not successful. I think he himself gave a rating of B-plus for himself on his first year in office. In general, one would have to say, rating his performance in the Middle East in general, one would say C-minus or D-plus: no breakthroughs, no real progress.

On the Arab-Israeli conflict, we mustn't forget that between the time he was elected and between a few months after he took office, there was the Gaza war which completely transformed the Palestinian situation, and there was an Israeli election. So I think he was elected with a certain set of expectations and certain ideas as to how to start. Of course he had a lot on his plate when he became president, and the choices he made didn't pan out in the first year.

MR. LUSTIG: He made a demand of Israel, didn't he: There must be a halt to all settlement activity. That demand was not met – his bluff, if it was a bluff, was called.

MR. SALEM: That is correct. That was an approach taken a bit from the roadmap that had been developed earlier. There is no doubt that his first year and the set of attempts that he made that were pivoting on the settlement freeze have come to naught. In 2010, he's going to have to come up with a new approach to the Middle East peace process.

To my mind, that needs three elements. It needs a U.S. commitment from the president that settling the Arab-Israeli conflict is a U.S. national interest, and the U.S. needs to put political commitment and economic resources and perhaps security resources to that end. Secondly, the U.S. needs to dramatically help the Palestinian Authority and dramatically to improve its institutional capacity, the security situation on the West Bank and the economic situation.

It needs to help Abu Mazen, the Palestinian president, and Salam Fayyad, the prime minister. Part of that is by easing the situation in Gaza. And finally, this year – and Sen. Mitchell and others are hard at work – to fully restart full peace talks on final-status agreements between the Israelis and the Palestinians with very significant U.S. commitment and starting a Syrian track as well, and bringing in the Turks and the entire international community. This needs to be big or it's not going to work at all.

MR. LUSTIG: So from your point of view, then, looking specifically at the Israel-Palestine issue, has the first Obama year been a wasted year?

MR. SALEM: I don't know that it's been wasted – it has failed, there is no doubt about that. As I mentioned, there were some surprises in this year and there had to be a lot of readjustment. I think the groundwork that Sen. Mitchell has been doing is necessary. It has been, in a sense, a failed year, but if this is a 1-year presidency, he needs to move very, very quickly. I think there is the possibility of a settlement, and if the U.S. takes the Arab-Israeli conflict as seriously as it actually impacts U.S. interests, this can be done.

MR. LUSTIG: Jessica Mathews, your verdict on Obama in the Middle East?

MS. MATHEWS: I think you have to, in order to judge this rightly, go back and say – and look at what he inherited on his first day in office. I mean, he inherited two wars and a global financial crisis that appeared to have no bottom. And he put a bottom under it, and he did provide the leadership that allowed for a very smooth global response to the financial crisis. He also has, I think, given us a very important earlier deadline for withdrawing from Iraq, which I personally believe is the right thing to do.

So I think, in trying to judge whether he achieved enough in the Middle East, you have to ask, you have to look at the total number of priorities he faced. I think he inherited the toughest international inbox since Harry Truman, without question. And he had to make some choices. Now, he made a mistake in making a very clear, laying down a very clear challenge to the Israelis, and then backing down. And I think if he doesn't step back up in 2010 then he has no hope of leaving a positive legacy there.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan, let me move you to the Iran issue because Mr. Obama, when he came to office, promised a very different approach to his predecessor. He said he was open to reaching out to the Iranians. Has any of that, in your view, paid any dividends?

MR. KAGAN: I think it has paid dividends because it has revealed how completely uninterested in negotiations the Iranians are. And I think that is in fact a useful thing to have done. Nobody doubted President Obama's sincerity in terms of the opening that he offered to Iran. He was extremely patient, to the point where his critics said he was far too patient, and the Iranians, up until now, have shown absolutely no sign of reaching for the hand that he's offered, which now leads him to what I assume is the next phase of his policy.

Now, the other thing that's happened, of course, is that the Iranian issue has completely changed from what it was when he came into office. It changed because of the elections – some would say fraudulent elections – of June, and what has been, much to everyone's surprise, a budding Iranian opposition. And now I must say, the question that faces the Obama administration is not simply, or perhaps even primarily, about nuclear issues. The question is now, what can or should the United States and other countries around the world do to help produce a more legitimate and more democratic government in Iran?

MR. LUSTIG: Paul Salem, what's your verdict on the way in which Mr. Obama has handled Iran?

MR. SALEM: I think a very positive verdict in this way that he's handled it; the outcome in terms of any breakthrough on the nuclear issue has not occurred. But I think President Obama, by taking an open and soft approach to Iran, unlike the rhetoric that was included in the Bush administration – the axis of evil – whereas sort of that very harsh rhetoric made the Iranian factions and groups hang together, the soft approach shows the fissures within the regime itself and of course between a large cross-section of the population and the regime itself.

MS. MATHEWS: And allowed them to emerge.

MR. LUSTIG: Jessica Mathews. Absolutely. Say that again.

MS. MATHEWS: That that soft approach Paul is describing allowed those fissures to emerge in the election – I think Obama's probably biggest impact on Iran this year was that his policy did have a great deal to do with what happened that June 12th.

MR. SALEM: Absolutely. I think had there been a different approach from Washington at the time, the demonstrators could not have had the same level of comfort. But still, the Iranian problem is where it is in terms of the nuclear issue and the international community, with no easy options in 2010. I think the combination that the administration is pursuing, which is, first of all, be much more forthright about human rights and freedom issues in Iran, which originally Obama did not express strongly enough and received criticism for that. He's upped that rhetoric and that's very important – it should be more than rhetoric.

But, secondly, keeping the door open for negotiations and for deals: We will never be sure when and if the Iranians might be ready to make a deal. It's important to keep that door open. And as sanctions are coming on the table, which will occur, to make sure that the sanctions are rather narrow, well-targeted and not to impact the population, not to have a negative effect on the mood in Iran.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan?

MR. KAGAN: Okay, the thing that would concern me now is if the administration, in its eagerness to get any kind of deal with Iran, accepted a fairly watered-down version of a deal that we would like to have, and in the process, if this were true, undermined the opposition in Iran. I mean, right now, I think we have at least two goals in Iran, and the one of getting a change of government in Iran may be more important.

MR. LUSTIG: I want to ask each of you a question which I asked when we met on this platform here a year ago, just before President Obama's inauguration. That was whether you expected there to be a sweeping shift in U.S. foreign policy or continuity. Bob Kagan, you said as always in U.S. diplomacy, you thought there would be continuity. Has there been?

MR. KAGAN: I would say there has been a greater effort – there was initially a greater effort to shift away from continuity than I anticipated. However I would say you know, if you look at this from a certain distance, there's been less change overall in basic American foreign policy than I think many people expected, and one of the things – when people talk about their disappointed, you know, if Brzezinski is disappointed with Obama, it's that the expectations for change were so great, but in reality, the possibility of change was not as great.

MR. LUSTIG: Jessica Mathews, you said 12 months ago you thought there would be a sweeping shift on both style and content.

MS. MATHEWS: I think there has been.

MR. LUSTIG: You do.

MS. MATHEWS: No question. And I think Zbig also made it very clear in his remarks. He has transformed the way the world sees the United States – the way the United States approaches the rest of the world. I wouldn't have expected and don't think we should expect that all of that will come to fruition in 365 days, particularly in the midst of, as I said, two wars and a financial crisis. But he has also put the U.S. back into diplomacy, which, frankly, in the last administration, we were not doing much of. We had no confidence in ourselves' ability to negotiate our way out of things.

MR. LUSTIG: Okay.

MS. MATHEWS: So I think he has – and it will become clear in the coming years – he's changed the underlying currents of world politics.

MR. LUSTIG: Doug Paal, 30 seconds. Sweeping shift or continuity?

MR. PAAL: Well, my part of the world is Asia, and I don't see the big sweeping shift. We've seen some tactical adjustments that are kind of low-hanging fruit, and I would applaud most of them. The big strategic issues – what does the U.S. do about the rise, or re-rise, of China? Still an open question.

MR. LUSTIG: And Paul Salem?

MR. SALEM: I think there was a shift from some elements of what the Bush administration was putting forward, particularly some of the rhetoric and ideology behind it. I think the Bush administration was the more radical of the administrations. I think Obama draws on a lot of pragmatism and traditions in the U.S. I think what he brings new to the table is U.S. engagement in climate change in particular, and a renewal of arms control issues.

MR. LUSTIG: We're going to have to leave it there, I'm afraid. My thanks to all of you: to Jessica Tuchman Mathews, to Robert Kagan, to Douglas Paal, and to Paul Salem. My thanks also of course to Ashraf Ghani who joined us earlier from Kabul.

Our main headline tonight: planeloads of supplies have begun arriving in Haiti. President Obama has promised one of the biggest aid efforts in recent U.S. history. The Red Cross says it believes up to 50,000 people died in the earthquake two days ago. Haiti's president says 7,000 victims have already been buried in a mass grave. Reports speak of bodies piling up in the streets.

In the city, the 100-share index closed up 25 points at 5,498. On Wall Street, the Dow Jones ended the day up 30 points, at 10,711. On the currency markets, the pound was up just over four-tenths of a cent against the dollar at \$1.63. Against the euro, it was up half a cent, at one euro and 13 cents, making one euro worth nearly 89 pence. If you'd like to make a donation for emergency relief in Haiti, you can get information on how to do so by going to www.dec.org.uk. That's the world tonight – this is Robert Lustig in Washington. Good night.

MR. : Studio production was by Linda Marlow (sp). The editor was Tracy Rubenstein (sp). (Inaudible, cross talk.)

MR. LUSTIG: We will now take a short break, as in like 60 seconds, and then we will continue! And you will have your chance. What I want to do is pick up a little bit on terrorism – talk a little bit about all that.

Doug, I then want to come to you on China, because we just didn't have a chance to do that, and we'll talk a little bit about China. And then, we will have some questions. And I will just wait for Lee to tell me that we can go ahead because all kinds of complicated stuff is being done with wires in London, he says confidently. That was a thumbs up, was it? Okay, let's go, let me find the right piece of paper here. Right.

On the subject of terrorism, Jessica Mathews, one of the issues that was huge at the time of the election just over a year ago was what to do about Guantanamo Bay. President Obama said, almost as soon as he took office, that he would close it in 12 months. Is he going to?

MS. MATHEWS: No. But he – but that doesn't diminish the importance of having said what he said. This was an albatross around our neck all over the world, and he took the right step, as it turns out, trying to – the practicalities of doing it are much tougher than he perhaps realized, and it wasn't handled as well as it might have been, politically, but it was still the right thing to do and that will, I think, become very clear over time.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan, on Guantanamo? Do you think he offered more than he could deliver?

MR. KAGAN: I'm going to get in trouble for pointing this out, but I think John McCain also promised that he was going to close Guantanamo, and would have found the same difficulties, had he been elected. The difficulties are extraordinary, and I'm not sure that he can do it in 24 months, even. Partly, there are political issues, partly, and this is what, you know, this is what happens to presidents.

The failed Christmas bombing has an effect on the American domestic political scene and makes it harder – there's less flexibility in the system. So, look, I think most of the world believes that Obama's heart is in the right place, and insofar as that has benefits for the United States, then it does. I guess the question I have is, how patient is the world as 12 months, possibly 24 months, possibly 36 months go by and Guantanamo is still in operation?

MR. LUSTIG: You don't think he's going to have closed it by the end of his second year in office?

MR. KAGAN: You know, I'm not a betting – I don't have enough money to bet on these things. But I would say that it's an open question. There was a lot of business to be done this year in Congress; there are midterm elections this year in Congress; you have a very nervous Democratic Party, rightly or wrongly, and it's not a time for thrusting too many challenges down their throats, especially after having this attempted attack which, you know, I agree with Jessica that, you know, things will happen. Nevertheless, the political ramifications of it are pretty strong.

MR. LUSTIG: Okay, let's turn now to China, a country that is rapidly emerging as a major player on the world stage. It's overtaken the U.S. as the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases; it's overtaken Germany as the world's biggest exporter; it will soon overtake Japan as the world's second-biggest economy. So what did the Chinese expect from Barack Obama a year ago and what did they get? This is the verdict of the China scholar-professor Steve Tsang at Oxford University.

You won't hear that clip because we can't play it to you – (laughter) – but what he says is that the Chinese loved President Bush. They thought that everything that they got from Bush was just great. They weren't sure what to get from Obama; they have been puzzled by Obama and he's not sure that Obama has quite got the hang of how to deal with the Chinese.

Douglas Paal, do you think that Obama has got China wrong during his first year in office?

MR. PAAL: I don't think so. I think he made an assessment even before he took office that the Bush administration had left a sound foundation in China policy, that there were areas of cooperation. The many issues that arise in trade and human rights and other fields could be managed while the U.S. was still working together with China.

And Obama made the decision early on in office to take the platform of the Bush administration and build on it. And the three areas he chose to build on are first, the financial crisis: getting China to cooperate. And in that respect, although there are problems we can talk about, by and large, China set the gold standard for how to respond to a financial crisis, and has been cooperative in the international environment.

Secondly, the challenge on global climate change, and he worked hard to try to persuade the Chinese to come out of the exceptionalism they enjoyed when they were not included with the Indians in the Kyoto treaty and to be brought into the new Copenhagen arrangement.

MR. LUSTIG: But that all blew up in his face, didn't it, at Copenhagen?

MR. PAAL: It didn't quite blow up in his face, but it was a very muddy outcome, very mixed outcome, a not very strong outcome. And the third area is nonproliferation, and there the Chinese have put some effort into helping U.S. with the proliferation problem of North Korea. They have their own reasons, but it's been useful. Not a solution – just fixing it for temporary purposes.

And then Iran, which is the issue that's coming down the chute at us in the next month or so. The Chinese now have become the principal obstacle to getting P-6 cooperation and P-5 cooperation in the U.N. Security Council on new sanctions.

MR. LUSTIG: Just to explain to those who don't understand P-5, P-6: That's the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany, making P-6.

MR. PAAL: That's right.

MR. LUSTIG: Jessica Mathews, there are those who think that if the U.S. and China can get their act together, then they can do whatever they like. There's been a lot of talk about the G-20 of the world's leading nations – some people say all you need is a G-2: Washington and Beijing, and once they decide on something, that's what's going to happen. Has Obama moved in any way down that road?

MS. MATHEWS: No. I think he recognizes that that's an illusion. I think where it is – where there's a good deal of truth in it actually is on climate because the two countries represent 43, almost 45 percent of global emissions. Europe is ready to act; Australia and New Zealand, ready to act; many of the other key players: Japan, ready to act – and the big hold-up are the two. So there I think there is some truth in it, but on the larger global economy issues, we have to hope that the G-20 steps up and does work.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan, what do you make of the way in which Mr. Obama has dealt with China?

MR. KAGAN: Well, I don't think there's an awful lot to say about it because there has been substantial continuity, as Doug says, and I don't really think – there was a moment when the administration rolled out this idea of strategic reassurance, but now they seemed to have put that away. So they're not talking about that any more, so there's really nothing tremendously new under the sun, I think.

You know, I would say the bigger news than anything that's happened government-to-government is Google potentially pulling out of China. I mean, I think that for an American corporation, of all things, to be potentially giving up a lucrative market on principle is an interesting new development. I think, in a way, the Obama administration's been caught without knowing quite

what to do about that now, and has been sort of finding it a complicated problem. But to me that's a really interesting development.

MR. LUSTIG: Doug Paal, if you look towards the second Obama year, and specifically the second year of relations with China, how do you see that working out?

MR. PAAL: Well, in the first year, they were able to skip past some of the thorny parts of our relationship. Obama chose not to meet with the Dalai Lama; he did not sell any big arms package to Taiwan – some of the traditionally thorny issues. That's all coming to a pass now.

MR. LUSTIG: He's going to do both of those things.

MR. PAAL: He's going to do both of those, probably in the next two months. And we have the Iran vote, which may very well disappoint a lot of Americans and a lot of administration figures, if China opposes new sanctions on Iran.

And down the road, we've got, I think, a cascade of trade issues coming at us. China has taken a lot of its stimulus money and expanded production. The Chinese are marketing their products around the world, creating trade tensions with lots of new and traditional trade partners with China – and we will be no exception; and we have midterm elections coming up, and the president will be under tremendous pressure to respond to constituents who feel they're losing jobs to Chinese exports.

MR. LUSTIG: Do you think the Obama administration understands China in perhaps in the way that the last administration was thought to do?

MR. PAAL: I think they're very realistic about China. We've got tremendous problems. The area where I feel uncomfortable praising the Obama administration's understanding of China is actually not on China policy per se, but on the – on something the Chinese and all Asians look at very carefully: What's the future for the U.S.? Is the U.S. going to keep redistributing its existing wealth or is it going to remain an engine for tremendous future growth? They don't see that coming out of this administration.

Now, we've talked about the need of Obama to focus on getting through the financial crisis. It is a little odd to explain to Asians why we're spending so much time building new entitlements on health care when we're in the middle of a financial crisis and we're already running up against Social Security indebtedness and Medicare bankruptcy.

MR. LUSTIG: Jessica Mathews, is there a risk, do you think, that if there is not a coming-together of views on climate change, for example, between Beijing and Washington, the Obama administration will be tempted to say, we'd love to go here, but the Chinese won't, therefore we won't. In other words, they'll blame China.

MS. MATHEWS: Well, Congress will say it. And it will prevent any legislation on cap-and-trade and in an energy/climate bill.

MR. LUSTIG: And that's why it matters?

MS. MATHEWS: And that is, boy, why it matters, because, you know, we're trying to negotiate a global climate agreement with 180 countries. Really, only 14 political actors, if you count the EU as one, matter; they account for 85 percent of emissions. Most of them are ready to act – the two I've mentioned are not. And of the two, Chinese is far more ready to act than the U.S.

And so the reality is that the big block to coming to deal with this enormous threat is right here in this city. And I'm – and China is just a really easy excuse for Congress not to be willing to step up on this.

MR. LUSTIG: We will stop there because it is time for the good folk down there to do their bit. Let's have some hands raised, please. We're going to get a microphone to you. Nobody on this side at all. As I said earlier on, I would be grateful if you would identify yourself and the institution, embassy, whatever, from which you come. Let us wait for the microphone. I will take you first, here, then a gentleman there, and then a gentleman here. And I'll take three at a time. So bear with me one second because I'm going to introduce you in a second.

I think it's time now to take some questions from the audience. So if I could see some hands please – yes, the lady here.

Q: Hi, my name is Nikita Desai, and I'm from the NESAC center, affiliated with the National Defense University. In December, numerous U.S. government officials testified that South Asia, or particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan, is the epicenter of extremism. Now, with the Yemen situation unfolding, how do you foresee the U.S. government dealing with that situation?

MR. LUSTIG: Okay, thank you, there was a gentleman further back there, if we could take that question next, please. Yes, you sir with your hand raised.

Q: Sambe Duale, Tulane University School of Public Health. My question is just trying to see how Obama has fared with dealing with Africa because when he was elected, there was a lot of expectation, a sense that he had some ancestry in Africa; he would put more attention to Africa. How do you assess what he has done so far?

MR. LUSTIG: Okay, thanks for that, and the third question I'd like to take is this gentleman down here in the second row.

Q: Terence Taylor from the International Council for the Life Sciences in Washington, D.C. My question is about nuclear weapons policy in relation to would-be possessors and possessors. The president announced a substantial change in policy with a measured, if I might say calibrated, pathway to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which is a huge change.

But one has yet to see an actual impact on the ground, for example, in Iran and North Korea. Are these problems so intractable, no matter who is in charge in the White House? Does it have to await the resolution of domestic political and economic issues?

MR. LUSTIG: Okay, thanks for those three interesting questions. Let's start with Yemen – Paul Salem, what do you think about the way in which Mr. Obama has so far talked about and dealt with Yemen, and what do you think he's going to do?

MR. SALEM: Well, there was growing attention to Yemen even before the failed Christmas bombing, but certainly it has made headlines and it is something that the administration has to take much more seriously. And the administration has already indicated that they will be upping their military and economic support for Yemen. It's still something they're coming to grips with – attention of course was focused elsewhere.

Yemen is of course a very complicated place; however it's not Iraq and it's not Afghanistan and it's not Somalia. I don't have the dimmest view of the situation in Yemen – there is a state there, it has limited capacities, it can be helped. There are regional challenges and there're some areas where al-Qaida has been able to operate.

But it's a, in my view, a problem that can be managed to a considerable degree. Al-Qaida, if evicted from Yemen, will find sanctuary elsewhere, as others mentioned earlier in this meeting. Terrorism of this type will be with us for 10, 20 years at least, but Yemen is something the U.S. and European Union and others are taking much more interest in, and I think we will see initiatives.

MR. LUSTIG: Jessica Mathews, Yemen?

MS. MATHEWS: I don't think I have anything to add to what Paul has said. This is – I think the most, perhaps, the most important point is that there is a plentiful supply of failing or failed states and so this is a problem that goes – we ought not to think of it as jumping around. It moves around itself.

MR. LUSTIG: Let's move on to Africa then. Who wants to deal with why there may be a feeling of disappointment in Africa? That the son of an African father, after all, in the White House hasn't demonstrated a greater commitment to the continent of Africa. Jessica Mathews?

MS. MATHEWS: It's 24 hours in a day.

MR. LUSTIG: No time?

MS. MATHEWS: I mean, really – the most important thing that a president or any senior government official can do is to establish priorities. That is the number-one way to fail is try to do too much. And he has had no choice but to try to do more than anybody, really, any administration can do. I think as a first year, given that context, it's been amazingly smooth.

MR. LUSTIG: Doug Paal? You got any thoughts?

MR. PAAL: Well, I think, as I mentioned earlier the Obama administration took a look at Bush's policy and not only was China an area where they felt Bush had left a good foundation, they recognized that Bush had done pretty well in Africa as well.

MR. LUSTIG: Specifically on AIDS.

MR. PAAL: And so continuity was the emphasis, yes. And the Millennium Challenge grant and support for reformist governments and the like.

MR. KAGAN: Africa's one of the few places where Bush's popularity ratings were in pretty good shape, actually, so Obama has nowhere to go but down, I'm afraid, after Bush, which is saying a lot.

MR. LUSTIG: Now, nuclear proliferation was the third question. Who's going to take that one? Jessica?

MS. MATHEWS: Well, you know, if we want the prime example of where there has been change rather than continuity this is it. In his Prague speech last spring, he laid out an enormously ambitious, but I would agree with Terry, very well-calibrated policy of a dramatic change that recognizes at last the needs – the imperative – for us to strengthen the nonproliferation regime so that we now can deal with the biggest security threat we face which is nuclear materials in the hands of terrorists. Those terrorists are un-deterrable. They have no people to protect and they have no territory to protect.

So that calls for change and that will call for change on our part. Now, I think they have to say two things about it. One, making the commitment to move, ultimately, to zero was an enormously courageous and, I think, correct – history will see it as correct – thing to do. But it makes the near term harder because a lot of people are going to oppose – whether it's the treaty with the Russians or the test ban treaty or other steps. Not because they actually oppose those steps but because they see any step as a step in a direction they don't want to end up in 30 years from now or 50 years from now. So there's a paradox there.

He's got a lot on the table. He's got an agreement with the Russians, which I think will come to pass, to get through the Senate. He's got the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty which he's promised to move aggressively on. He's got the nonproliferation summit coming up this year. He's got the Washington summit on nuclear security. This is a huge year on this subject and they've got an awful lot in process but an awful lot at risk.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan?

MR. KAGAN: I mean, I think aside from the, sort of, the gesture of declaring that goal, the problem is running into some very intractable realities. And they're not just congressional realities, which there will be, but there are global realities – Russia, for instance. Russia is happy to go down to a certain level – I assume they're happy. Eventually we'll see that they're happy to go down to certain levels. But Russia's strategy relies on nuclear weapons. And Putin made this very clear the other day when he said he doesn't want the Americans to have missile defense because if Americans have missile defense, then they can do whatever they want. Which is another way of saying, we need our nuclear arsenal to deal with the Americans.

I mean, some countries – Russia's one, China's another – will say, of course you want global zero, then you Americans have complete conventional superiority over the rest of us. The Russians are counting on their nuclear arsenal. I don't think it's going to have any effect on Iran's decision and it remains to be seen – one of the other objectives was, well, you can get more pressure on Iran if the United States is seen to be moving in this direction.

I remain to be persuaded, at least in the near term. Maybe over 20 years this would have an effect. Unfortunately, the Iran problem is a near term problem. So it's a very noble goal. And again,

I guess I would have to say, McCain also talked about this in his campaign but it would have been difficult for him too.

MR. LUSTIG: Let's take some more questions. Could I see some more hands please? Yes, there's a gentlemen here and a lady there and then another gentlemen down here on my left. This gentlemen here first please? Down in the second row.

Q: My name's Radwan Masmoudi. I'm with the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy and my question is about question of supporting freedom and democracy in the Arab world and the Muslim world. I think one of the main reasons for the disappointment in the Arab world with the new administration is that it has basically diverted to the old policies of supporting dictators, oppressive regimes in the Arab world.

This, of course, has pleased the regimes but, really, caused a lot of anger and frustrations with the people in the Arab world and in the Muslim world. And I think is going to cause another wave of radicalization and extremism in the Arab world as people are struggling for peaceful ways to reform their countries and change the situation of their countries. So my question is, do you think the Obama administration is going to continue down this path or – I think lately they've been talking more about human rights and democracy – are they re-evaluating their policy toward the region?

MR. LUSTIG: Okay, thank you, yes. Lady back here?

Q: Yes, thank you. My name is Caroline Scullin. I'm with CIPE, the Center for International Private Enterprise. In the past six weeks, the Obama administration's positions on both democracy and development have been articulated by Secretary Clinton in speeches. Would the panel please offer their thoughts on both the speeches and, in particular, supporting democratic reform through economic support?

MR. LUSTIG: Thank you for that. And there was a gentleman down here on my far left.

Q: Thank you. My name is Raghbir Goyal from India Globe and Asia Today – great showing, great panel. My question is that now Wednesday President Obama will finish one year in office, first of all, what grade do you give him out of 100?

Second, when he took office his first priority was to reach to the Muslim world and his first visit Istanbul, Turkey, and then also even to Egypt in Cairo and this week, in the White House – (inaudible) – he had a very crystal clear message for the Muslim world: join us the democracies around the globe, not Osama bin Laden because we are with you if you are with us.

So you think his message reaching now because same question I had in the White House this week? Now, if he's reaching this message or not, whether he has to re-devise his message to the Muslim world for this second year in office or where should he go from here?

MR. LUSTIG: Okay, thank you to the – I'll take you in moment, sir – but let's get some answers to that, first of all. Democracy and freedom in the Muslim world, in a sense it also is part of that last question that we just heard – Paul Salem?

MR. SALEM: Well, I would agree that that's a feeling in the Middle East among reformers and activists that they have not seen from the Obama presidency strong support for reform and for democratization in the region – rather, a return to pragmatism and realism, some of which is welcome. I think the Bush administration got something right in saying that there is a link between high tensions – some of it ends up in terrorism – and the presence of authoritarian regimes throughout the Arab world, in particular. The way they went about addressing, obviously, was very problematic. And practical –

MR. LUSTIG: But is it enough to say, is it enough to say that? Or does something have to follow from that?

MR. SALEM: Absolutely, something has to follow. Now, the challenge is well known but I think the administration has to step up to that challenge. And it's two fold. The administration, like many U.S. administrations, has relationships with regimes in the region that it depends on to maintain peace treaties with Israel and that it depends on for the War on Terror, which, as Bob mentioned, is very much ongoing.

The second aspect is that democratization in the region is often bringing Islamist groups to power – something that previous U.S. administrations were not comfortable with. The key are countries like Egypt. Egypt faces parliamentary elections and presidential elections in the next 18 months. I don't think the Obama administration yet, at this point, has come up with a policy relating to translating words into fact or into policies but I think it needs to.

It needs to be a calibrated approach and it needs to put action where the words are in terms of pushing countries like Egypt and others to move gradually and safely – to include more Islamist groups and non-Islamist groups and share power more effectively. Whither goes Egypt there will go many other countries of the region. And that's the only positive future for the Middle East – is a bit more democratization.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan, you're nodding?

MR. KAGAN: Vehemently. I mean, every administration or many administrations come in – and this was true of the Bush administration – and says, whatever the last administration did, we're doing the opposite. And so sometimes that's a very intelligent course but in this case it was a very foolish course, especially, since the Bush administration's last 2 years – it didn't actually do anything for democracy in the Middle East. I'm hopeful that they will get over this and do exactly what Paul is talking about. Egypt is critical and Egypt is with us right here, right now.

The early moves on the part of the Obama administration, with regard to Egypt, have all been bad. Democracy programs have been shut down, kind words have been said about Gamal Mubarak, it's really –

MR. LUSTIG: President Mubarak's son?

MR. KAGAN: Yes, who is a potential successor in the pharaonic succession in Egypt. And I think that it's really very important that the Obama administration listen to these voices in the Middle East now and as it happens, we have this happening in Iran as well. If we could have change in Iran and the administration move forward on Egypt then the kind of radical transformation that

the Bush administration talked about can actually be achieved on the Obama administration's watch. And wouldn't that be an irony?

MR. LUSTIG: Paul?

(Cross talk.)

MR. LUSTIG: Jessica Mathews, first of all.

MR. KAGAN: Now for a dose of reality.

MR. LUSTIG: Okay.

MS. MATHEWS: No, I think if there was – it's clear that the Obama administration was ready to embrace Bush policies that it agreed with – in China, for example, in Africa as we discussed. This was an area where, I think, the whole democracy policy of the Bush administration in the Middle East was one that had to be dropped because the Bush administration had made democracy promotion synonymous with forced regime change. And the whole region saw it that way and with good reason. So I think they had no choice but for really substantial pause and recalibration.

I think also, though, that we saw under the Bush administration, the real limits of what change the U.S. can induce in the Arab world – that modesty is really called for. And so I'm a bit skeptical on how far things can move almost more –

MR. LUSTIG: Paul Salem.

MR. SALEM: Well, I agree that the United States cannot induce – and certainly the Bush administration went overboard in many senses of the term but the U.S. in its very strong relationships with these regimes on security issues and on peace with Israel issues certainly has a lot of influence and a lot of leverage – in addition, a lot of the aid that it gives, military and economic. And the second point is that the U.S. has opposed the outcomes of elections when Islamists have won. The most blatant case is in the Palestinian Authority when Hamas won. That was a grave mistake, not to recognize, in some shape or form, the outcome of that election and also, to respond with horror when the Muslim Brothers in Egypt had somewhat of a showing.

This is, sort of, a holdover from attitudes in the '90s when the Algerian situation, without going into details, and September 11 and so on. I think the Obama administration and President Obama himself is equipped to have a nuanced approach that Islamist groups like Christian-leaning groups in the U.S. – you know, they have a role in politics within certain limits. And I think he needs to translate that understanding, that nuanced view of Islam and Islam and politics and the various ways that that can happen. Turkey is an excellent example of the way this can happen in a very positive way. And the U.S. needs to learn from that and Turkey's role can be very positive in helping in the region.

MR. LUSTIG: Let's move on to the question then about the democracy and development issue. Who'd like to talk about that? Doug Paal? You got any thoughts?

MR. PAAL: Well, thank you for asking me because I feel that one of the flaws of the Bush administration's diplomacy in its latter years was the monotonal approach to talking about the war on terror all the time. And I think – it started before Bush. We've been focusing on issues of the moment here in Washington and we often don't listen to the concerns of the people we're talking to. And the message from the United States that sold so well from the '50s through the '80s was one of, we want to work with you for development. And we need to get back to that message because that's where people's minds and hearts are around the world.

And I think the Obama administration has been stymied in getting its policy going by personnel misfirings in terms of – but they now have someone who is supposed to provide us with some development policy. Unfortunately, he will now spend the next few months focused entirely on the Haiti disaster.

MR. LUSTIG: I'm going to leave the question about grade out of 100 because I think that's a great question to end on. But let me take another question from –

Q: How many points do you give President Obama?

MR. LUSTIG: We'll ask that at the end of the program but I'm going to ask a gentleman down here for his question as soon as we get the microphone to you. Yes, sir?

Q: Thank you. Nicolas Maquel (ph) from the Embassy of Luxembourg in D.C. I would like to ask you for your assessment on the success of the reset policy towards Russia, beyond the aspect of nonproliferation. Thank you.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan?

MR. KAGAN: I'm generally unimpressed. I think that where we have common interests we can find dealings that can work. One of these is obviously getting to a certain number of nuclear weapons that is comfortable for both countries. I think that is possible. However, I think that the number of areas where Russia perceives that its interests are the same as the United States is very small. A lot of what the Russian regime, especially the Putin element of the Russian regime is about, in fact, is demonstrating its ability to have a contested relationship with the United States. There is a general perception – at least the way the administration talks – that there's all kinds of zero sum – we don't have to have a zero-sum relationship with Russia.

But on issues on like Ukraine, Georgia, Russia's desire for a privileged sphere of interest that carves into Eastern Europe – that is a zero-sum game. It's zero sum for those countries out there that rely on the United States. That's one area. I don't expect great Russian cooperation on Iran despite what President Medvedev sometimes says. Partly because – and now Russian can hide behind China and they won't have to look like they're a problem. But I have never seen why Russia has a particular interest in sanctioning Iran along with the United States.

So I would say there are limited areas where the reset can function. What worries me about it are the things that we may be giving away in the process. And that has to do with the independent rights of independent countries, in some cases.

MR. LUSTIG: Jessica Mathews, reset relations with Russia?

MS. MATHEWS: Obama inherited a relationship that was an empty shell whose only content was mistrust and where we had, sort of, train wreck after train wreck in the last year of the Bush administration. I think the Georgia/Ukraine issue is only a zero-sum game if you choose to want to make it that. I mean, this is precisely the kind of issue where diplomacy – is what diplomacy is for is for balancing two conflicting sets of goals. I think the relationship is on, now, a track that is headed towards cooperation on a number of issues.

MR. LUSTIG: Better than it was a year ago?

MS. MATHEWS: Oh, it's incomparable to the relationship a number of years ago and I don't think – I think Bob is right about that there are a whole of issues on which we have really different interests but the question is on how much do the Russians feel that they want to have conflict versus how much do they want to have cooperation?

And that is, I think, what the present administration's policy's building towards is a very different set of underlying aims in the relationship on the part of Russia and on our part as well. Vice President Cheney – look, let's just be honest here. One of his principal goals in office was to stick his finger in the Russian's eye as often and as painfully as he could. And he did that to great effect on the U.S.-Russian relationship. Things are different.

MR. LUSTIG: Let's then give Mr. Obama a mark, a grade, out of 100. He's been in office for very nearly 12 months. He has had a huge range of issues, both domestic and foreign, to deal with. Looking just at the foreign policy record, Doug Paal, grade out of 100?

MR. PAAL: In the part of the world I focus on, which is East Asia, I would say he's in the 85 area. A lot remains to be seen to be giving – this is, sort of, like the interim grade rather than the end of the term grade.

MR. LUSTIG: Okay, 85 in East Asia. Paul Salem, in the Middle East?

MR. SALEM: Seventy-five in the Middle East, but it's still – it's only a mid-term exam. So he has time to very much improve this grade.

MR. LUSTIG: Bob Kagan, global grade?

MR. KAGAN: I'm really strongly inclined to rebel against this question but I must – 1 year is just – we know nothing about this administration in 1 year. If you'd looked at the Bush administration in the first year, especially prior to September 11th, it looked entirely different then what it later became. So I'm going to pass. I'm not – I'm in a pass/fail mode. (Laughter.) I'm going to give pass/fail and I'm giving pass, okay?

MR. LUSTIG: Okay. Jessica Mathews?

MS. MATHEWS: Well, I put a lot of weight on something we didn't discuss at all which was the global financial crisis. And you know we always – dogs that don't bark never get paid attention to and the fact that the Obama administration led the G-20 to act and got – you know, if it had failed in that, that's all we would be talking about right now. So and I guess I have to put

Afghanistan, if I can put Afghanistan to the side a bit, I would give it somewhere between 85 and a 90.

MR. LUSTIG: Okay. We will leave it on that note. So my thanks to all of you, to Jessica Tuchman Mathews, to Robert Kagan, to Douglas Paal and Paul Salem, also, of course, to Ashraf Ghani who joined us earlier from Kabul and, of course, my thanks to our audience here at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. I'm Robin Lustig, this is the BBC World Service. (Applause.)

(END)