



Harry Kreisler: Good evening. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the second Richard and Judith Guggenheimer Speaker Event of 2009, hosted by the World Affairs Council of Northern California. I'm Harry Kreisler, Executive Director of the Institute of International Studies at U.C. Berkeley and your host for this evening. I'd like to thank the Langendorf Foundation for their generous program grant in Richard and Judith Guggenheimer's name, and I want to thank Rich and Judy for their leadership not only in the Council but the community more broadly. I'd also like to thank the Marine Memorial Association for partnering with us for tonight's event. The World Affairs Council was established in 1947 as a forum to engage the public in the exploration of issues and opportunities that transcend borders.

It's now my pleasure to introduce our distinguished guest. Praised for his inclusive tactics, convivial style and result oriented approach, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad's record in the most turbulent areas of U.S. foreign policy has earned him broad respect throughout the world. Serving as the 26th United States Ambassador of the United Nations he dealt with extraordinary global issues during one of the most challenging periods in our history, including the recent Russia/Georgia conflict and the Mumbai terror attacks. Previously he also served as U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and to Iraq where he played a significant role in facilitating these countries' constitutions, elections and formation of government. Ambassador Khalilzad's first-hand knowledge and experience as a statesman in these hotspots provides him with unparalleled insights into future challenges for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, as well as the greater implications for effective U.S. strategy in the Middle East. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad. Welcome, Mr. Ambassador.

Zalmay Khalilzad: It's very nice to be here. I came to the United States in 1966 and it was in California where I came. I graduated from a high school not far from here, Ceres in San Joaquin

Valley near Modesto, and I spent some time, also, in the Bay Area, in Burlingame, with the Kurday family, and I understand some members of the family might be here. Hi, hi. So, I'm delighted to be back.

HK: And we're delighted to have you here. Mr. Ambassador, your life is a remarkable interplay between ideas and action, theory and practice. Let's talk a little about that interplay. As a strategist you've made important contributions. You were in the Pentagon, in the first President Bush's administration, and participated in an important document when America tried to redefine its role in the world. After 9/11, we had to rethink our strategy again, and we moved from the realism that you probably were trained in under Professor Wohlstetter to a whole new set of problems and a set of new doctrines. Now when you became ambassador you had to go and deal with the results of some of the implementations of those theories. So, I guess what I want to ask you is, to what extent were the theories, the grand strategies, an adequate guide to what was happening on the ground and what could happen?

ZK: Well, there is a Chinese saying, may you live in – it's a curse, perhaps – may you live in interesting times. And I, for one, have had the privilege of having to work in times of great change and challenge. I was trained at the University of Chicago, as you said, by a group of scholars in terms of problems of strategy, of how you solve problems – alternative ways of dealing with problems and finding solutions. In particular, I was trained with regard to nuclear strategy because during the late '70s and early '80s it was the competition with the Soviets that was the dominant problem facing the world and U.S. foreign policy. And when the Soviet Union disintegrated, to everyone's surprise, then the question became, what do we do now. At that time, I was in charge of policy and plans in the Department of Defense and it was the responsibility of my shop to come up with some alternative approaches for the U.S. to pursue in terms of defining its role in the world, in this new era. We came up with the idea that we didn't want to go back to either a bipolar system or a multipolar system but to go to a system of cooperative security led by the United States as the world's preeminent power. Very few people thought at that time that 9/11 would happen and yet again the world would change, and we had to then develop approaches for how do you deal with the problems of the Middle East, because the dysfunctionality of that region, the challenges of that region, replaced, in a sense, the Soviet challenge – they were different challenges but replaced it as the most important geopolitical issues facing the world. And very quickly, in response to the 9/11 attack we had to deal with the issue of Afghanistan because that's where al-Qaeda was present, and had cooperated and supported the Taliban, the Taliban supported it, and then with the longer-term strategy of how you make the Middle East region a more functional region of the world. As the military planners say, there is no plan that meets the test of reality once you confront facts on the ground, but I think the process of strategizing, and of planning, is very useful even though the exact plan that you go with does not survive the confrontation with facts and reality on the ground. But the process of having thought about issues, alternatives, is helpful, and it makes it easier to adjust the plan. I think if you go in with very fixed ideas and do not have the agility to adjust, dealing with reality as you find them, I think that could be a constraint that could help cause failure, but not having any idea, any plan, a strategy, I think also is a problem. And I was, I suppose, lucky that as a

planner I participated in the planning, and then as someone who knew the region, and could absorb the realities of the region at a faster pace, and with a relationship that I had with the president and others, I could convince our leaders what sort of adjustments were required in our plans, in order to make progress and be successful.

HK: You said to a correspondent for *The New Yorker*, and I quote now, “the Germans say you have a fingertip feel” – you were talking about a German description – “the sense of place, you know how a place feels – a strategist who doesn’t have the innate sense about the area he’s working on is going to get us in trouble. The U.S. Government doesn’t have enough people at the top who have that special sense about Iraq and the Middle East on their fingertips.”

ZK: That’s true. Because what happens is that many of our senior strategists were the products of the Cold War, even myself – although I came from that region, my training at the University of Chicago was, I told you, in nuclear strategy with Albert Wohlstetter, and many of our senior people were focused on the Soviet Union. But the center of gravity of problems now has shifted southward to the broader Middle East. During the post 9/11 world of policy, a lot of people around the President, advising him, were very smart people – most of them were my friends, and are still my friends - but they were not trained and did not have significant experience in dealing with the broader Middle East, with the challenges of the Islamic world. And now, I think we’re training a lot more people, and at the same time, people who have served in the Middle East, in Iraq and Afghanistan, are going to become future significant leaders. But who knows? In fifteen, twenty years, another region may be the most challenging and the most difficult region for us and for the world. So, this was a constraint that we faced, but you have to go forward with the team that you have, so to speak, but the limitation was a lot of Soviet experts, European experts, not very many people who knew Iraq or the Middle East.

HK: There is this continuing problem in U.S. foreign policy of global responsibility – some on the left, I guess, would call it empire – versus the problem that we’re a democracy, we have to set priorities through democratic votes at home, and it appears that we haven’t made the investments in the kind of skills that you were blessed to have because of your background and training.

ZK: Well, we’re lucky in another way because we have people coming from all over the world, becoming Americans. That is an advantage that we have, compared to some others. I think we made a lot of investment during the Cold War in getting people to learn Russian, to study the Soviet Union, and we are now investing a lot in people learning about the Middle East, learning Middle Eastern languages. But during the period immediately after 9/11, that was not the case, and it takes a long time to train someone in appreciating a society, understanding its complexity, learning its languages. And we still do not have an adequate number of people who speak Pashto, for example. Now the area where the Taliban are active, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, are mostly Pashto speakers, and we contract people from the community here, or from locals, and there have been instances in which – I mean, I appreciate the services of all the interpreters for our government, but in which because we were in a hurry to get as many people as possible because our needs were great,

sometimes we got interpreters who had their own agenda, they were involved in their own rivalries, whether political, or tribal, or family, and our power was being used at times for their particular agenda. So, these are the kinds of challenges that sometimes you face when you don't have adequate capabilities, reliable capabilities, in place. But as I said – Secretary Rumsfeld got a very negative reaction when he said you go to war with the army that you have, not with the army you wish you had, but at the same time, when you face a challenge like Afghanistan, 9/11 happens, you martial the resources that are available, and given the time constraint I think we did relatively well, given that there was no plan that anybody had about going to Afghanistan to invade it and to put a government there together, all in a matter of weeks. I remember President Bush telling me that – this was a meeting that I initially did not attend that was at Camp David – I think Condi Rice has talked about it, as well, where after 9/11, they looked at a map of Afghanistan and looked at the neighborhood, landlocked, China, former Soviets, Iran, Pakistan, and the history of Afghanistan, foreigners who've been there, experiences they've had, and now we have to go there [laughs] – was not what he thought he had been elected to do.

HK: So, you were ambassador to Afghanistan but then you were pulled out of Afghanistan and went to Iraq to be ambassador there. I think it's very clear that both your cultural background, your religious background, your innate political skills, really made a difference in Iraq, and I would like you to briefly explain to us – because we give all the credit to the surge but in fact, when you were there, prior to the surge, you essentially put in place vital politics to make the surge work.

ZK: Well, thank you. I believe that the Iraq situation – some would argue that the invasion of Iraq – if anyone knew anything about Iraq, its composition, the sectarian divide between Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims, and the ethnic divide between Arabs and Kurds, the geopolitical transition – now I'll state that Iraq is, on the one side the Persians, on the other side the Turks, on the other side the Arabs – that Iraq was an area where these three peoples, so to speak, met, that it was going to be difficult, and therefore [some people] advised that one shouldn't have gone into Iraq. I think that is a legitimate argument that historians would have to look at. My own judgment, for all it's worth, is that some of the problems that we experienced subsequent to Iraq had a lot to do with some of the early decisions we made, some of the mistakes we made after we went in. And whatever you think about whether one should have gone in or not, I think the dissolving of the army, the deep de-Baathification, and the way that the new army and security forces were put together, bringing a lot of militias in, and not doing enough on the politics of Iraq, getting a national compact, as we did in Afghanistan very early on, getting agreement among the key Iraqi players from different ethnic and sectarian groups, and governing ourselves, Iraq, for a while, which we didn't do in Afghanistan – I think all of those factors contributed to the subsequent challenges that we faced. I went to Iraq with a clear view that we needed to bring the Sunni Arabs into the political process. They had boycotted the elections that had taken place earlier, and for the audience here, as Americans you – I'd like to tell you something; you may not quite believe that people in that region would think like that, but the Sunni Arabs did, in Iraq. When I went to talk with them, after I became ambassador, with a mission of bringing them into the political process, they would tell me that what we did in Iraq was a revenge for 9/11, the cultural revenge that's preeminent in pockets of the area. Why, I asked them,

do you believe that? And they said that the people who carried out the 9/11 attack were all Sunni Arabs, which factually is true – I don't think there were any Shia Muslims in that – and that in response to that, what we did is to give a country as important as Iraq, which was ruled by the Sunnis, to the Shia, which happens to be the majority in Iraq, the largest community. And in a democratic election driven process, of course that weight of numbers do matter, but they believed that this was a calculated design, a strategy of what to do to the Sunnis, and therefore to give an important country that the Sunnis were running – taking it from the Sunnis, giving it to the Shia – and that therefore, we did not want them to participate in the political process, we wanted them subjugated, that was our design. And it took me a while to convince them that we wanted Iraq to work, and Iraq would not work unless the Sunnis, also who were 25/30 – I mean, the numbers – Arabs also participated. So, I worked very hard to move toward a national compact and use the constitution as a process to get an agreement among the communities. It was difficult. We made a lot of progress – I was at times accused of being the lawyer for the Sunnis, representing their views with the Shia, and of course they participated in the elections. Al-Qaeda was trying to divide the Shia and Sunnis from each other. They wanted an Islamic civil war. That was their way of making the project of Iraq working fail. They were working on the fault line. I was working on bringing them together, and Zarqawi's killing was a help, the constitution was a help, but the destruction of the mosque in Samarra, which was carried out by al-Qaeda, was a great – factored in the opposite direction. I think one of the factors that helped with the security improvement in Iraq was the change in Sunni attitudes. Another key factor in helping was the growth in the size of the Iraqi armed forces. Iraq is a rich country, they have got about a million people now in their security forces. That was positive. I think that some of the changes in our tactics and strategy, along with the surge, was also an important factor, but I think the other two factors were also key. And I think the person of the prime minister, Nouri Maliki, his willingness to go after the Shia militias in Basra, although he's a Shia leader, was also important. So, we tend to focus a lot on the surge, I think that was important, but all these other factors were also important.

HK: It sounds to me like you're saying that one very important skill is listening and then understanding the politics, and trying to shape it, and so on.

ZK: If I could say something more that's critical for success, when you have taken down a government, is a political compact, an understanding among the key political forces about the road map to the future of their country. And we are very good at – our military's terrific. I've had the honor of working with some great officers and soldiers, but the military can do so much. We need more people able to do the politics of this. In Iraq and Afghanistan it's a lot about state and nation building. Of course, the Bush administration had come to power saying we shouldn't be doing state and nation building, was critical of the Clinton administration for Bosnia, but 9/11 and what we did in Afghanistan necessitated precisely that we do that. And it has taken a while now to recognize that non-military capabilities that are important for state and nation building are vital for national security in terms of producing success. And now you have – and I've been advocating it as ambassador in both those countries, and Secretary Gates has embraced it, that we need to expand the capabilities of the State Department to be able to operate politically in these environments. I have to

tell you, as a citizen now, I think there isn't an appropriate balance in our sort of military capabilities, which are – and I think we need to sustain those – and the political capability, to do the political part which is vital to deal with the security issue. We throw lives and billions at the problem militarily; we do very little in terms of having the political skills, developing the political skills, the political capabilities that are so important for success, and to reduce the threat so that the military doesn't have to be the only weapon that we rely on. Because if the only thing, weapon, you have is a hammer, then all problems look like nails, and all problems are not nails.

HK: So, we now daily are witnessing the ramping up of military power to deal with the Afghan/Pakistan situation. What you just said – let's apply that to Afghanistan. How should we judge this ramping up? What sort of balance should we be seeing in U.S. policy as the Afghan war seems to be becoming Obama's war?

ZK: Well, first, on the military front, I mentioned Iraq, the capabilities – a million people in the Iraqi security forces now. And Afghanistan, there is – the total police and army is less than 150,000. Afghanistan is bigger than Iraq, territorially, and has the same size population, and it is a more complex environment because now you've got the same people across the border in Pakistan and the insurgency, if you like, has a sanctuary in Pakistan. In the case of Iraq, there was help coming in from Iran, through Syria and others, but there wasn't the kind of sanctuary that you see for the Taliban in Pakistan. And therefore, for success there on the military front, in order to have an effective counter-insurgency strategy you need to have the capability to not only go after the bad guys but also protect the population. And protecting the population is a very labor intensive effort. You need a lot of people, a lot of people under armed coalition or Afghan. We have said that while our forces will go to 60,000 plus in Afghanistan, that the Afghan forces should double to 134,000, the army. The question, really, that comes to mind is whether the combined forces that we've talked about will be sufficient to do an effective strategy that is a good ends and means relationship, and I haven't done, frankly, the detailed planning to judge that. But I remind you that in Iraq we have almost 200,000 forces, coalition forces, and 750,000 Iraqi – now Iraqis have reached a million. The second thing that's important is the non-military part, governments, leadership that inspires confidence in the people, and reconciliation, how do you win over people from the insurgents. You isolate the extremists among the insurgents. How do you build state institutions so that the state can do things for the people, so that the people believe in the state rather than be neutral between the insurgents and the state, or worse, support the insurgents? And here I think a lot more effort is needed not only by us and the coalition but also by the Afghan government. And then the third element is the sanctuary, how do you get the sanctuary eliminated. In this recent meeting that was organized as a background for this meeting here between President Obama and the two regional presidents – I think the test of how successful that meeting was would be whether they came to an agreement with timelines and benchmarks for eliminating the sanctuary. I think this is going to be a very difficult challenge, it will take a lot of effort, but at the same time, Afghans are losing patience because it's taken a long time, it's now eight years of this fight going on. The American people also are becoming impatient, and if we don't see positive results over time, I think the danger of mutual

disillusionment, the Afghans losing confidence in the world, the world losing confidence in the Afghans, whether they're prepared to build their country, is real.

HK: Two important political dimensions to the problem in Afghanistan, which actually you addressed in Iraq and actually in Afghanistan when you first were there: the first is, you mentioned that you had peeled off the Sunnis from the al-Qaeda. So, the first question that comes to mind is, can we do that with the Taliban, are there moderate Taliban? But then secondly, initially in Afghanistan there was a regional conference, and you, while you were in Iraq, were really focused on talking to the neighbors. So, look at those two problems and talk about them in relation to Afghanistan.

ZK: I think winning over people is very contingent. Yes, you can win them but it depends on the circumstances. If the government and the coalition seem to have a good strategy, be seen to be making progress, governments are improving, services are improving, the military strategy is protecting people, not alienating them, then the prospects for reconciliation improves because they see the balance shifting. I believe, and I told President Karzai a few months ago – because he's talking a lot about reconciliation, which is conceptually an absolute necessity, every war must end. But the circumstances must be created for that wish for reconciliation to be operational, to be successful. And I told him, get your house in order first, get the corruption issue dealt with, get governance improved, get services improved. Then people say, "Aha! Well, I want to be on this side. It looks like it's a better side. It's a side that's producing results." But if they see that your judges are corrupt, and your governors are not providing any services, well, initially people might think, "Why should I die for this? I'm going to be neutral." Or worse, if the other side is providing more security, let's say, then it will be even more difficult. Otherwise what's important – in the case of Afghanistan, that's its own special feature – and that is, if the sanctuary could be put at risk, I think the prospect for reconciliation will improve. As long as the insurgents have a safe sanctuary where they can go and recover, and get help, and train, and so on, and there are forces encouraging them to continue to fight, and make assistance conditional on continuing to fight, it also becomes difficult. So, I would say, improve the situation on the ground, both militarily and politically and economically, and then pressure the neighborhood in terms of either providing financial help, military help or allowing them to operate, and you improve the prospects significantly for reconciliation.

HK: Do you see the Pakistani elite turning on this issue? Because if you look at the history, the Taliban was a product of ISI maneuvering because of the perceived threat from India.

ZK: Well, I mean, the history of the extremism, and Afghanistan and Pakistan, and our own role in it, is complex. Because there was a period of resistance to the Soviets in the 1980s, we and Pakistan and the Afghan resistance worked together against that, it was a great success beyond what was expected. When we got into helping the anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan, our assumption was that they [the Soviets] would prevail at the end because it was a little country on the Soviet border, that was how it was perceived. It was a reasonable assumption but it turned out to be wrong. And then

we abandoned Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Afghanistan went to chaos of civil war, Pakistan became more and more involved, and then the Taliban phenomenon, with assistance from Pakistan and others, came about. I think that Pakistan has had an ambivalent policy until recently on this issue where they have seen part of the Pakistani security establishment as seeing the Taliban, as Islamic forces in general, as useful vis-à-vis India in terms of Afghanistan policy. But now that it has become a bigger problem for Pakistan itself, I think this ambivalence needs to be replaced, and it's moving in the right direction with a recognition that this is a mortal threat not only to Afghanistan but also to Pakistan itself. Certainly we regard it as such. But I think there is still some work to be done to gain the trust of Pakistan. I think there are Pakistanis who do not trust the United States and the West, given the history of the relationship, and therefore that lack of trust produces this ambivalence as to should they re-focus really on this issue. They even asked the question of why has this become such a big problem all of a sudden, and you saw in the paper today that some public opinion survey in Pakistan indicates that most Pakistanis do not see the Taliban as the urgent problem that we do. So, we have some work to do there, and hopefully this meeting that President Obama convened has helped in building trust and confidence and getting Pakistan to replace ambivalence with a commitment to deal decisively with this challenge. And the challenge cannot be met only by military means. It requires a whole range of instruments, again, in terms of transformation of the border areas of Pakistan.

HK: You started as a graduate student worrying about nuclear weapons. Are you worried about Pakistan's nuclear weapons?

ZK: Of course. The whole world has to worry both extremism and terror. This is the challenge, the defining issue, of our time. And then combine that with the danger of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of extremists and terrorists, or into the hands of states that have ambitions that go against an orderly world – I'm not saying that about the current Pakistani state, but if you see a scenario which is not likely but you can't rule it out, and given the danger that it poses, you have to take it seriously, although the prospect may not be very high but the risk is so high, you have to think about that. Nuclear weapons in the hands of extremists – that is a very demanding and challenging scenario for the world.

HK: We have a number of questions here related to this whole question of regional settlements, the notion of a peaceful settlement, looking for alternatives to the military, and I think that one has to talk about that other hat that you've worn, which is U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. And I'm curious, looking at this particular region, what are the opportunities for the involvement of the U.N. for multilateral solutions? I'm from Berkeley, so many in Berkeley think if you turned it over to the U.N., all the problems would be solved, where you had colleagues in the Bush administration, maybe even your predecessor there, who believed that, well, what we should do is abolish the U.N. and then we can move on. What is the middle position here in working toward peaceful solutions, multilateral solutions, and relying on these international organizations?

ZK: I believe that the challenges of the Middle East, the broader Middle East, are the most demanding and difficult challenges that we face, and by “we,” I don’t mean only the United States but the world faces. You know, for a long time – we all are aware, a lot of people in the audience are old enough to remember the Soviet challenge, but prior to that it was the European balance of power that was the problem, and it failed a couple of times catastrophically, leading to world wars. But now the problems have moved southward. It’s sort of this region that is the most difficult, and I believe it’s not only difficult for us, although we have a special responsibility given our relative role in the world, but it’s also a problem for Europe, it’s also a problem for Russia, it’s a problem for China, it’s a problem for others, as well. And one of the tasks of diplomacy is how to bring the international community together to assist the people of the Middle East overcome these challenges that they face, that makes the region dysfunctional, one of which is the Israeli/Palestinian issue. The other is – of course we know about Pakistan/Afghanistan, Kashmir issues, we know about the issues of the political and economic underdevelopment of parts of the region – there is a set of challenges that need to be addressed, and if you need to deal with them on an urgent basis, such as the matter of Afghanistan, it takes strong and disproportionate U.S. role to deal with it, because to build consensus and get agreement, and make sure the Security Council approves and nobody vetoes it, will take time and effort. Well, I think given the problems of this area, a lot of it will take time, and I think there ‘s an opportunity for greater multilateral effort and an opportunity for this administration to deal with some of them. I think not all of the issues can be dealt with through the U.N. as successfully-- as former ambassador to the U.N. – for example, dealing with the issue of terrorism as an urgent security matter, I think turning it over to the U.N. to do through peacekeeping – I do not think it would produce effective results in the short term, but I think we can, when we need to, get the U.N. endorsement. We did have the U.N. endorsement of our approach to Afghanistan, for example, and there are areas in which the U.N. can be better than us in taking the lead on the political issues. For example, in Iraq, on some of the difficult political issues that makes the country combustible, like the provincial borders between Arab and Kurdish areas of Iraq, rather than the U.S., the U.N. is a better instrument to put forward. Although myself, given my background, being born in Afghanistan, had certain advantages in dealing with Iraqis, but because I represented the United States that some Iraqis saw as the occupying power, they wouldn’t talk to me directly, like Ayatollah Sistani, or Muqtada al-Sadr. But they would visit and talk with the U.N., so I relied on the U.N. to pass on messages or convene some of their supporters in to deal with some of the political issues. I think it is an important instrument, the U.N. It’s not a perfect instrument, it’s an important instrument that can be applied to resolve, or assist in resolving, some issues. And when I went to the U.N. from Iraq, I made a big effort to convince the President and others that we will get the U.N. to play a bigger role in Iraq on the political track and on the regional track, because we still couldn’t talk to Iran or Syria and we needed to deal with the neighborhood in order to also assist with the stabilization of Iraq. So, you have to be selective, you have to know the limitations, and you have to look, also, where they can help, but I think they can be helpful in dealing with some of the regional issues. The same is true of Afghanistan. The U.N. can play an important role. For example, one of the big problems with regard to Afghanistan is that there’re a lot of countries involved there, in providing assistance of various kinds, but there is no coordination among them. Sometimes two countries want to build schools in the same area, across

from each other, while there are a lot of needs elsewhere, or different foreigners go to Afghan ministers, asking them to do sometimes opposite things, and they get quite confused, what to do. So, I saw that we needed to get the U.N. representative to be the civilian coordinator, international civilian coordinator, to get all the donors together. It's not easy, nobody wants to be coordinated, everybody wants to spend their own money their own way, but at least to orchestrate to see we don't duplicate, to minimize some of the inefficiencies that exist, and to produce a bit of coherence in the state building effort in Afghanistan. So, they can be helpful.

HK: I hear you saying that political skills, cultural skills, people skills – all these are so extremely important, whether you're talking about dealing with the factions and groups in Iraq, or in Afghanistan, and so on. Now if we look at who were the enemies of that way of thinking, I think you could say it's ideology, it's a failure to think long-term, it's a failure to have a sense of community. How do you transcend those obstacles?

ZK: Well, it's also a failure to – it is under-appreciation of the importance of politics. And sometimes when you don't have the skills to do it, you de-emphasize it. You emphasize what you can do more, and that can be distorting, misleading, and therefore not produce what you see. Another area, as a citizen, that we should think about in this, is what gets into politics, is we emphasize the importance of elections. We see elections as a sign of progress, that we're building a democratic order, there's got to be elections. We need to have a constitution, we need to have a constitution referendum, or a Loya Jirga in the case of Afghanistan, a grand assembly, and then we need to have elections. Now elections – there are different forces competing with each other, obviously, in an election, and the outcome of the election is extremely important in terms of affecting the future of the country. And there is a struggle going on throughout the region between more moderate forces and more Islamist, or extremist, forces. The extremist forces do get assistance from other extremist forces, or countries who do not want the country to work. For example, I believe that although Iran and the United States share a common interest against the Taliban in Afghanistan – they do not like the Taliban, we do not like the Taliban – but as a tactical matter, in order to get leverage over us, they support the Taliban a little bit, to keep the pot boiling so that we will not be able to solve this problem without them, so this will eventually come to some kind of bargaining with them over these issues. And as the ambassador to Afghanistan and Iraq, two countries where our soldiers were dying to fix these countries, I could not do a thing to help anybody in the elections to affect the politics of it, because we have laws that forbid us to interfere in an election. But now the Iranians don't have laws [like the U.S. laws which prohibit interference in elections in other countries], I'm just giving them as an example, they're not the only ones, there are others. So, I say to my bosses in Washington, "Okay, you want me to make this country work, and elections are important in making this country work, and I can't do anything to assist those who would help the country work. How does this add up?" I think we have real issues, as we go forward, in terms of state building. I understand that elections are very vital but it is very important that there is a level playing field. It isn't that we go, sacrifice lives, invest billions, and then politically we leave it to our adversaries to, with very little effort, shift the politics in a way that makes our job difficult, or worse, give the country, in terms of influence, to someone else. I think this is one of the

issues that our political leaders need to debate and discuss, and come up with an approach that balances the relations between the various instruments available to the United States. I think we have had to rely disproportionately, I would argue, on the military instrument for success, while we need the whole panoply of American instruments to deal with these kinds of problems, because these kinds of problems are not your traditional wars where it's force on force – you go and destroy the other force, you've won. Here it's a counterinsurgency, it's state building, it's nation building, and sometimes people under-appreciate that complexity.

HK: Do you think that given the changing geopolitical environment – and here I have in mind the economic collapse that we're witnessing in the international economy, the rise of China – there's a question here about the future of our relations with China. Do you think that we are going to be forced to understand better some of these political realities on the ground in places because we aren't going to be able to overthrow leaders as we did in the past—I am thinking about our intervention in Iran in the 1950's – somebody here is asking about Iran – that we're going to have to move to the mode of engagement on the ground that your career represents?

ZK: Well, absolutely. We've got to do it; if we want to succeed it will necessitate that we do it. We have to develop the skills to do it. Certainly we need to pay attention to our economy because we cannot sustain our power without an economy that is doing well, and we need to hedge against uncertainty because we're now focused on this region but there are other challenges that could arise. And where we can use – rely on combining our effort with others to minimize exposure of our own capabilities, where our vital interests and our having to control everything is not critical, is also important. I believe that where our weaknesses are, besides sustaining the military options, developing these other instruments – I think that's very important for future success.

HK: One of the major challenges is going to be the transformation of the Islamic world, and this is going to be traumatic, and within the Muslim world there is a faction, a minority, that seized the opportunity through terrorism to restore that part of the world to the medieval period. What do you see as the steps over time that we have to take because we're dealing with a terrorist group in a particular place, say the Taliban, we don't confuse it with this global group Al Qaeda that is trying to subvert the basic tenets of Islam and wage a global war against the West?

ZK: Well, there is no doubt – I think there may be Muslims in the audience that – there is a crisis of civilization that's going on in the Islamic world, that's been going on for some time, where at one time Muslims were preeminent and dominant in the world and then there was a decline, has been a decline, and Muslims have asked themselves for over a hundred years, what went wrong and how do you fix it. And there has been schools of thought that say we should imitate successful countries, become secular democracies, versus those who say we abandoned the true faith and only by going back to it can we achieve greatness again, and schools in between. I think that this is one of the biggest issues facing the world because some of those who say, and correctly, that the reason for greatness at that time was to be not open, and not to be inclusive, not to be adapting to circumstances, but nevertheless this extremist group uses violence and then from them terrorists find

recruits. Of course, if this problem could be resolved by Muslims and it could affect only the Muslims, one could say, let's stay away from this, let's build a wall around the Islamic world and let them resolve this and see what happens. But given the interconnectedness of the world, it affects everyone in the world, and the challenge for the rest of the world is how to support moderate forces, those who want to develop and solve the problems of the Muslim world and make the region successful, without undermining them. We don't have a good answer for the – I talked about elections, for example. There's a variety of ways – we were dealing with the Soviet period, we had a whole range of instruments to interact and affect – we don't have as many of them in this case. It's new, so – but I would say a challenge is how to empower its moderates without undermining them. We've got to find a way to do that, and also to make sure you're doing it in a way that doesn't – your interaction doesn't project an image that one is anti-Muslim generally because that's what the extremists would like, to have a clash of civilization, Islam versus the West. And I think that success requires that it doesn't become that way, and that it sort of – the world and moderate Muslims face the extremists, who are a minority – in Afghanistan there was a recent poll that less than 20% support the Taliban, and in Pakistan, in their recent election the extremists, more a fundamentalist party, leaving aside even extremists, did very poorly. So, they are a minority phenomenon but they get a lot of attention because of their resort to violence.

HK: How do we shape our intervention so that it doesn't become part of the problem and actually is part of the solution? Just looking at Afghanistan, I think we had a lot going for it and then we changed our focus to Iraq. After our intervention, Afghanistan became a narco-state in the way that it hadn't been before. So, I guess I'm hearing you say that you have to be very subtle, nuanced, with a real understanding of the situation on the ground, but in a way, once you intervene things take off on their own, they have a momentum. We're distracted, we align with warlords who then get in the business of making the narco-trade even more of a problem – how do we think about that? Is this the job of the strategist, or is this the job of the ambassador on the ground?

ZK: Well, it's both and it's not easy. Sometimes we underestimate the complexities. State and nation building, if you look at the history of our own country, or you look at the history of European countries, successful ones, have been difficult, taken time. Here in the case of Afghanistan, I think in retrospect we did make some mistakes. For example, I think the effort to keep the size of the Afghan security forces small was a mistake. We said they should only have the force that they can support. It was a reasonable approach, except that Afghanistan is very poor, thirty years of war – when I went there as ambassador, the entire state income from taxation was under \$200 million. Thirty million people, a country that's bigger than Texas in size, but only producing revenue of \$200 million. By the time I left, we had managed to triple it to over \$600 million. So, it can't sustain very much, and therefore it would have required an international trust fund for a period to sustain a large enough, what was needed, force. That would have reduced the need for a bigger foreign force that we still now have to introduce. We didn't pay enough attention to the sanctuary issue, and as I said, there was no plan thought through in the detail, years worked on, before one went in; 9/11 happened, here we go. And we had to adapt and adjust, and I think people have adapted and adjusted, and I believe the politics, the economics, state building, the

military part, all – we have a better appreciation of now than we do – you have even have seen in the McKiernan controversy, the last few days, that our military has had to adapt from a kind of conventional war planning and fighting to a counterinsurgency capability, and it takes time because of Afghan culture and the ways that they do things, and they don't change on a dime. It takes time for them to adjust, and I think you see more adjustments coming in. Some of our civilian institutions have not even adapted, still. We talk about the need to develop capabilities in the State Department, and some of the other institutions, to be able to do some of the tasks that state building requires more effectively. And we have to be able to work better with locals, work better with coalition partners. Now we've done a great job with the limitations that existed but I think things could be done better, and that's the challenge that we face.

HK: There're several questions here that say, well, why don't we just pull out. Why don't we let these places develop organically in the context of their culture, their history, and so on?

ZK: Sure. Well, we could but if we pulled out of Afghanistan, the Taliban most likely will take over, most likely, the current government may collapse, most likely, al-Qaeda could come back in Afghanistan, and we could, in a sense, go back to status quo ante of pre-9/11. Now do we want that? I would say no. The question is how to help effectively with others, and with Afghans – and I believe that in the most recent public opinion poll, the coalition presence is not as popular as it used to be when I was there. We had 70% plus approval rating. I used to tease my friend, President Karzai, at times that we were more popular than he was, but we had a 70% plus approval rating. Now it's below 50%. I think it's fifty – some said 48 to 50%. But the Taliban are down, it said, about 20%. So, it's not as if what we're doing is in opposition to the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people in the area. What they want, which is perfectly understandable, what the Afghans want – and I used to hear it constantly from them – given how much they have suffered for thirty years of war – is a chance at a normal life. As I said, seventy plus percent wanted the country to work, and they saw us as a hope for them. They could not have enough of us, of Americans. They said, "Why are you only 5,000 and only in Kabul? Why aren't you in the rest of the country?" They loved the American forces and they hated their own militias because the militias had tormented them and they feared them. And the question is – with some of the things we did or some of the things we didn't, given the realities of the situation, our level of support has diminished. But I believe that there is still a lot of goodwill there, although there is a danger of mutual disillusionment that I referred to earlier that also exists.

HK: One final question, requiring a brief answer, but it seems like you've demonstrated where we began, which is the wonderful combination in your career and your persona of the strategist and the ambassador, man on the ground, and so on. I have a quote here from you, and you say, "I think it's a terrible mistake to think at the beginning of something that you know the end. It sometimes can have a very distorting effect on what you do and precludes some options and limits the real possibility." So, keeping your eyes open, your ear to the ground and be willing to navigate the world around us.

ZK: Right. I think – and while you have some basic values that you also keep in mind – but I was disciplined, if you like, with the example I gave earlier of our experience with the Soviets. It’s like the Greeks have the word “telos,” the end, one knows it. So, if one thinks one knows it – and our assumption that we knew that the Soviets would win, had a terrible distorting effect on our policy in Afghanistan, and some of the negative forces that we see now, some of the extremists – we did not worry as much about them in that period, in terms of them receiving assistance to go fight the Soviets, because we thought the Soviets would prevail. If we had not made that assumption, perhaps we would have been more selective in how and who we supported. And I think this is an important lesson, especially – I know there’re some high school students here, I visited with some of them earlier, that they should keep in mind, as they develop their careers – some of them one day might become ambassador to the United Nations, Iraq or Afghanistan. Who knows?

HK: On that note, on behalf of the World Affairs Council of Northern California, I would like to thank Ambassador Khalilzad for sharing his insights with us this evening, and to thank you, the audience, for your participation. Thank you all for coming and have a good night.

ZK: Thank you. Thank you very much.