

THE FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE

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"THE PRICE OF GREATNESS:
THE NEXT FOUR YEARS OF FOREIGN POLICY"

THE CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION IN SYRIA

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Moderated by William Kristol

All Eyes on Asia: Perspectives from our Allies -

A Conversation with Ambassadors Kim Beazley,
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Closing Remarks

**Film Screening of "The Oath of Tobruk" and
Conversation with Bernard-Henri Levy at the
French Embassy**

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. FLY: Great. We're about to get this
3 session underway. We titled this session, the last
4 session before lunch, "The Consequences of Inaction in
5 Syria," and we've got a great set of speakers.

6 Before I turn it over to Bob Kagan, I just
7 want to remind everyone that you can follow us today on
8 foreignpolicyi on Twitter, and we're using the hash tag
9 "fpiforum," if you want to tweet questions. And we'll
10 take a number of questions from Twitter and from people
11 watching on CSPAN.

12 So, with that, I'm going to turn it over to
13 Robert Kagan, who is a senior fellow at The Brookings
14 Institution, and also one of FPI's board of directors.
15 Bob.

16 MR. KAGAN: Thank you, Jamie. And thank you
17 all for being here to discuss this extremely important
18 topic. I must say my own view of things is that if the
19 French are ready to go, we should go.

20 (Laughter. Applause.) That's my rule of
21 thumb in foreign policy. And in that regard, I think
22 it is both mystifying and shameful that the Americans

1 are so far behind on this issue, that they are once
2 again letting the French lead the way. But I wish I
3 could -- I was more confident that the Americans were
4 actually following in this case.

5 But, in any case, that will be the subject of
6 our discussion today: Syria, what to do, why we aren't
7 doing more, what outcomes we might want to see in
8 Syria, and what are the methods to get there. And
9 it's, it's almost literally impossible to imagine two
10 people better suited to having this discussion.
11 Sitting next to me is our old friend, a living
12 institution in the United States, the leader of foreign
13 policy thought in the Senate, and I guess I would say
14 in Washington. I won't go through his whole
15 distinguished biography because you all know, ladies and
16 gentlemen, John McCain --

17 MR. MCCAIN: Please do. (Laughter.)

18 MR. KAGAN: I'll save that. I'll do it
19 afterwards, or I'll send it around to anybody who wants
20 to see it. It's really a pleasure to have you here
21 again at FPI.

22 MR. MCCAIN: Thanks.

1 MR. KAGAN: And it's also a great pleasure and
2 honor to welcome Bernard-Henri Levy to FPI, and to have
3 this discussion. He is also someone who needs no
4 introduction. But I think, since American audiences
5 may not be as familiar as they ought to be, despite his
6 best-selling book about America called, "American
7 Vertigo," which, I think, is based on the Hitchcock
8 movie -- is that correct?

9 MR. LEVY: Absolutely.

10 MR. KAGAN: But he has also been -- he's a
11 philosopher, he's a thought leader, and he has put
12 himself frequently in harm's way in the most noble of
13 causes. And one of his other books is called, "La
14 Guerre Sans L'AIMER," which I believe translates to
15 "War Without Love," which is about his time in Libya,
16 which was a kind of -- it's a literary diary inspired
17 by his actions during the war in Libya. He is the
18 director of a review called "La Regle du Jeu," which I
19 believe is called "The Rules of the Game," which is
20 based on the Renoir film. So there is a movie theme
21 here.

22 But, in any case, it's a great pleasure to

1 have you here with us to talk about Syria. Let me just
2 start by asking Senator McCain, because you're in
3 frequent contact with the U.S. administration.

4 There was some speculation, I think -- I don't
5 know what it was based on -- during the campaign that
6 President Obama and the administration in general were
7 reluctant to take action on Syria while he was running
8 for office on a theme of, you know, receding of war,
9 and a hope and an expectation that after the election,
10 then they would begin to put some steps in place. And
11 we did have Secretary Clinton and the effort to build a
12 new Syrian opposition group. Do you see new movement
13 in the administration on this issue?

14 MR. MCCAIN: Well, I certainly saw an effort
15 to organize better the Syrian resistance, and Secretary
16 Clinton and others in the administration played a very
17 active role in that effort. I am also hearing from
18 their usual source, from -- they have to send their
19 information out through the New York Times, as you know
20 (laughter) -- that we are now going back to try to
21 convince the Russians to -- I thought we had fairly
22 well exhausted that avenue, which was, of course, a

1 blind alley to start with.

2 But I've still not seen any indication that
3 the United States would take the active leadership role
4 that, frankly, the entire Middle East is crying out
5 for. I just have not seen that yet. I hope it will
6 happen, I pray that it will happen. We are now up to
7 40,000 and climbing. And, of course, as all of these
8 kinds of civil wars and conflicts go, they escalate,
9 and atrocities get worse, and the bombing and things
10 that were never contemplated or seen early in this
11 uprising, are now basically tactics of war -- and the
12 thing about this that bothers me more than anything
13 else, Bob, I agree that someday Bashar al-Assad will
14 fall. We've been saying that now for 20 months,
15 something like that.

16 But in the meantime, what carnage will take
17 place in between now and then? Because every time
18 there seems to be a modest escalation on the side of
19 assisting the resistance, there is an escalation by the
20 Iranians, by the Russians, by the formation of this
21 now, group -- I've forgotten now what they call
22 themselves, the paramilitary organization they are

1 trying to form up -- so I kind of see steps of
2 escalation with the resistance making some progress.
3 But a long, long way from victory.

4 MR. KAGAN: The administration's -- you can't
5 tell whether the administration's insistence on going
6 to the Security Council and getting Security Council
7 authorization is a way of being very sincere in its
8 desire to get a Security Council authorization to move
9 forward, or whether it's a way of hiding behind the
10 Security Council and not taking action.

11 But let me ask you, Monsieur Levy, what have
12 you -- you know, in France -- I think American -- the
13 American assumption is that the French would agree that
14 you can't do anything without a Security Council
15 resolution. I'm wondering what your view on that is,
16 given that, at the moment, and really for quite some
17 time now, it seems very unlikely that the Russians
18 would approve any serious action to overthrow Assad.
19 What is your view of how important it is to go to the
20 Security Council, whether we should be dissuaded if we
21 can't get a resolution.

22 MR. LEVY: Let me tell you first how, just one

1 word, how honored I am to sit next to Senator McCain.
2 Senator McCain embodies for me and for many Frenchmen
3 one of the most noble things in the world, which is
4 physical bravery, physical courage. And I remember
5 four years ago I was very embarrassed. I had a vested
6 interest in Barack Obama's campaign because I predicted
7 four years before that he could be an American
8 President. So I was for him. But I had the real
9 embarrassment when I saw the performance and the
10 bravery of Senator McCain. And for me it is a very big
11 treat to be here with you and with this...

12 MR. MCCAIN: Come out to Arizona with me some
13 time.

14 MR. KAGAN: 2016 (laughter).

15 MR. LEVY: So that is the point I wanted to
16 make. About the United Nations, how important it is.
17 Of course it would be great to have the United Nations.
18 Of course it would be better. But please, if United
19 Nation was a moral authority, then it would be
20 indispensable to have it. We could not do it without.
21 But United Nation has -- is so morally corrupted, they
22 accepted so many bloodbaths in the 20th century, they

1 closed their eyes on Bosnia, they closed their eyes on
2 Rwanda, we cannot take shelter under the veto of
3 Security Council in order not to do anything.

4 This is really an alibi, it is an excuse.
5 There are a lot of people in France and in America who
6 are very pleased of this veto. It is very comfortable
7 to be able to say, "We would love to go, but there is
8 this moral authority, this Antigone of Security
9 Council." This is a joke.

10 And what I can tell you is that I remember so
11 well the first day when Nicolas Sarkozy received the
12 transitional authority of the Libyan people) the NTC,
13 in *Palais de l'Elysée*. I was here. I took the three
14 guys, Ali Zeidan, Prime Minister today, Mahmoud
15 Jibreel, Ali Alisawi to Nicolas Sarkozy's office.
16 Nicolas Sarkozy exposed to them his plan to prevent the
17 bloodbath in Benghazi. They were very happy. And one
18 of them, Ali Zeidan, asked, "But, Mr. President, what
19 if you don't have the endorsement of United Nations?"

20 Nicolas Sarkozy made the following reply. He
21 said, "Number one, I will have the endorsement because
22 I am very strong and very voluntary, I will

1 have(inaudible). But if I don't have the endorsement, I
2 will do without because you have situations in history
3 of humanitarian emergencies where there is of course
4 the laws but also the law(inaudible)." And Sarkozy
5 said, "If ever by mischance I did not get the
6 endorsement, then we would build these other
7 organizations, regional. You have Arab League, you
8 have African Union, you have NATO, you have European
9 Unions. I would build with my friend, David Cameron
10 " -- this is the code of Nicolas Sarkozy this
11 day -- "we will build a sort of substitutional, of
12 legitimacy of substitution, to deal with this moral
13 emergency which we are facing."

14 So, it could be the same about Syria. If we
15 can, of course. The proof is made that we are
16 hijacked, that the human rights are hijacked by Mr.
17 Putin, the great democrat of Chechenya. (Laughter.)
18 The man who razed(inaudible) three-quarters of Grozny.
19 He is entitled, apparently, to say what human rights is
20 and what a difference of human rights should be. This
21 is a terrible joke. And we have to -- I think that the
22 only decent thing to do would be to proceed without

1 that.

2 MR. KAGAN: Let me just ask you, just
3 following up on that, what is your view -- because I
4 asked Senator McCain -- what is your view of American
5 policy right now? I mean what is your opinion of it,
6 and also, how do you explain it?

7 MR. LEVY: My view on American policy in
8 Libya, I think that America did well. France took the
9 lead, but America did well. I think I had a view
10 inside -- an inside view of the story, and I can say
11 that America was saved, the honor of America was saved
12 by your President -- of course, Obama -- but by three
13 women. Three women: Samantha Power, Susan Rice, and
14 Hillary Clinton (Clapping).

15 I happen to be the one who took Mahmoud Jibril
16 to Paris on the -- in March, when there was this
17 meeting of the G8, when Hillary Clinton was in Paris to
18 see Nicolas Sarkozy and Alan Jupe (inaudible). And
19 Mahmoud Jibril, who was prime minister
20 of -- transitional prime minister of Libya, had a
21 face-to-face meeting with Ambassador -- future
22 Ambassador Stevens, Christopher Stevens, who was not

1 yet ambassador. He was there. There was a meeting
2 face-to-face between Jibril and Hillary Clinton. And
3 my belief and -- my feeling and my belief is that a
4 great deal of the story happened during these 45
5 minutes. There was a man -- there was two persons, a
6 man and a woman, a heart speaking to another heart, a
7 great plea of Mahmoud Jibril addressed to a mother, to
8 a humanitarian militant who is Hillary Clinton. And
9 when Jibril went out of the office, I think that
10 Hillary Clinton was really impressed, moved, then there
11 was this conversation overseas between Gates, Clinton,
12 and Obama. And so on. So, Clinton, Rice, Samantha
13 Power, they did a great job (inaudible). And, of
14 course, President Obama and your whole administration
15 followed very bravely.

16 Today, about Syria, I must confess that I
17 don't understand. During the campaign, one could
18 understand. There was a special context, there was a
19 electoral fight, and so on. But now what prevents?
20 Opposite to what is generally said, it is more doable
21 today against Assad than it was two years ago against
22 Qaddafi. All those who tell us, "But you can't say

1 that, Syria is very difficult, very complicated," they
2 lie. It is much doable. A war is never easy. And it
3 is always tragic. And the collateral effects are
4 always dramatic. But as soon as this is said, it is
5 more doable today in Syria than it was doable yesterday
6 in Libya. And I could explain why later.

7 MR. MCCAIN: Could I make two -- could I just
8 make two points. One is that all the things that the
9 non-interventionists said would happen if we intervened
10 have now happened in Syria. The influence and dramatic
11 increase in al-Qaeda presence, the escalation of
12 bombing, the tensions on the borders, all of the things
13 that were predicted that would happen are now happening
14 and in spades. And again, it cries out for American
15 leadership.

16 But I think that we also must view the
17 situation in Syria in the broader context of the entire
18 upheaval that's taking place in the Middle East, and
19 especially the role of Iran. Iran are the ones whose
20 missiles were set in Gaza. It was Iran who was sending
21 in the Revolutionary Guards on the ground that are
22 training this new paramilitary force. And, believe me,

1 in warfare there is nothing more atrocious than these
2 kinds of paramilitary forces. It's the Iranians that
3 continue to have the centrifuges spinning. It's the
4 Iranians that are even influencing al-Qaeda or other
5 extremist groups throughout the region, and continuing
6 to provoke and to plot even assassinations here in our
7 nation's capital.

8 So, I think when we look at Syria we also have
9 to look at the effect of the fall of Bashar on Iran,
10 and also what Iran will continue to do not just in
11 Syria, but, for example, Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.
12 Suppose that they decide to trigger these missiles,
13 which would overwhelm Iron Dome.

14 There are so many things moving parts in the
15 region, and so much of it can be traced back to
16 our -- the number one spoiler in the region, on top of
17 the Arab Spring, and that is the Iranian meddling in
18 literally every part of the Middle East.

19 MR. KAGAN: Well, let's talk about, then, what
20 should be done. What is your current view on what we
21 ought to be doing?

22 MR. MCCAIN: The no-fly zone, which, by the

1 way, does not mean that we go after Bashar's air
2 defenses. It means that we place anti-air missiles in
3 place. And I guarantee you the first Syrian aircraft
4 we shot down, that would be the last one to fly over a
5 no-fly zone.

6 A place where they can -- a Benghazi, a
7 Benghazi where they can organize, where they can train,
8 where they can equip, where we can find out who the
9 good guys and the bad guys are in this effort to form a
10 revolutionary council that will be effective.

11 And also, frankly, to counter what is the
12 increasing influence of al-Qaeda and extremists who are
13 pouring in from all over the Middle East. The longer
14 this goes, the more likely we're going to have enormous
15 challenges with these kinds of -- it will be the
16 militias in Libya magnified by a factor of 10.

17 So then -- and then obviously, it would be
18 nice if we had the United Nations, but I really believe
19 that, one, Americans are war-weary. "No boots on the
20 ground. No boots on the ground. No boots on the
21 ground." But it could, we could prevail with the kind
22 of equipment that they need, and training, and

1 organization. Right now they have no place to
2 organize.

3 MR. KAGAN: Are you talking about giving
4 anti-aircraft weapons to the opposition, or are you
5 talking about emplacements in Turkey, or what --

6 MR. MCCAIN: We could do some of the above. I
7 think Patriot missiles, you know, as now the Germans
8 are moving some Patriot missiles under some kind of
9 weird circumstances, but at least they're coming in to
10 Turkey. Or we could give them a limited number, a
11 controlled number, of MANPADS. But, primarily, I think
12 it would just be a Patriot installation.

13 Pilots are not going to fly into certain
14 death. I don't care how brave they are. And you shoot
15 down one or two of them, they're not going to fly there
16 again. They may like Bashar Assad, but they like to
17 live a little more.

18 MR. KAGAN: Is Turkey ready to play that role?

19 MR. MCCAIN: Again, everybody I talk to in
20 Turkey and in the region cries out for American
21 leadership. I think that the Turks are having
22 significant public opinion problems that are

1 overwhelmed by huge numbers of refugees. They see this
2 thing continuing. We're going to have -- my friends,
3 the next big challenge in the Middle East is the
4 ambitions of the Kurds for a Kurdish state. And the
5 longer this kind of situation prevails, the more that
6 they're going to have their ambitions -- they're in
7 Syria, they're in Iraq, they're in Iran, they're
8 everywhere, they're in Turkey, as you know.

9 So, I think that it's very obvious that we
10 can -- the sooner we get this thing moving in the right
11 direction, the better -- but I worry about Erdogan, I
12 worry about his ambitions, I worry about his comments.
13 He took himself out of negotiations on the Gaza thing
14 by his comments about Israel.

15 One thing I can assure all of us, and I am
16 totally confident of, is we didn't know what the world
17 and the Middle East was going to look like two years
18 ago, a little over two years ago, when all these other
19 guys were in power. We cannot predict what the world
20 is - what the Middle East is going to be like two years
21 from now, except that it cries out for American
22 leadership. And that's what, in my view -- and I hate

1 to be partisan when I say this -- but it is missing
2 there. It is missing. And when I talked to all of
3 these leaders, whether they be Gulf leaders, or
4 anyplace else in the Middle East, they want American
5 leadership.

6 MR. KAGAN: Do you have other thoughts that
7 you wanted to add to what ought to be done? And do you
8 have a view as to whether -- I mean, you know, if the
9 administration -- if an administration official were
10 sitting here, they would say, A, Erdogan talks a good
11 game, he doesn't really want to do anything in Syria
12 for a lot of the reasons that you mentioned, including
13 the Kurdish thing. B, we don't want to give
14 anti-aircraft weapons to people, because we don't know
15 what happens to them after they've used them, et
16 cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

17 But all these things -- I've heard the phrase
18 "non-start." Everything is a non-starter and that's
19 why they go to the Security Council.

20 MR. LEVY: You know, the question is not will
21 Assad fall. Assad will fall. The question is will
22 Assad fall with the help of the West or without the

1 help of the West. This is a crucial question. If
2 Assad falls in a few weeks, in a few months, without
3 the help of the West, then it will be an affair between
4 Iran and Saudi Arabia. It will be a fight
5 between)Qatar and the allies of Guard of Revolutions,
6 and so on.

7 If it is with the West, then, number one, we
8 will do our duty, duty of democrats. We will have the
9 flag of our values high. And, number two, we will have
10 our world to say in the future of this area, "Look at
11 what happens in Libya today. Egypt, Tunisia, Libya."
12 It's commonplace to say that things don't go so well in
13 Egypt and in Tunisia, which is true. Muslim Brothers
14 are in power in Egypt, women are not in such a good
15 situation in Tunisia, and so on.

16 Look at what happens in Libya. In Libya, the
17 Muslim Brothers lost the elections in last July, the
18 secular and moderate Muslims won. The prime minister
19 is Mr. Ali Zeidan, who is a true Libyan patriot, but
20 who is also a friend of the West, a friend of Europe, a
21 friend of America, a true human rights fighter. He was
22 the president of the Human Rights League for 20 years

1 and so on.

2 So, what is the difference between Libya on
3 one side, and Egypt and Tunisia on the other side? The
4 difference -- one of the differences -- is that the
5 Libyans did the job with the help of the West. They
6 know that the key argument of al-Qaeda, which is that
7 "The West is against us, the West is devil, America is
8 the grand devil," is false. They know that the West is
9 not the eternal ally of the dictators. And this
10 reshaped completely the way of thinking of a lot of
11 average people in Libya.

12 The (stutter) grass has been cut under the
13 feet of the Islamists and of the al-Qaeda. The key
14 argument was that the West is the enemy of the peoples.
15 No. In Libya, the West was the friend of the people.
16 They gave the hand, and they were helpful.

17 So in Syria, it is the same, but it is late.
18 It is 40,000 dead too late. But nevertheless, it is
19 still time. It is still time to show to the youth of
20 Syria that we hear their appeal to liberty, that we are
21 able to listen to their call for human rights.

22 MR. MCCAIN: Let me just say about Libya.

1 Everything you say I totally agree with, except for the
2 fact that we abandoned Libya. The light footprint.
3 They needed all kinds of help, which they could pay
4 for. They needed help with securing the borders. They
5 needed help with setting up a police and army force.
6 They needed help with disarming these militias, which
7 are still roaming around. We watched the deterioration
8 in the eastern part of Libya. We watched it.

9 We saw the threats to our embassy. We saw the
10 al-Qaeda elements coming in. Ten different al-Qaeda
11 affiliated groups are around Benghazi, as we speak. We
12 watched it happen, because we didn't do the things that
13 we knew were necessary to assist them to set up the
14 first government that -- virtually, that they've ever
15 had. And we obviously paid a very heavy price for it.

16 MR. LEVY: And we watched great Ambassador
17 Stevens being killed in such a savage way, probably
18 linked to what you are saying. Of course, that is
19 true. That is true. But that is not a reason not to
20 intervene. That is a reason to change the
21 move(inaudible) even in Libya.

22 I think that, for example, American --

1 MR. MCCAIN: -- I think that's why the
2 follow-up is always so important.

3 MR. LEVY: Of course, of course, of course, of
4 course.

5 MR. MCCAIN: Help the Syrians, but then
6 realize that the international community has --

7 MR. LEVY: I am not in your face, I will never
8 be. If we were -- there is, for example, a project
9 which I -- I happened to propose it recently to
10 President Hollande. I'm going to look at (inaudible)
11 on that, to build in Benghazi or in Tripoli a real
12 institute of leaders, of -- building of hills according
13 to local views of course, according to the -- what is a
14 Muslim country, but with democratic values(, a sort of
15 national school of leaders in a country where, in
16 Libya, you have 42 years without any state, without any
17 civil society, and not even a nation. So ground zero
18 of policy. We could follow up, of course, for example,
19 with that.

20 We have in France a school called Ecole
21 Nationale de Administration(inaudible), Administration
22 National School. Something like that. This would be a

1 great opportunity between America and France. Could be
2 built in Benghazi. And I am sure that they will take,
3 that they would take, the Libyan leaders would be more
4 than happy of this sort of thing.

5 MR. MCCAIN: They need a police force and an
6 army.

7 MR. KAGAN: I just want to follow up on that a
8 little bit and pull back the lens somewhat, because we
9 have the honor of having you here, and it gives us an
10 opportunity to hear from you how the U.S. is viewed
11 these days, both in France and in the -- and in Europe,
12 more broadly.

13 You know, you raised a question, you know,
14 does the United States -- are we working closely enough
15 with Europe on these kinds of issues? Do you sense a
16 strong alliance? Is there a perception of whether
17 America is on its way up or on its way down?
18 Just -- I'm just curious to get your view of how
19 America appears right now.

20 MR. LEVY: There is one thing which was
21 noticed in Europe in the acceptance speech of President
22 Obama a few weeks ago, which is that the word, Europe,

1 was not uttered once in his speech. He did not say
2 "Europe." So I don't know enough.

3 But sign or not, I leave it to Europe. I hope
4 not. I hope the current administration knows that
5 whatever is a stake on the -- of the West, whatever the
6 emergency of dealing with Chinese things and so on,
7 there is a link of flesh and of blood and of values
8 between America and Europe. I hope this is well
9 understood in America. In Libya it seemed yes, I hope
10 it will be in the next situations. I don't know. I
11 don't know.

12 MR. MCCAIN: I understand our emphasis on the
13 Asia Pacific region, the world's economy, China, all of
14 those things. But you -- when they use the word
15 "pivot," then that's a very serious error in my view.
16 And I think it's kind of coincidental the President was
17 in Asia when, obviously, Gaza and Israel were on the
18 brink of an all-out conflict.

19 I think that I would strongly advise our
20 national security and people in the administration to
21 say that we want to balance. We don't want to pivot,
22 we want to balance. We understand that Asia Pacific

1 region is very important. God knows, look at -- the
2 Chinese just landed an aircraft on an aircraft carrier.
3 There is no greater signal of a desire to have a nation
4 that can protect power than an aircraft carrier. I say
5 that with some parochialism, obviously (Laughter).

6 But we have to understand that there has got
7 to be a worldwide leadership, and we can't focus all of
8 our attention on one region. And I hope that the
9 recent upheaval in the Middle East has convinced the
10 administration of that.

11 MR. KAGAN: Okay. Well, let me turn it over
12 to our audience for some questions. I think people are
13 walking around with mics. Also, I think I am supposed
14 to say that you can tweet questions, or somebody can
15 tweet. I'm the wrong guy to talk to about any of that
16 stuff. (Laughter) Okay. Yeah, sure.

17 QUESTION: My name is Francois Braine-
18 Bonnaire. I am French, but I am living in the States,
19 and I am proud to be part of the two nations. We know,
20 Mr. Levy, that because you had very close relationship
21 with President Sarkozy you have played a key role into
22 the action in Libya. And that's a great thing. And we

1 have the opportunity tonight to see the -- your movie
2 about that.

3 I don't know how close you are with current
4 President Hollande. My question is -- to be very
5 direct, because French people are not very well known
6 to be politically correct -- if today we cannot
7 intervene in Syria as we have been intervening with
8 success in Libya, is it mainly because nobody can repay
9 the price? I think it relates well to the theme of the
10 day, the price of greatness.

11 And in that case, nobody can pay the price
12 because, actually, it couldn't be a cash payment, but
13 on a credit card, and nobody can afford that in the
14 Western World, either France, either the States.

15 MR. LEVY: It is probably one of the reasons.
16 But the price to pay will be much higher if we don't
17 do. It will be a price to pay in terms of terrorism,
18 it will be a price to pay, as Senator McCain said at
19 the beginning, in terms of reinforcement of Iran. It
20 will be price to pay in terms of reinforcement of
21 Hezbollah and Hamas. The price to pay will be huge if
22 we are not able today to pay the price of helping the

1 fall of Bashar al-Assad.

2 And you know, about Libya, it is very easy
3 today to say that it was easier this time. It was very
4 difficult, too. It was a completely obscure situation.
5 Nobody knew how much it would cost. The cost was much
6 higher than it was expected. It took much more -- many
7 more months than it was announced. The victory was not
8 sure. Qaddafi was not alone. The Russians were -- did
9 endorse at the beginning, but they very soon thought
10 that they had been abused, and so on.

11 So, it was a very difficult matter, very
12 costly. But I think it was a big cost to afford in
13 order to avoid a huger price in the future. Same for
14 Syria. If we don't do it today, we will have, as the
15 famous world said, "The shame plus the cost" in the
16 near future.

17 MR. MCCAIN: I think we could have accelerated
18 the downfall of Qaddafi if we had continued to use U.S.
19 air power. But that's -- I regret that, but there is
20 nothing that can be done about it. But I do thank the
21 French and our British friends for the enormous effort
22 they made.

1 And I think the administration also deserves
2 credit because we provided a lot of the areas of
3 support, such as refueling, such as additional weapons,
4 such as intelligence capability, and many other things
5 that our French and British allies and others did not
6 have. And it was that part of our contribution that
7 was really vital.

8 MR. KAGAN: Okay. Over here.

9 QUESTION: Good morning. My name is Bridget
10 (phonetic), and I'm actually from Arizona. So nice to
11 see you again, Senator.

12 My question has to do with more of the other
13 parts of the Middle East. I think that -- well, maybe
14 not me, personally, but do you think the world
15 community is more hesitant to get involved with Syria
16 because of the collapse of other states around it? So
17 if, say, we intervened in Syria, what if there was a
18 revolution in Yemen, which -- there were a lot of
19 protests -- or Oman, or in Iran. There is huge
20 protests about the failing of the currency.

21 Do you think that there is a possibility for
22 the whole Middle East to change in, say, 5, 10 years?

1 Or do you think that this is more a motivation of, you
2 know, Russia's playing a certain side versus the West,
3 you know, Europe. Any thoughts?

4 MR. MCCAIN: I think as far as the United
5 States is concerned, it's a -- war weariness is a big
6 factor. People are very weary. Iraq, Afghanistan, the
7 fear of getting into a prolonged conflict which perhaps
8 the United States might escalate and become more
9 involved than initially, anticipated -- wouldn't be the
10 first conflict that escalated in that fashion. So I
11 think war weariness, the economy, and jobs.

12 But I also think that there is a rising amount
13 of American public opinion that want us to do something
14 about the slaughter. I really do. It's just
15 antithetical to everything that America stands for and
16 believes in. These stories are horrific. I wish every
17 American could go to a refugee camp, as Joe Lieberman
18 and Lindsey Graham and I did and hear the stories.
19 They're just so heartbreaking. And I think I'm a
20 fairly tough old guy, but it just breaks your heart.

21 And so, I think there is some momentum. But
22 every day that goes by, then the solutions are going to

1 be even more complicated. And I guess it was the young
2 Syrian leaders who said, "After this is over," just as
3 you said, "we're going to remember who helped us and
4 who didn't."

5 And this -- the thing that bothers me more, as
6 much as anything else, is this enormous influx of
7 al-Qaeda and extremists that are pouring in to Syria
8 from all over the Middle East. There is going to
9 be -- makes it really difficult to set up. Look at the
10 problems they're having in Libya, with just the -- what
11 they've got to contend with.

12 But again, I want to emphasize the Middle East
13 is changing and the world is changing. I don't think
14 the Arab Spring is confined to the Middle East. I
15 don't see how the Chinese can continue the way that
16 they're run, with this little group of people and all
17 the corruption and all the ways that people have of
18 communicating with each other nowadays, and the ongoing
19 scandals that we see.

20 So, I think not only is -- are there going to
21 be changes in the Middle East, I think there is going
22 to be changes throughout the world, where people are

1 going to want to assert and obtain their God-given
2 rights. And I think that Putin is going to have
3 difficulties in Russia.

4 And so -- and where it all leads, I'm not
5 exactly sure. But I promise you that two years from
6 now I hope we will have this same kind of conversation,
7 and we will be looking at a very, very different world.
8 The question is what leadership role does the United
9 States and our allies and friends play in shaping this
10 new world that's going to emerge in the next -- in the
11 21st century.

12 MR. KAGAN: All the way in the back, over
13 there, yeah. The man who still has his hand up, yes.
14 It's not a man? I can't tell from here. (Laughter.) If
15 it's not, I apologize. I need to get these --

16 MR. LEVY: I wanted to add during -- in the
17 meantime about the war weariness. It is true. But
18 America, English, and French did a big job even, for
19 example, in Afghanistan. I am infuriated when I see in
20 the press, French press and sometimes American press,
21 that Afghanistan is a disaster. It is not true. We
22 did a great job in Afghanistan. Karzai, Abdullah

1 Abdullah, a lot -- I was recently -- even in Ouzbin and
2 Kapica (inaudible) there is a lot of villages, a lot of
3 cities where people don't want the Taliban to be back.
4 The American and special forces of French in
5 Afghanistan allowed, for example, the chase of -- and
6 the success of the chase of bin Laden.

7 So, war weariness? Of course. But we must
8 not let us depressed by these defeatist propaganda who
9 say that all that we did since 10 years was a disaster.
10 Iraq was not good, of course, but Kosovo was not a
11 disaster. It was a just war with fair reasons. Libya
12 was a just war with a good reason. And Afghanistan,
13 this should be said at this moment where hard decisions
14 are at the edge of being taken, we achieved and you
15 achieved -- you Americans, especially -- real results,
16 which are good for the future of the whole area,
17 including Pakistan.

18 MR. KAGAN: And, Senator McCain, I would even
19 add Iraq to that, but --

20 QUESTION: Yes.

21 MR. KAGAN: Ma'am, I apologize.

22 QUESTION: No problem.

1 MR. KAGAN: Please.

2 QUESTION: I am Catherine Fitzpatrick
3 (phonetic). I write on Eurasian affairs.

4 Senator McCain, I wanted to ask you. A lot of
5 focus is on the U.S. about Syria. But what can the
6 U.S. do to pressure Russia more? They supply the arms
7 to Assad. Are we too dependent on Russia
8 through -- because of having the road to Afghanistan
9 where we have to get our troops in and out? Have we
10 become too dependent there, that we can't pressure
11 Russia sufficiently on this issue?

12 MR. MCCAIN: Well, as was discussed earlier,
13 the Russian veto is more of an excuse for
14 non-intervention than a reason. We went to Kosovo
15 without UN Security Council endorsement.

16 I think that if there is a significant lack of
17 progress, it is on the reset. Look at what Putin is
18 doing. He just kicked out the NGOs. There is a new
19 definition of treason. Why in the world he would
20 nullify the Nunn-Lugar process which is in Russia's
21 benefit to get rid of nuclear materials, the -- every
22 step he seems to be taking is more and more autocratic

1 and a kind of an ambition to see the old near abroad of
2 the Russian empire.

3 And I don't think that we're going to have
4 another Cold War. I don't think that we're going to
5 have huge confrontations with Russia. But I think we
6 have to understand that Putin is going to be
7 there -- ambitions are to be there for the rest of his
8 life, and to have an autocratic regime that has a lot
9 to do with corruption and kleptocracy.

10 And that's one reason why I hope that -- and I
11 have been working as hard as I can -- that -- the House
12 has already passed it -- that we would pass the
13 Magnitsky bill, we pass the Magnitsky bill and it sends
14 a signal back to Putin that this kind of behavior is
15 not acceptable, at least as far as the United States of
16 America is concerned.

17 MR. KAGAN: Okay. We have time, I'm afraid,
18 only for two more quick questions --

19 MR. MCCAIN: Which, by the way, as you know,
20 which is triggered by the repeal of Jackson-Vanik as
21 part of the deal. So --

22 MR. KAGAN: We have time for two more quick

1 questions. And I think I will take the two, and then
2 you guys can answer them. This gentleman, and
3 I'll -- over on this side, this gentleman right here.

4 QUESTION: Thank you very much. Two questions
5 one on leadership. It seems that the key missing piece
6 of the equation today on acting in Syria is the French
7 president has changed(. So would you think that
8 President Hollandewould have acted different in Libya?
9 And today, if we cannot have the leadership on the
10 French side that we could have had with a different
11 president, who could replace that leadership on the
12 European side, for instance?

13 And, number two, I was (inaudible) perplexed
14 by Mr. Levy's consideration that the UN -- the moral
15 principle we should act when the UN has failed. I
16 think that argument could be also used by other
17 countries and non-democratic countries that would
18 define moral imperative in different terms, and then
19 find their rationale to invade other countries. And if
20 you take a step back, the idea of United Nations is
21 also to provide some order, process, on the relations
22 between countries and on the interventions.

1 Very quickly on the premises that the UN is
2 unable to act, what other forums and what other
3 mechanisms can we use? Can NATO, for instance, take
4 over some of the role of the UN? I think there is an
5 interesting possible difference in perspective between
6 the Europeans and the United Nations. An ambassador
7 recently told me that the UN (inaudible) told him that
8 he saw NATO as a toolbox to solve problems. And I
9 think the Europeans are more cautious about how do we
10 expand the role of NATO. And so that -- how do you see
11 that play out as a possible replacement of the United
12 Nations to find some legitimacy and context to act
13 abroad? Thank you.

14 MR. KAGAN: Thank you. And if you could, just
15 hold off a little bit, let me just get the other
16 question, and then we can --

17 QUESTION: Thank you, sir. Nelson Garcia
18 (phonetic), with the Washington Intergovernmental
19 Professional Group.

20 We are placed in a situation where Western
21 intervention, while very positive and while very good
22 in Libya and Syria, I could see us in a position down

1 the road where it actually backfires on us, because the
2 question will then be asked, "Why aren't we intervening
3 in allied countries like Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi
4 Arabia in promoting Western values?" How do you
5 address that situation and the other differences
6 between our approaches between the two governments,
7 besides the fact that one is anti-American versus one
8 being a pro-American government?

9 MR. KAGAN: Thank you. Mr. Levy, why don't
10 you answer this question, and then we will turn to
11 Senator McCain to answer that question.

12 MR. LEVY: About President Hollande and
13 President Sarkozy, you are right in Libya. It has
14 been, in great part, a question of persons. That is
15 true. And it was amazing for me. I can be of
16 testimony for a few episodes of this story. It was
17 amazing to see how much these questions of persons, of
18 who is in charge, of who does what, was important. And
19 the film, which I hope to see tonight, which is diary
20 of these 10 months of what was done, of how it was
21 done, how it was acted, shows that in a very clear way.

22 The person -- the role -- I remember when I

1 was a Marxist in my youth, we used to say, "History
2 with a big H; men do not count, they are just a puppet
3 of history," and so on. The proof is done and
4 definitively the opposite. The men do history. When
5 they want, where there is a will, where there is a
6 courage to act, things can be done. And this Libya
7 story is really emblematic of that. I hope you will
8 take consideration on that when you see at the French
9 embassy, I think, tonight -- French embassy --

10 PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

11 MR. LEVY: -- my "Oath of Tobruk". Number two,
12 Hollande. The game is not over. And the mess is not
13 settled. Let's wait. Francois Hollande was elected a
14 few months ago. He had to take time to put his feet in
15 the new steps of a president. I don't know if Hollande
16 would have act as Sarkozy, but I am sure that Sarkozy,
17 number one, the Sarkozy of the first year of the
18 mandate, would not have done what he did after four
19 years.

20 The young Sarkozy -- the new president would
21 -- certainly would not have acted in Libya as he acted
22 at the end. This is to say that I'm not sure at all

1 that Francois Hollande will not be at the good level of
2 acting and taking the lead. He shows signs since a few
3 weeks of his ability to understand the question of
4 Syria and to take the lead.

5 One event which was rather unnoticed in
6 America, which was his stop in Beirut, when he went to
7 Saudi Arabia, was a great sign. This surprise stop in
8 Beirut four weeks ago to say, "In the name of France,
9 don't touch Lebanon as Mitterrand did in '82, as Chirac
10 did after the death of Hariri what they will think.
11 So, let's wait. Maybe we will be -- we, free world,
12 and we, France, disappointed. Maybe not.

13 About United Nations, I think that there will
14 be in the next year a question of United Nations in
15 general. I would advise my friends of foreign policy
16 and of the think tank directed by my friend, Bill
17 Kristol, to put that on the agenda of the next month,
18 the question of United Nations. This organization,
19 which can accept that the human rights committee is
20 directed by Qaddafi at one time, by Pakistan at another
21 time, that an organization of women can be directed and
22 presided by a country which does not respect the right

1 and so on, is, frankly, problematic.

2 So, there is, in general, a question of United
3 Nations. At the end of the day Societe des Nations,
4 which was replaced by United Nations. Why should not
5 there be an initiative coming from the civil society,
6 from the government maybe, to make a new path, to
7 proceed, to change the rules? This is one general
8 point. Failure in Rwanda, failure in Bosnia, failure
9 in so many bloody wars in Africa, the forgotten wars of
10 the 20th century, millions of them, South Sudan, Blue
11 Nile, Darfur, hundreds of thousands of unnamed, without
12 grave, without archive, dead, with the absolute silence
13 and indifference of United Nations. So there is a
14 problem, a problem of failure. And we will have to
15 deal in the next years with that.

16 Now, of course, to act
17 without United -- Security Council cannot be a law -- we
18 cannot pose as a law, that it should be done without.
19 It has to be done very carefully. It has to be done
20 modestly. And it has to be done as an exception. When
21 you have an emergency situation, sometimes you have to
22 follow a law which contradicts slightly the laws.

1 You have a great piece of literature which is
2 one of the founding stone of our civilization, which is
3 Antigone, Antigone of Sophocles. And you have the law
4 of Creon and you have the law of Antigone. Sometimes
5 the law of Creon is an outlaw law. Sometimes it is an
6 unfair regulation. And sometimes you have to stand
7 against. This is what the American administration,
8 hand in hand with the French and English
9 administration, should do in front of Mr. Putin and his
10 new autocratic regime.

11 MR. MCCAIN: Well, Bob, I'd like to thank you
12 and FPI for having me. And you all do a great job.
13 And those of you who haven't read his latest literary
14 effort, I strongly recommend it about -- it has a lot
15 to do with the blueprint and ideas and thoughts for
16 America's role in the 21st century and beyond.

17 I think your question touches on the really
18 great challenge that we face in the 21st century. And
19 as to where we intervene, where we don't intervene, on
20 what circumstances, who do we support, how do we
21 divert -- extend our most valuable and precious assets,
22 ranging from American blood to American treasure, I

1 think, first of all, you have to, I think, view America
2 as still the indispensable nation. The 20th century
3 was the American Century, and I believe the 21st
4 century can be, as well.

5 And I think there is a fundamental principle
6 that I believe in, and that is that our interests are
7 our values, and our values are our interests. And how
8 we pursue those objectives is really going to be shaped
9 by the nature of the challenge.

10 Mr. Levy just mentioned Africa today. What is
11 going on today in the Congo is really just absolutely
12 horrific. And yet the question is, what can we do
13 effectively? You mentioned some of these other
14 countries that are our friends and allies. We have to
15 begin a process, diplomatically, of saying that they
16 are going to have to show a greater respect for human
17 rights, that they're going to have to show progress in
18 democratization, freedom of the press, et cetera, all
19 the things that we believe in and stand for. Not
20 immediately, there can't be an overnight transition,
21 but we have to expect that kind of progress from them.
22 Otherwise, they will go the way of Mubarak, Ben-

1 Ali, Qaddafi, et cetera. And there is always a danger.
2 Look at Iran. Iran is the classic example. We got rid
3 of the rotten Shah, and we've been paying a very heavy
4 price for it ever since.

5 So, it requires diplomacy, it requires
6 understanding, it requires adjusting policies to the
7 environment in which these various situations exist.
8 And they will become more complex, rather than less,
9 but we have to base it on a fundamental set of
10 principles, and that is that our values are their
11 values, and our values are universal, that our belief
12 that all of us are created with certain unalienable
13 rights.

14 And if we adjust those principles to the
15 realities on the ground, then I don't think that we
16 could ever really go very far wrong. When we go wrong,
17 in my view, is when we look at the short term situation
18 rather than take the long view. And that's awfully
19 easy to say, and a lot harder to do.

20 But without a bedrock set of principles for a
21 United States and the European -- and that's got to be
22 more and more allied efforts -- then we really don't

1 have any blueprint as to how to assure a future of a
2 globe that is changing in ways that I don't think we've
3 seen -- I keep trying to remember, as a student of
4 history, I think maybe the Reformation in Europe was a
5 period of upheaval, frankly, that is a little bit
6 comparable to this one.

7 I believe in American leadership, I believe in
8 the greatness of America. I believe that this
9 President can lead. I believe that his Secretary of
10 State, whoever that might be, can also lead. And I
11 think it's important that we talk about these issues
12 because I don't think the challenges have ever been
13 greater either. Thank you.

14 MR. KAGAN: Well, thank you, Senator.

15 One quick sentence for President Obama if he
16 were sitting here -- I don't have a Clint Eastwood
17 chair for you to talk to, but one sentence for
18 President Obama on Syria.

19 MR. MCCAIN: It's time to intervene. It's
20 time to lead.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. LEVY: Please wake up.

1 (Laughter. Applause.)

2 MR. FLY: Thank you very much. Okay, we are
3 going to take a break now. And just some special
4 housekeeping announcements. We are going to need all
5 of you to pick up all of your belongings and move over
6 into the other rooms, where we have coffee set up.
7 They're going to come in and plate the lunch. And so
8 all of you here just exit the room as quickly as
9 possible, we'll get the lunch with Senator Lieberman
10 and Senator Ayotte underway shortly.

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