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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BENJAMIN: If you could take your seats. Well, good morning and welcome to the Brookings Institution. I'm Daniel Benjamin, I'm the Director of the Center on the United States and Europe here. Clearly, we meet at a remarkable moment. People of all political stripes I think will agree that the presidential election of last week was a pivotal one in our history, and the sense of significant and genuine change, if I can use that freighted word, is in the air as few other times in our lives.

There are high expectations that the relationship between the United States and its allies will undergo a major revitalization, one that is necessary to meet the challenges of a lengthening and urgent global agenda.

So it is very fitting that the first senior representative of a major U.S. ally to visit the United States, to visit Washington, indeed, since the election is Bernard Kouchner, the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of France, because France has so often been there at moments at new beginnings for the United States. France, of course, was our first ally, and on this day after Veteran's Day, we should recall an earlier great humanitarian and a hero of our Revolutionary War, the Marquis de Lafayette, who arrived here to fight with the Continental Army in 1777. In a slightly more humble connection, France, and in particular, the French

Foreign Ministry, was present at the creation of our Center, which began its life as the Center on the United States and France.

And I want to take this opportunity to thank Minister Kouchner and Ambassador Vimont, who is here with us, for their continuing support of our program on France, the foremost embodiment of which is our Senior Fellow, Justin Vaisse, sitting up front, who has been a great addition to Brookings and to whom I'm grateful for doing so much of the groundwork for today's event.

It seems clear that with the towering inbox that awaits President Obama in January, our cooperation with France and with Europe will have to be of a new quality and intensity. Both sides of the Atlantic recognize this, and I want to thank Minister Kouchner for coming to Brookings to begin the discussion on how we achieve that new and vital relationship. Now I'll turn the podium over to my boss, Strobe Talbott, the President of Brookings, to introduce our speaker.

MR. TALBOTT: Thank you, Dan, very much. And I add my own welcome and greetings to everybody here. We're particularly glad that Ambassador Vimont is joined by so many of his distinguished colleagues from the Diplomatic Corps. It is a personal pleasure, as well as an institutional one, for me to be able to say a few words of welcome to Bernard Kouchner.

Everybody in this room, and indeed, following the event by media and in the overflow rooms and other parts of the Institution knows

that we are in the presence here this morning of one of the world's most energetic and imaginative diplomats.

He has taken up his current post as France's Minister of Foreign and European Affairs at a time when the world needs all of the energy and imagination that it can possibly muster. And he brings something else to his current job, and that is a prodigious record as a pioneering humanitarian.

As Founder of Médecins sans Frontières and Médecins du Monde, he understands, as do few others, the human costs of those international crises that come about when national governance and diplomacy fail. He also knows what well coordinated international cooperation can accomplish. I had the chance to see that myself first hand and up close in the late 1990's in Kosovo, where Doctor Kouchner served with great distinction as the U.N.'s special representative.

The Minister comes to Washington, as Dan has said, at a time of great hope for renewed relations between historic allies, and very much in the first instance that includes the relationship between the United States and France.

But this is also a moment of hope for the transatlantic relationship more generally. Appropriately, the Minister is here representing not just his own country, but also the Presidency of the European Union. And I think it is no exaggeration to say that we have never seen Europe as prepared as it is today to take on a leadership role

in addressing the problems that we face on a global basis. That has been evident in the North Caucasus in August, and, of course, it is evident as the world responds to the financial crisis that will bring many global leaders here this weekend.

To its great credit, the French Presidency of the European Union has initiated a dialogue among Europeans about how to take the U.S.-Europe relationship to a new and higher level, particularly 69 days from today, when the new America Administration comes into office. And perhaps the Minister will give us a preview of that important project, as well as his insights into other matters now. Mr. Minister, the podium is yours.

MR. KOUCHNER: Thank you. Dear Strobe, dear Mr. Benjamin, ladies and gentlemen, Excellencies, my deepest thanks to the President of the Brookings Institution for his kind words. Thank you very much. I'm thrilled to address this particular audience in this particular time.

The French are always very impressed by the influence of American think tanks. Conspiracy theories will be very difficult to dispel now that the Brookings Foreign Policy Studies Program has been able to get Senator Obama elected President of the United States! More seriously, the prominent role of so many Brookings scholars on Barack Obama's team is a tribute to the quality of Brookings... and, of course, to the fine judgment of the President-elect.

The last French Presidency of the European Union took place during the second half of 2000. Like this one, it saw the election of a new President of the United States, but that is the only resemblance. What a difference eight years can make. That world was pre-9/11, pre-Iraq, pre-Afghanistan, pre-food crisis, pre-financial crisis, pre-Guantanamo. There is probably a lecture every month in this auditorium announcing a new era for something or other, but this time, my friends, it is for real.

Why this expression in the title for my speech? Because we stand today at the true turning point. Indeed, the President elected last week is the first, and perhaps the last one, who will have a chance to shape, with the rest of the world, and particularly with Europe, the global agenda, together, in a spirit of shared responsibility.

Why the first? Since John Kennedy's proposal for a two-pillar Alliance in '62, the conditions were never right.

During the Cold War, divided Europe was more of a prize between the superpowers than an actor. After the Wall came down, during the '90's, America did not necessarily see the value of sharing its unipolar moment, and this nascent political Europe was not able to demonstrate the necessity, unity, and resolve to act as one. Remember the Balkans. Jim Baker said that the U."S. doesn't have a dog in this fight", and was wrong. Jacques Poos said, "the hour of Europe has arrived", and was wrong. So the wars in Balkan consumed all of our

energies. In the end, we worked together, and were successful, but could not focus on the global agenda.

Then came 9/11. Some, including myself, thought that out of this tragedy, and of the outpouring of solidarity, could come a new relationship, a new way of dealing with the challenges before us. In Europe, we were all Americans, as I wrote in *Le Monde*. But this illusion quickly faded away, and you know the rest of the story. Iraq drove a wedge between us and between Europeans.

Why the last? Because I do not think that in four or eight years time, we will, you and us, be able to shape the international agenda by ourselves. I'm not interested in lamenting the decline of the West, I'm just stating a simple fact, but a key fact. The balance of power is shifting rapidly from West to East, from North to South, from the national to the local, and the global. Globalization means we are no longer alone. The others count, from Astana to Beirut, from Ouagadougou to Pristina.

Today, the issue is about making room for new-comers in existing institutions, moving from a G8 to a G14, reforming the Security Council. But tomorrow, we may find ourselves on the side of the demanders, and the issue may be about defending these institutions, not just adapting them.

We must act, we must now act, we must act together. We must be bold and imaginative. And this means that we must seize the unique opportunity that we have together, in a spirit not only of shared

burdens, but also of shared risks, shared action, and shared responsibility, I would even say of co-responsibility.

We will be able to build on a very strong foundation. The transatlantic partnership is firmly rooted in our shared history. It helps defend our common security, sustain our common values, and uphold our common interests.

And what we have to bring to this partnership, as Europeans, is a new sense of initiative and unity. Judge for yourselves; just in the last 12 months:

- We sent a military force to help secure refugees and internally displaced persons on the Chadian side of the border, to address the regional dimension of the Darfur tragedy. Unfortunately, on the Sudanese side, the so called hybrid force, United Nation and African Union, which were supposed to be there together, was unable to stop the massacres. In fact, the force was not deployed at all. But it was for us the most important external mission of the European Union.

- In the Georgian crisis, we took the initiative when America's response was late. Even if everything was far from perfect, we obtained a cease-fire, monitored today by a European force which ensures that commitments are lived up to and the peace talks have started in Geneva. I know that it was not so well done, but it was done, and we were alone (alone in a way, since we are 27 nations).

- Again, in the financial crisis, Europe has spoken with a single voice and has offered solutions that will inspire to start off, to start, just as a start, the G20 in its meeting on November 15.

- Just this Monday, Strobe, I told you, the EU launched its first autonomous naval operation to fight piracy in the Gulf of Aden, and it will certainly be extended later on . Meanwhile, we were also in charge of solving Bosnia (getting better, and it was a good surprise), and Kosovo (getting worse, and it was a bad surprise). In times of crisis, facing the most difficult issues, Europe has united to bring the best of itself to the world. And our ambition now, looking to the future, is to tighten the bounds of the transatlantic partnership, and to tighten them not against the rest of the world, but with it. This stronger Europe is an asset for the United States. And a new President of United States is also an asset for Europe. In particular, a new President so clearly symbolizes change, who is committed to re-engage America on the international scene, or to engage America in a different manner.

And who embodies hope for many, because he represents more justice for the poor. Social justice within our own countries, yes, and justice with the third world. A wave of hope across Europe, of course, but also from Africa to Asia to Latin America. This tidal wave of hope, just look at the reaction in the street of every city the world over, is a global vote for Barack Obama and what he represents. But it is also a clear

message that we have missed too many opportunities. We cannot afford to miss this one.

Ladies and gentlemen, just a little over a week ago I hosted my 26 colleagues, along with Javier Solana, High Representative, and Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations, in Marseilles. Together, we agreed on the basis of a French proposal, on a toolbox containing what the European Union could offer the next administration, what it expected from it, and, most importantly, what it hoped we could achieve together. Let me share with you the core of our thinking.

We jointly identified four key sets of challenges. They are not the only ones and they are not the only ones that we face today, but they are one of the ones that will determine the shape of tomorrow's world.

First challenge, reinventing an effective multilateralism. I already mentioned this, we should start with the reform of the Bretton Woods system and the establishment of an effective and fair system of global economic governance. I know this is an immense hope.

The obvious need to enhance cooperation in the economic and financial field, within the International Monetary Fund in particular, must act as a catalyst for the other necessary reforms: in the United Nation, in the G8, we need to give the new-comers the place they

deserve. But as I said, this is just not about formats, it's also about rules and mindset.

The institutions that we created in the middle of the last century are just not adapted to the complexity of the next century. And the powers that are emerging either are not part of these institutions or, when they are, prove less and less willing to constrain their sovereignty.

So we must find new ways of bringing nations together, including developing countries. We must harness the new-comers' energy and convince them, through dialogue, that it is in their interest to accept the basic deal that underpins multilateralism both as a tool and as a system. The deal that countries like the United States accepted in 1945: to trade off individual power for collective efficiency through enhanced legitimacy.

It will not be easy. But the stakes are too high not to put all our energies in reforming the international system. On its failure or success will largely depend our failure or success in addressing the wider challenges we face. Because there can be no efficient and legitimate collective action without efficient and legitimate institutions.

And this is true whether we are talking global hunger, global health, climate change, non-proliferation, human rights, of course, energy policy, crisis management, or the responsibility to protect we were talking about. And there is a real regression in the responsibility to protect. This last subject is difficult to summarize, but it is essential, and it will take a

long time for the international experts and several G20 -- or other formats -
- meetings. This is a task for the new administration, and for Europe and
Asia. We were very impressed at the Europe-Asia Summit in Beijing, by
the will of our Asian colleagues.

I'm not naïve. Multilateralism is not a panacea. Just
because an action is legal and legitimate doesn't mean that it will be
successful. Witness the United Nation Mission in the Congo; I was in a
refugee camp in Goma ten days ago with my British colleague, David
Miliband. I have smelled death very often but never gotten used to its
stench. We saw the all-too familiar face of fear, of despair. We saw
families soaked from the rain, but with no water to drink. And the situation
has only gotten worse since. It is fine to invoke the responsibility to protect,
but then what? We, EU, must work hand in hand with Washington, the
African Union and the UN to stop the massacres. Are we able to do so? I
have my doubts.

We can no longer retreat behind the certainties of our way of
life. It is imperative we break down these barriers in our minds, barriers
between today and tomorrow, barriers between us and them, between
here and there.

More effective institutions must help us shape the agenda,
and not just react to it. But that does not mean we do not have to deal with
the pressing issues of the day. I see three, in particular: relations with
Russia, the Middle East writ large, and Afghanistan/Pakistan.

Russia is a challenge to us. It may be seen today as part of the problem, but we must not forget that there is no solution to most of today's problems without it, let alone *against* it.

In the past year, Russia has oscillated between cooperation and provocation. It has offered to negotiate a treaty redesigning the security architecture of the continent, while violating internationally recognized borders for the first time since the Cold war. It has asked for a stronger partnership with the EU and offered contributions to the EU military mission in Chad, while threatening to target European capitals with nuclear missiles, and now to base missiles in Kaliningrad. It has voted all 5 Security Council resolutions against Tehran, while selling sophisticated weaponry to Iran... I could continue. Some may attribute such behavior simply to cynicism, or hypocrisy. But, even if this was true – and nothing is simple in Russia – it would be beside the point.

The key question, for the European Union and for the United States (but we, Europeans, are neighbors of the Russians), is how we can create the conditions for a true partnership with Moscow. In the short term, this means getting Russia to understand that playing power politics will backfire. In the medium and long term, such a policy requires a stronger investment on our part:

- Through and in the economy. We must encourage Russia to sign up to predictable and stable rules. The aim is Russia's accession to the WTO,

the OECD and the IEA and the realization of a single area of economic cooperation between the European Union and Russia. It is our goal.

- In the field of European security. Faced with current uncertainties as regards the CFE Treaty, Europeans and Americans must get Russia to respect its commitments towards the Treaty. But it is also in their interests to closely examine and respond to the Medvedev proposals on Security.

When Russia flexes its muscles and speaks to us with Cold war accents, the smartest thing to do is to come up with a new form of dialogue. Reaffirming our red lines, in particular with regard to human rights, the rule of law or the territorial integrity of sovereign States. But trying to show Russia, at each step, the advantage of foregoing a sterile confrontation. This was our approach when we decided at the meeting of the 27 foreign ministers that I chaired on Monday, in advance of Friday's EU - Russia Summit, that negotiations on the Framework Agreement with Russia could go forward. And 26 out of 27 states were in agreement.

In the Georgian crisis, our ability to respond rapidly, and to remain united, both among Europeans and within the Alliance, was a key asset. We must do whatever it takes to maintain it.

One of the areas where Russia has continued to cooperate is the Middle East. I have just returned from Sharm El Sheikh, where we had a meeting of the Quartet. My message to this administration is simple: continue working the peace process with the same determination as if you had four years ahead of you. My message to the next administration is just

as simple: start working the issue from day one as if you only had a few weeks left. Every day wasted reinforces the extremists, not those who work toward peace. Europe's message is straightforward: *dare peace!*

We know the broad parameters of a final settlement – and we have known them at least since Taba. Today, we must join forces to fulfill three urgent tasks:

- Contribute to a viable Palestinian state with strong institutions that respect the rule of law.
- Second, push for a genuine freeze on all settlement activity, as set out in the roadmap. Settlements are one of the biggest roadblocks on the path to peace.
- Make more room for the Arab peace initiative, while we encourage inter-Palestinian reconciliation.

I know that the peace process is central in the minds of Arab public opinions. But it is not the single key to solving the other problems of the region.

We must seize the moment and respond to positive developments in Syria and Lebanon. A converging European and American attitude could help Syria realize that it has more to gain from breaking with its past -- above all in terms of its support for terrorism, of course -- and getting closer to us than from continuing its current relationship with Iran.

Iraq. I do not need to make the case in Washington that it is in our common interest to do what it takes to ensure Iraq's success. I had good talks with Gen. Petraeus on my last trip to Baghdad. I will continue, however, making the case in Europe, and in France. Iraq is starting to stabilize and rebuild itself. It must take on its full role in the region and affirm its independence and sovereignty. In the future, Iraq can embody something unique in a conflict-ridden Middle East: a democratic country where Shias, Sunnis and Christians, Arabs and Kurds, can co-exist. Even if the road is still long, and the relations between communities are still difficult at this point. This is a dream, but it must be our common dream.

The dark cloud looming over the whole region and beyond is Iran. Not just Iran's support for terrorism; not just its missile program, which is rapidly progressing; not just the vile statements of its leadership regarding Israel. Iran's current progress toward a nuclear weapon capability is the most serious threat to the international non-proliferation system and to the security of the region. Europeans cannot make effective multilateralism their motto and accept Iran's uranium enrichment, in continued defiance of the IAEA and the United Nations Security Council.

That is why we took the initiative to act on this crisis in 2003. Behind the UK, Germany and France, Europeans took a united stand. And we stuck to it, despite opposition from many quarters. We were railed by the U.S. administration for being weak-kneed, for "talking to the enemy". We remained firm, and were able to rally the support of the United States

in 2005 and then of Russia and China in 2006 on a dual-track approach (sanctions and negotiations). And last summer, the U.S. participated in E3+3 talks with Iran in Geneva.

Today, I hear some voices, even in this town, saying that we have failed, that we must prepare for an Iranian bomb – or for a military intervention. I could not disagree more.

Our current approach has not yet succeeded, Iran is continuing enrichment, yes, I know, but it has certainly not failed. Iran's increasingly disastrous economic situation will only become worse because of falling oil prices. The impact of sanctions will continue to grow. And the time will come when the leadership is faced with a clear choice: open negotiations, with all the promise they contain, including assistance on a civilian nuclear program – to which Iran is entitled once it has come clean – or stand ready to pay a price too steep to sustain.

Until substantive dialogue is engaged with Tehran and so long as it refuses to suspend sensitive nuclear activities, we should increase the pressure on the Iranian government. But this is not contradictory with openness to dialogue, and obstinacy in trying to launch such a dialogue. I personally have spared no effort toward this goal. Unfortunately, Iran has not yet replied with anything other than delaying tactics.

Today, the United States holds a key card in its hand: the prospect of dialogue opening a perspective for normalization. Depending

on how and when this card is played, Washington can either help unlock the current stalemate, or doom the dual-track process, by convincing once and for all the Iranian regime that its perceived position of strength allows it to just continue playing for time. Neither Europe nor France has ever said that there must be no dialogue with Iran. But this dialogue must be meaningful.

The next administration will wish to take a new look at the whole issue. That is normal, given its importance. I know that the Europeans are often seen as "*donneurs de leçons*", or giving lessons. But the stakes are just too high to ignore what we have to say. If we want to ensure that a possible US-Iran dialogue moves us closer to our shared goal, and not further away from it, we must continue to work together. I was very encouraged by the discussion that then-candidate Barack Obama, Nicolas Sarkozy and I had in Paris last summer.

Let me turn to the last major challenge we are facing: Afghanistan and Pakistan.

European determination to sustain and increase its effort, in the civil and military fields, for as long as necessary to succeed, is crucial. I reaffirm it here today.

I know that there are several reviews underway in Washington. However, success is less a matter of redefining our objectives than of ensuring full implementation of those already set out at the Bucharest NATO Summit last April and the Paris Afghanistan Support

Conference last June. In both instances, we underlined that the solution cannot be only military. In American, you say “you can’t kill or capture your way out”. That is why I said “succeed”, not “win”. We are not at war with the Afghan people, we are on their side.

Our overriding objective remains the exercise by the legitimate Afghan authorities of their full responsibilities, beginning with security. That is the desired end-state. And I said end-state not end-date. We will remain present as long as necessary. But our action must be guided by the objective of full “Afghanization”, which will allow us to leave the moment that Afghan authorities are fully in charge, and in a position to remain so.

This means consolidating our military presence and strengthening our assistance to the Afghan National Army; assisting central and local government by reinforcing their credibility in the field of governance, for example through support in the field of police. The European police mission got off to a very bad start. Under the French presidency of the EU, we have decided to double its numbers, to broaden its mandate, and to change its leadership. “Business as usual” is not an option.

To achieve all of these goals, and to ensure their coherence, our support to Kai Eide, the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative, must be unflagging.

President Karzai has been busy these last few weeks, both domestically and internationally. We support the political initiatives that he has undertaken, whether internationally or locally, to move towards an Afghanistan that is reconciled with itself. Peeling off Afghan Taliban who are pursuing an essentially national agenda from Al-Qaeda jihadists for whom Afghanistan is just another front in the global war against “the infidels” is politically difficult and morally tricky.

But, ultimately, I believe reconciliation with those who give up violence and accept the Afghan constitution will be part of the solution. It will be up to the Afghan authorities to navigate this difficult process.

Neighboring countries also have a key role to play for the security and stability of Afghanistan. A truly comprehensive approach must be a regional approach. This is why I have offered to host a meeting on regional cooperation, with my Afghan counterpart and Kei Eide, in Paris next month.

The country that counts most in the neighborhood is of course Pakistan. The internal situation is worrisome, especially on the economic front – and we must support it economically. But there is some good news regarding relations with Afghanistan, since the election of President Zardari, and the arrival of new heads of the military and intelligence. There seems to finally be a realization that there can be no stability in Pakistan while Afghanistan is at war, and Afghanistan will

remain at war as long as the Afghan insurgents continue to receive outside support. Deeds must now match words.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Commentators point out that the next American President will inherit two wars, the worst economic crisis in a century, and a continued threat from global terrorism. That is true, but it is only part of the story.

First because he will not inherit them by himself: whether Europeans like it or not, we will share with you failure and success alike. This is why we must pool our energies, our resources, our imagination, to act together in our shared interests.

Second because in this ordeal he will also inherit a unique resource: hope, optimism, goodwill, from the world over, and in particular from Europe. I trust he will know how to turn these expectations from a burden into a treasure.

And the “toolbox” whose substance I have summarized for you, on behalf of 500 million citizens from 27 European nations, is an illustration of this extended hand.

Europeans and Americans have moved to a more mature stage in their relationship. One where you know what phone number to call when you need to speak to Europe, despite Henry Kissinger’s remark, and, once in force, the Lisbon Treaty will make it even easier. One where we can jointly define the agenda, and not just share the bill. One where we

can handle disagreements. One where we can build unity out of diversity, within Europe, across the Atlantic and in reaching out toward the rest of the world. One where our partnership is a partnership of choice, and not of necessity.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. BENJAMIN: Mr. Minister, thank you for a comprehensive, clear, enlightening, and deeply encouraging address this morning. I think we all learned an enormous amount, and I think that all of us have taken a great deal of heart from what you've had to say. And we share your hopes for this new period. Thank you.

Hope is a great resource, as you said. It can also be a fickle emotion. There's a tidal wave of hope, as you said, but there's also an enormous agenda, which in democratic societies raises the issue of expectations and of preserving energy and effort and a sense of resolve.

As you well know, the American system of government, unfortunately, means that we won't have a full team even in office for many months, and, yet, we have many, many problems that cannot wait. You've laid out a roadmap that begins with institutional reform, and you were very clear on the other things that need to be addressed, but do we need to have our eyes on particular issues that we can choose early on to make the kinds of gains that will make hope self-sustaining, that will maintain the engagement and the hope of those 500 million Europeans, as well as the

rest of the world? Where would you direct our gaze for a way to essentially build the foundation for this new relationship in a way that won't frustrate the excitement that the moment has brought?

MR. KOUCHNER: It's not up to me to decide, but I will give you some suggestions. I believe that for a new president, of course, the national crisis in terms of finance and economy will be certainly the first to attract not only the attention, but the first decisions coming from the new administration. And I'm not expecting big recipes coming out from the G-20 meeting on Saturday in Washington, but I'm expecting — and after from the new administration — certainly a roadmap. Not only a roadmap, but step-by-step, benchmark after benchmark, the works of the expert helping us to define new regulations. This is certainly very important.

But less than the affectivity of some decision for social suffering. It's up to the new presidency to encourage and to support these people suffering because of the lack of job, unemployment, see the car industry for example, it's exactly the same in Europe. I know that, and, in a way, we expected — it was a dream for us to expect a change in an old world, in particular part of the world. And it was certainly in the decision of the presidency, but, look, we need to follow-up the Annapolis process in Middle East. This is important. More than important. I was listening to Tzipi Livni and Abu Mazen, the President of the Palestinian Authority, in Sharm El Sheik. They were speaking with the same words. They were turning to the same direction, but, unfortunately, politics is politics, and politics means that

there is no government in Israel, neither a new administration here. This part of this obstacle, we have to support the process because it has given a different behavior of the people.

Believe me, I know the settlements, I know the roadblocks, I know everything because we were supposed to follow on the Paris conference with Tony Blair, with a lot of people, et cetera, and they are now on the good track. This part of the nonsense obstacle, they know what they have to do. They know Jerusalem, they know refugees as it has been in Geneva. Remember Geneva initiatives, but the first movement of the new administration for us, the European people, we wait and we welcome this decision of going on on the Annapolis process because this is the key, not the only key of all the Middle East problems, but partly, yes, a very important key. Otherwise, Hamas is there, they renounce to meet with Palestinian Authority last week, and there is a great danger of restarting the conflict.

So, my first — and this is difficult because of the suffering of the people in the Congo, because of the suffering of the people in Zimbabwe, because of a lot of other problems, but, certainly, this is the easiest movement to get meanwhile working on the national problems following Annapolis process. That's my experience.

MR. BENJAMIN: Very good.

I'm sure we have far more questions than we have time for, but let me open the floor to one of our experts in the back, Federiga Bindi.

Let me just say while she's getting the microphone, if you can announce who you are and make sure you have a question mark at the end of your question, we'd be very grateful.

MS. BINDI: My name is Federiga Bindi, and I'm visiting fellow here at Brookings. Thank you for your speech and also for --

MR. KOUCHNER: I won't listen --

MS. BINDI: My name is Federiga Bindi, and I'm visiting fellow here at Brookings. I'm Italian. So, thank you for your excellent speech, and, most of all, excellent EU French presidency.

Now, my question is: you mentioned the treaty of Lisbon and the (inaudible) road that will give to Europe, but we have had a few European visitors here in the past months, and the picture we have for the future of the treaty is different.

Where are we with the negotiation with the Irish and what is a credible option?

MR. KOUCHNER: (Inaudible).

MR. BENJAMIN: What's the future of the Lisbon treaty?

MR. KOUCHNER: Oh, the Lisbon treaty. I didn't even hear Lisbon.

MR. BENJAMIN: We're getting different pictures here.

MR. KOUCHNER: Sorry, but you have to talk in the microphone.

(Laughter)

MR. KOUCHNER: Lisbon treaty, you know that it was — we were all in agreement in Lisbon itself at the end of the Portuguese presidency, and we offered by means of vote in parliaments or referendum, and the only country was supposed to accept or to refuse the Lisbon treaty by referendum was Ireland, and our Irish friends refused the Lisbon treaty. And some others didn't confirm their agreement and there was Polish, Czech people, and the last is what —

MS. BINDI: Swedish.

MR. KOUCHNER: Swedish, yes. But they will do it. When, I don't know. Before the end of the year for two of them, at the beginning of next year for one other. What about Ireland? What about Irish people? I don't know. This is possible. We offer them at the last council of Heads of State on December 11, we offer them to decide because we cannot go to election in the Europe parliament without rules how many people to be elected, how many deputies, member of parliaments, how many commissioners. So, it will be done at the end of the year in December, but, of course, it's up to the Irish to offer us an issue. It has been done more or less by Brian Cowen last time in Brussels, but with no particular precision, so, it's up to them.

You know, we know that because we voted in this favor, the French people, and we have changed our mind in offering. It was Nicolas Sarkozy's offer, a simplified treaty, and all the rest of Europe accepted, including those like our very special Spanish friends, they voted yes by

referendum, we voted no by referendums or referendum. That's been in agreement. I believe that it will be done, but when, I don't know. In the middle of next year, 2009, and it will be part of the offer, accepting. I mean, the Irish people would not accept to use this parliamentary election to revote in favor of yes or no to the acceptance of the treaty and several little suggestions. It will be done; otherwise we cannot accept that only one country refuse the acceptance of the 26 others, but how? This is a permanent adventure, Europe.

(Laughter)

MR. KOUCHNER: This is a permanent invention. That's why it's so interesting, and that's why you are all very demanding. Very demanding. This is a model all over the world. The African Union, the MERCOSUR. Many regions of the world are looking to Europe, and we have to invent that, how to convince or to jump over the Irish refusal -- if not public opinions, elections acceptance. It will be done. And you will get a president for Europe with the Lisbon treaty, but when, I don't know. We're all looking for that. It will be easier.

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, speaking of presidents, we have a question from the president who I recognize.

MR. KOUCHNER: I thought it was, but no, maybe it was an illusion.

MR. TALBOTT: I presume to intervene with a question because it follows on what you've just been saying, Mr. Minister, and it concerns Turkey.

The presence here in Washington of Prime Minister Erdogan in days to come will refocus American minds, which they, of course, have been focused on for a long time on Turkey's prospects with regard to Europe. Would you update us on that issue, particularly in the context of the new thinking that is clearly going on in your side of the Atlantic in anticipation of new thinking here?

MR. KOUCHNER: Thank you. I will try to be short on a very, very difficult subject. There are a certain number of candidates, among which Croatia is more or less accepted. The other Balkan countries, that is to say Macedonia – I don't know if I'm allowed to pronounce the word – Bosnia, Montenegro, and I hope Serbia.

Regarding Turkey, anyway if you have no modification in our future as Lisbon treaty, it will be very difficult to enlarge European Union because as we are acting if there is no acceptance, agreement on Lisbon treaty, we are back to Nice treaty, and Nice treaty is 27 countries. And unanimously, they have to accept. Only one country, and we will not face even the possibility of enlargement. So, we need the Lisbon treaty acceptance, the Lisbon treaty at work, to get new members. And, for Turkey, they're a candidate. As you know, the French president during his campaign – and he reaffirmed his position some months ago, some weeks

ago -- he is not in favor of getting Turkey onboard. But he's in favor, and we are in favor, as President and friends of Turkey, of opening new chapters, one after the other, and we opened two new chapters in this last six months of the French Presidency. Is it possible to open more? Yes, but it is up to the Commission to open the chapter for all the candidates at the same time, and this is huge work. So we'll see. I hope that it will be possible. This is my personal hope, not in my official capacity of Minister of Foreign Affairs, that Turkey will be part of the European gang, but we'll see. So I'm seeing ways to accept the candidacy and another thing is to let them go in with this treaty. If we are back to this Nice treaty, it would be not possible. This is clear. If we are under the auspices of the Lisbon Treaty, it will be much more easy.

MR. BENJAMIN: I think we have some questions from the press in the back. Sir, I'm pointing at you. At least I think you're a reporter.

MR. ALIFERIS: I'm not from the press.

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, ask the question anyway.

MR. ALIFERIS: This is a follow-up question. My name is Alex Aliferis with the American Hellenic Institute. I know you mentioned Turkey and EU member Cyprus. This plays a big role because the Turkish military occupies Cyprus with 40,000 troops, close to 180,000 Greek Cypriots remained refugees in 1974 from this Turkish invasion of Cyprus, and the occupation is still there. I know there's an effort by the

Cyprus President, Christofias, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Talat, and are engaging in weekly talks. Cyprus plays a big role in that Turkish succession from the EU. Can you tell us what active steps France is playing, and the EU is playing, to ensure that there will be a United Cyprus and that Turkey needs to be -- and its military -- needs to just withdraw from Cyprus because there's peace on the island. There's no conflict. At 40,000 troops on the -- on Cyprus -- is just an act of -- it's just -- it's not needed. They've got U.N. peacekeepers in Cyprus. Can you expand on that?

MINISTER KOUCHNER: Well, yes. This is one of the most difficult problems in the world to be solved. Last time, some months ago, we were very happy after the coming of a new government. If I may say (inaudible) because they start talking to each other, and it was very good because the two parts and the two leaders were talking to each other apart from the involvement and the indifference either from Athens or from Ankara. It was a very good signal. We are still on this hope, and there is a sort of hope coming from the people themselves there. But you're right for the rest. We, the French people, are not the only obstacle to get Turkey in. Cyprus is, of course, very reluctant. I cannot offer you an exit strategy. Do you know how many years or the lives with blue helmets with poor ladies offering to the travelers of -- to the political people involved -- the picture of their husband who disappeared in the war? Thirty-five

years. My dear, you have to be strong enough to solve that, but it must come from them, and there is a new hope in these recent talks.

MR. HALTZEL: Thank you. I'm Mike Haltzel from the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins. It's good to see you again. Mr. Minister, in your excellent talk, you said with regard to Bosnia that in contrast to Kosovo, the EU had found a positive, a good surprise -- I believe those were your words. With all due respect, I'm a little surprised to hear you say that because in the last several months, I think the rhetoric on all sides in Bosnia has turned really sour, ultra-nationalistic talk, no unity whatsoever over a compromise of a revision of Dayton or the Constitution, even talk about a referendum in the Republika Srpska after ethnic cleansing and genocide changed the population there. And at the same time, unless I'm mistaken, I've heard talk that the EU is considering withdrawing its EUFOR force of 2,000-some troops. My question is wouldn't it be better for the EU to keep EUFOR in place and for the American Administration and the EU together to launch a renewed diplomatic offensive to try to solve Bosnia?

MINISTER KOUCHNER: You're completely right, sir. But it was absolutely the situation you described until last week. We were successful enough or lucky enough to influence the Special Representative, Lajčák, and we sent a letter to the third parts, signed by your humble servant, and Olli Rehn, the Commissioner in charge, and they were -- they accepted to meet each other last week, four days ago.

The Bosnia part, (inaudible), and they accepted the idea of absolutely like you said to maintain the maintenance of the troops for a while, but we cannot maintain (inaudible) for centuries. But yes, and to decide not to stop the constant (inaudible) of forces, but to -- and I decided to commit with them and to visit them as a presidency in some days or before the end of the year, and they accept to maintain the idea of the Dayton Agreement, and let's say not to force like (inaudible) wanted to do so because his argument was that we were, let's say, setting up a sort of upper tide. And he wanted unique Bosnia with the three communities, but this is certainly a good idea, but impossible to accept right now. So it was a good surprise, and not only a good surprise, but they decided to go on with the same movement with Europe. So we'll see. It's coming from three days or four days, good surprise. On the other side, Kosovo -- the Kosovo didn't accept the document of six points offered by the U.N. system, in fact. And we are today sending another letter in order to get in the same time the Serbian Agreement and the Kosovo Agreement. And it has not been done. There's a little hope on one side, Bosnia. It was good surprise on the one side. Kosovo is no longer, not for the time being, a good surprise, but another little burden.

MR. BENJAMIN: I think we just have time for one more question, and I did promise that I would get the Fourth Estate involved. So sir, right there in the middle.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. Mr. Minister, I'm from the Czech Republic, and I'm looking forward to taking care of the Presidency of the European Union here in the United States next year.

MR. BENJAMIN: Everyone's impersonating journalists today. I don't know what's going on.

QUESTIONER: So should I give my microphone to some of the journalists?

MR. BENJAMIN: No, what's your question?

QUESTIONER: The question is about the future of NATO. NATO, not about alliance. What do France and what do you think about that? And if you agree Europeans are now back in business with Russia as European Union, do you think that NATO should do the same business as usual? Thanks.

MINISTER KOUCHNER: These are good questions for a journalist.

MR. BENJAMIN: There's another career waiting for him.

MINISTER KOUCHNER: We have to think about the meaning, the attributions, and the role of NATO because the world has changed and for the time being, this is not an emergency because NATO is involving only two theaters of operation, one is Kosovo, the other is Afghanistan. This is clear, more or less, under Secretary (inaudible) resolutions. So -- but we must understand, like I try to explain to you, that for Russia -- and Russia is a great player and our neighbor in Europe -- for

Russia to consider the deployment of NATO as a sort of perpetual threat or like if they were assuaged by their, let's say, neighbors is not acceptable the way it has been done. So we have to think about a new -- remember that -- and it was not by chance or misfortune that the six founders of European Union, that is to say, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany, France, and the Netherlands, they voted this in favor of offering to Ukraine and Georgia this particular formula for becoming a member of NATO. We have to reconsider NATO role. It would take some time certainly. For the time being, we offer them a particular nuance -- yes, you have the right to be member of NATO, but it will take time, and I believe that it will maintain its attitude. Meanwhile, we must have dialogue with Russia. That's my understanding of this. It was an alliance offered to reinforce democratic side against Warsaw Pact. Remember that. I think that's changed. So we must change our review and certainly without any breakdown, without any growing up. We have to reconsider our position, facing the necessary alliance which is represented by NATO, a necessary alliance. And we are part of since the beginning. We are French, was one of the founders. And we participate in all the actions, and we are part in Kosovo, and we are part in Afghanistan. And certainly we have to reconsider as the world has changed the necessary change of understanding -- the understanding of the populations. It's not so clear. What is NATO? What is the use of NATO? Do we have to use it in Africa,

in Asia, et cetera? We have to reconsider that and to think about the new clarity.

MR. BENJAMIN: Mr. Minister, I'm a former journalist, so I'm going to take the opportunity to ask this final question.

MINISTER KOUCHNER: I'm a former politician, so I can escape your question.

MR. BENJAMIN: Well, while we're both reforming, let me ask you this. We've talked very much about this new relationship, and we have done it as we often do a little bit in a vacuum, away from the issues of public opinion on our respective sides of the Atlantic. Americans I think it's safe to say are eager for a new relationship. One thing that the polls showed very clearly is we don't like being isolated in the world. We don't like being disliked. But there is also a sense that we are going to undertake a lot of things that will make our allies around the world feel better about America, whether it's closing Guantanamo, declaring that torture is a matter of the past, and so on. But we also have great needs. Now you have touched on some of these, but I was wondering if you would expand a bit on what -- how Europe will respond when whether it is the Congress or the Executive Branch says, you know, we need more help on the ground in Afghanistan or I didn't -- or President Obama who says, you know, I didn't vote for Iraq either. Can you help me out by training civil servants, by training police? What can -- can you intimate for us what might be the response?

MINISTER KOUCHNER: What might be the response? I cannot tell you because we have not been asked. But when we were asked by the previous Administration -- if I may say so, but I don't want to be impolite and unfair -- we answered yes, and we send new troops. Is it possible to maintain such a pressure? I don't know, honestly. It depends on the targets. It depends on the goals. And I know there's a time we are under NATO Command, and U.N. Command, and U.S. Command. So it must be a bit discussed and to get more easy answer. Who is the Commander and what for? And NATO another time we decided to get more involved in NATO and will be more involved despite of the necessity of clearing the old goal and purpose of NATO. We will be full member certainly in the coming meeting in Strasbourg in April, next April. But on Afghanistan as I told you I believe that there is no military solution. Pacification is something we need to secure some other part of Afghanistan and some particular fields in Afghanistan. But we are in favor of offering to the Afghans to take their responsibility and we did as French people because we were in charge of the center region and mainly of Kabul. And Kabul we pass to the Afghans in August, last August. We passed the command to the Afghan Armies. And this is -- we did it ourselves, no, but this is the model everywhere. So do we want some more particular troops on the particular field on a particular project? We have to share with all the project with the Afghan people. That's the answer. Sorry not to say yes or no. We send troops or not troops. This is

not a problem. This is not the issue. How can we assure our Afghan friends because I was not only witness, but part of the last -- they are fighting since 25 years. And so I was part of it as a military doctor of the last battle against the Soviet forces. They were 130,000 and they have lost, and they know that, and they are advising us, of course. And we have to take this experience in account also. And the good surprise is certainly President Zardari in Pakistan. And with them that is why it will be certainly interesting to listen to them in this meeting I propose -- very discretely in Paris -- to listen to them first. But I know that the Afghan problem is not to be military -- will not -- we will not be able to get rid of that with a military solution, certainly not. That is not to say that we won't withdraw our troop, not at all. We want to share with our allies and mainly with the Americans. Europe -- 25 nations out of 27 -- are involved in this Afghanistan fight. But this is not a fight against the Afghan people. This is a fight in favor of the Afghan people against terrorism. And it is not visible enough, even in our country, and the debate in the Parliament was very, very difficult. What are we doing there? What for? What is the goal? Fighting against terrorism? Certainly, yes. But let's fight together not the escape way, but the best -- better support for the Afghan people, Afghan democracy, supporting the new coming elections, et cetera. I'm sorry, it's part of the answer, not complicated.

MR. BENJAMIN: That's okay. You don't know how refreshing it is not to be answered with "well, let's not deal in

hypotheticals." So Mr. Minister, it's been a great pleasure to have you here this morning. I am sure that as -- after President Obama takes office, we will be seeing you back here in Washington frequently as this new structure, this new friendship, this new partnership is built and revitalized. And we insist you come back because this really has just been an appetizer. You said you went on too long, but I don't think it was a minute too long. We would have liked to have heard a lot more. It's a great pleasure to see a diplomat thinking big. Thank you for coming today.

MINISTER KOUCHNER: Thank you to you. That's because I'm not a diplomat, but some are good!

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/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

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