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RAGHIDA DERGHAM with:

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal;

HE Kevin Rudd;

HE General David Petraeus.

Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xaCXSnr2d8>

Raghida Dergham: Good morning Washington DC where General David Petraeus is joining us from, thank you very much General Petraeus for being with us. And good afternoon Riyadh where his Royal Highness Prince Turki Al Faisal is coming in, welcome Prince Turki, again you and General Petraeus are repeat guests with e-Policy Circle of Beirut Institute Summit in Abu Dhabi. And a special welcome and good evening, actually good very late evening, to the sunshine coast in Australia where former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is coming in. We're really grateful that you have made this exception, and we owe you big time.

And this is the 21st e-Policy Circle of Beirut Institute Summit in Abu Dhabi, under the theme of Stability Redefined. The co-chair of the Beirut Institute Summit is his Royal Highness, Prince Turki Al Faisal, and the regular – we will not have the Summit without him – it's always, David Petraeus. And we had also Kevin Rudd at the first Summit that we had, remember that Prince Turki, then all of you are part of this wonderful institution that takes place, the Summit that takes place in Abu Dhabi, we're grateful to Abu Dhabi for that.

So as usual, we'll start with four minutes to each of you gentlemen. It is going to be a global conversation as usual, and then here it is. Prince Turki Al Faisal, here you go.

Prince Turki Al Faisal: Thank you very much Raghida. It's a pleasure to be back with you, and of course, to have such distinguished colleagues on the same panel as it were another distinction for me. I've been, as I'm sure all of you have been, sitting in front of the TV or listening to the radio to find out who's going to be the next President of the United States. I don't think we're going to get a result pretty soon, all the indications that I have is that it won't be for another few days, if then, because then you'll have court procedures and everybody is predicting a court fight that will eventually get to the Supreme Court. But it is an amazing expression, I think, of people power and that is something I think that many of us, from abroad perhaps, always wonder at. And I've always described American elections as a Bollywood film with all of the ingredients of Bollywood films, whether it is tragedy, comedy, treachery, friendship, love, dancing, music, etc. And it takes a whole year, or maybe more to do that. So, it's a wonderful

spectacle to watch and you learn a lot from it, as I mentioned. The main lesson of course is that in the final analysis it is people power that makes this nation, that is very dear to all of us, what it is.

Here in the Middle East, of course, the issue is: Is it going to be Trump or Biden, and who is better for us? My personal view is that we will work with either one. And both of them have backgrounds, Mr. Biden, of course as a Senator and a Vice President, he knows the area very well. He's been to Saudi Arabia many times in his senatorial capacity and I think even in his vice-presidential capacity, if I'm not mistaken. And so, he has nothing to learn other than to come along with the new developments, if you like, in the last four years in our part of the world. Mr. Trump, of course, as a businessman he's had contact with our part of the world before, but as a President of course he made it his first destination as a President to come to Saudi Arabia, which Saudi people, of course, felt privileged to be distinguished by that visit of the President, and it coincided with an invitation that King Salman had for the leaders of the Muslim world who were attended the visit of the President here. So, he had a chance to meet not only Saudi leaders, but all of the members of the organization of Islamic cooperation.

Anyway, the future of course, as I said, **Mr. Biden if he becomes President, he will have to deal with events that have slightly changed since he was Vice President. We've seen a more, if you like, active engagement in the area by our Iranian neighbors, not necessarily in the most positive way with their attacks on oil tankers and an oil installation in Saudi Arabia. The situation in Iraq is precarious to say the least, it hasn't yet improved although they have a new Prime Minister who's trying to do his best to overcome the challenges that Iraq faces. Syria is still a work in progress. Yemen of course, there's still a civil war going on and Saudi Arabia is the victim of missiles launched from the Yemen, provided by the Iranian revolutionary guard. Lebanon, as you are probably better situated to tell us about that than me, is also work-in-progress. These are just some of the few things that the Middle East is facing that any president, whoever comes along, will have to deal with.**

Add to that, of course, the international crisis of the Coronavirus and trying to find the cure for it. We here in Saudi Arabia have had a very strict regimen that has dealt with the coronavirus since it struck here back in February-March. And fortunately for us in the past month or so, the virus curve, if you like, has been going down. The number of cases has decreased, the number of deaths has decreased, the number of active cases has decreased, etc. And it's been because of a very strict implementation of regulations on wearing masks, social distancing, and travel restrictions outside the Kingdom, etc. But slowly, but surely, the Kingdom is opening up. A couple of days ago, I think, we received our first foreign pilgrims to the Holy city of Mecca and they've been going through all of the regulations the Saudis have done.

I will not take more than that to continue with whatever comes up.

Raghida Dergham: Excellent, thank you very much Prince Turki Al Faisal. I will go now to a Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, please four minutes to you.

HE Kevin Rudd: Thank you very much Raghida, and it's good to join Prince Turki and General Petraeus in your gathering with the Beirut Institute. And as I begin, when you mention the great city of Beirut, as a former Australian Prime Minister, and with hundreds of thousands of Lebanese Australians in mind, our continued condolences for the extraordinary loss of life and damage to such a beautiful city in the explosions which have affected so many Lebanese people, including yourself Raghida.

The subject that you've set for us is strategic stability, who gets to define the future. And this is a reflection on when you set the subject for the post-COVID world. In four minutes, let me try and give a Japanese [haiku] summary of geopolitics. And my apologies to any Japanese who are listening because I'll offend all the rules of rhyme and rhythm. **There are three sets of players who get to determine the future. Number one is the United States, I'll come to that in a minute. Number two is China. And number three are groupings of third parties who perceive changes in the balance of power between one and two above.**

On the United States, given the extraordinary defense of the last 24 hours in the US presidential race, there will be the usual temptations around the world to write the Americans off. My view of that is that it's premature, and Mark Twain's observation on life remains [opposite rumors of my death??] are much exaggerated. And so, **when you look at the convulsions of the American democracy today, and the extraordinary statements by President Trump claiming voter fraud this evening, it's tempting for people around the world to say well that's it, America has finally politically self-imploded into two dividing camps and a house divided** among itself cannot stand to paraphrase Lincoln. I do not accept that proposition, the American democracy has a remarkable capacity to heal itself, we've seen tumultuous events in American democracy in the past, we'll see tumultuous events in American democracy in the future. But the thing about the democratic system, in the US as in a number of other countries, is that it is a form of a political, as it were, self-rectifying stabilizer of the system and it ultimately achieves equilibrium. That's not to say will not be an uneven and ugly process in the immediate period ahead, it will be. But let's remember what Bismarck said about politics in general, like the making of German sausages, a process never to be observed too closely.

On the economy, which is the critical question for the future of American power, that I think is a challenging question given the impact of COVID, and given the propensity and the possibility for a second wave effective COVID across the American economy. But if you look at the emerging third quarter economic data in the United States, again rumors of Americans economic death I believe are grossly exaggerated, and the American economy historically has demonstrated enormous capacity to reinvent and rebuild itself. And so therefore, when I look at these fundamental pillars of American power, the stability of its political institutions, the robustness of its economy, and associated with the latter the ability for it to continue to innovate and create world-leading technologies, the US is going to be around for a long time.

Yet, two final words Raghida before you get too excited about my four minutes. In China, they have had a reasonable year. **Despite the fact that virus began in China and spread from China,**

the Chinese economy beginning in the second quarter began its course of recovery. The third quarter has been stronger again. But the ingredients of Chinese economic growth are still state driven, not private sector driven, and so there are some fragilities there. Furthermore, on China I'd simply say this Raghida, **there is a danger of Chinese perceptions of America's current political challenges to overestimate the weaknesses – perceived weaknesses – in the American system, both in its politics and its economy.** That I think should give us pause in the immediate period ahead.

Finally, for third parties, third countries, and regions such as the Middle East, the rest of East Asia Southeast Asia, **I think the rest of the world is genuinely on strategic pause at the moment to observe the conclusion of the American political process, to observe the robustness of the American economic recovery, to observe how Xi Jinping responds to the new American President when that President emerges.** There'll be some hedging of bets by some, and I would say in southeast Asia we see classic candidates for that, but I believe the rest of the world by and large is simply waiting to see the outcome and to reach a conclusion about whether America will remain globally engaged and that will be subjective judgments, in part based on American political language once the new presidency takes place, but also concrete foreign policy and security policy action. Back to you.

HE Kevin Rudd: Thank you so much Kevin Rudd, I have so many questions that I want to follow up on, but after I listen to David Petraeus because you have brought to us several challenging thoughts here and I'm sure that both Prince Turki and David Petraeus will engage after the four minutes to General David Petraeus. To you, General.

General David Petraeus: Well thanks very much Raghida, it's always a pleasure to be with you and it's a privilege actually to be with former Prime Minister Rudd, and with longtime friend Prince Turki who knows this country very well as well from having served here. You originally asked us who authors, the future the short and easy answer to that is that in an era of renewed great power rivalries, it will be the great powers that largely author that future. And I thought that Prime Minister Rudd and Prince Turki both laid out very very nicely a number of thoughts about the world writ large and then certainly also the Middle East.

I'm sure that Prime Minister Rudd may want to chime in later about the Asia great power, if you will, and that of course is China which just concluded its four-day plenary the party and established its goals for 21 through 25 and also for 2035. And some have characterized this as a blueprint for competition with the US and perhaps that is a reasonable characterization, the US and China obviously are the biggest competitors in the world in certain respects, but also each other's biggest trading partners, at least up until the tariffs were imposed. As Prime Minister Rudd noted, China has had a remarkable truly V-shaped recovery – really the only country in the world that is actually above where it started the beginning of the year. It won't be at the growth level that they had hoped but that couldn't be possible given that their export markets aren't recovering as fast as they are. There are some other Asian economies doing very impressively, Korea would certainly be one of those. And then there are a number of countries that have dealt very impressively with the pandemic.

The US on the other hand is obviously still engaged in counting votes, it is very hard to call right now, the oddsmakers are saying that Vice President Biden has a bit of an advantage. The battleground states are termed that because they will be the battleground that determine the outcome. Most significantly this will be Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania. And again, what we will likely see is increased percentages of votes that are counted from now on for the Vice President because the democratic party stressed mail in voting so very heavily. As Prince Turki noted, both candidates have very strong relationships in the Middle East and frankly if Vice President Biden were the one to return to the White House, I think he would find the landscape in the Middle East is not dramatically different. As Prince Turki laid out some of these of situations that have continued on, fairly troubling in some cases, with one important exception and that would of course be the Abraham Accords, which I do think are very significant. **The recognition of the UAE and Bahrain of Israel in the establishment of economic, diplomatic, technological, tourism, trade and all the rest of that and I think that is a very significant achievement, and it also ensured that Prime Minister Netanyahu did not annex parts of the west bank or all of it, however politically difficult that might have been for him domestically. And of course, now we have Sudan following on there could be some other countries over time,** and in fact we saw a former Saudi Ambassador to the US speaking on this issue as well and indicating some bit of a different view than in the past also and I'd be interested in Prince Turki 's characterization of that perhaps in a moment.

Clearly on the other hand, the big difference but it's the difference globally, that is obviously the Coronavirus and the pandemic fallout. I think again Prince Turki 's assessment of the region is as one would expect spot on, Iran is still trying to achieve hegemony over the Shia crescent that stretches from Iran through Iraq through Syria and down into southern Lebanon. Iraq does have a very impressive prime minister, as Prince Turki noted, he has impressive goals, he has a superb cabinet – a surprisingly good cabinet frankly – and he was able to get his two security ministers confirmed in the first tranche rather than usually in the very late tranche. But it is an open question whether or not the objectives when it comes to the effectiveness and performance of governments, the provision of basic services, that the land of the two rivers should not be able to provide fresh water for its people is more than baffling and that it can't provide 24-hour power when it's one of the top five countries with proven oil reserves, also equally puzzling. **And one will hope, as I do as a former resident of Iraq for some four years, that the land of the two rivers could come to grips with these issues, but obviously there is the problematic situation that Iran is trying to Lebanonize Iraq, just as it's trying to Lebanonize Syria, in other words to have very strong power on the streets, i.e. Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Shia militia supported by Iran in the case of Iraq and equally important representation in [Congress].** And again, has nowhere near what it does have in Lebanon, but it is a significant problem and one can hope that the Iraqis can move forward with the impressive leader that they have.

There's a book recently that came out that said the future is Asian, I generally agree with that. It is where much of the growth of the middle class has already taken place and is clearly continuing. But keep in mind that the US is an Indo-Pacific country, very substantially as well.

We may end up with divided government out of this, it does appear that the Republicans will hold on to the senate, the Democrats have the house. And again, we'll see what happens with the White House at a time when again the pandemic is back with a vengeance in the United States and is going to dampen the results in our fourth quarter, having noted as the Prime Minister did that the third quarter results were indeed quite impressive. And dealing with the pandemic at the end of the day, this is a health crisis and if you don't deal with that the economic piece cannot come back and we could end up with either a W-shaped recovery, it will not be a V-shaped, I don't think, or a backward square root where it flattens, or perhaps a worrisome one would be a K-shaped recovery in which those who are doing well continue to do well, those who are not and are in the industries that are particularly hard hit by this suffer disproportionately.

So much uncertainty frankly, at home and the next few days will tell who the President will be, which will have some significant changes in certain parts of the world, but as I noted presidents that have strong relationships in the Middle East in particular, either one.

Raghida Dergham: So, thank you very much David Petraeus. Let me just open it up for a discussion now. Let's stay with the thing that you wanted Prince Turki to answer about the Abrahams Accords and whether Saudi Arabia is going to be one of the next countries that would go with it and whether this would be a priority of a 'President Biden' as it has been for President Trump. Prince Turki, what do you want to tell us?

General David Petraeus: And perhaps if Prince Turki could just comment a bit, perhaps on Prince Bandar's interview, your Highness.

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal: Well let me start by saying that I speak for myself, I don't speak for the **government and so what comes out of me you can take it with whatever it's worth. First of all, on the so-called Abrahamic Accords, the Kingdom has made its position very clear on that, at the highest level and that is that the Kingdom is committed to the two-state solution as envisioned by the Arab Peace Initiative which was initially presented by the late king Abdullah to the Arab Summit in 2002.** And so, on that issue I don't think there should be any questions as to where I, or other personal views, may have come out either from Prince Bandar or from other spokespeople in the kingdom and I remember correctly that our Foreign Minister when he was asked about Prince Bandar's views on that issue, he said that these were Prince Bandar's views, but that the official position of the Kingdom was still the Arab Peace Initiative is the only viable solution to the problem between Israel and the Arab states. So, that is where that issue stands at the moment. One thing I think, as General Petraeus said, both Mr. Biden and Mr. Trump have views on the area and have acted on the area so they are known for them. **My concern actually about some Arab quarters particularly my Palestinian friends and brothers is if they expect that president Biden is going to be different from Mr. Trump, I think they will be sorely disappointed in that because I think Mr. Biden as president is not going to draw back from where Mr. Trump has driven America, whether it is on Jerusalem, on the Golan Heights, or on the so-called Abrahamic Accords. So that is something that they would have to take into their calculations when, should Mr. Biden become president.**

And so, it is something I think that not only of course the Palestinians, but we, also in Saudi Arabia, I think in other Arab countries will have to take into consideration that a Biden administration is emanating from an Obama administration but not necessarily bound by Obama's implementation of his of his foreign policy, particularly on issues like the JCPOA and other issues in the area. Biden has said that he will go back to the JCPOA, but that he will have conditions for going back. We still don't know what those conditions are, but he talked about Iranian missile production and also Iranian malign activity in the area. How that is going to square with his wish to go back to the JCPOA, we still have to wait and see, should he become president.

Raghida Dergham: Okay. David Petraeus you want to come in on this and I want to then go to Kevin Rudd on a couple of the things, on China and the Gulf in particular, not only China-US, but go ahead David Petraeus, you wanted to say something.

General David Petraeus: Well, I just wanted to say that, of course, the Vice President applauded the Abraham Accords. Again, I think those are universally welcomed, it's a step forward for the region, that's certainly a step forward for the countries that are engaged. I think one needs to be careful and not present this as more than it is on the other hand. **I think it's, again, it is a very substantial achievement, but let's keep in mind that none of these countries were actually at war with one another at any time, and the real issue is still there as Prince Turki pointed out.** And what I found interesting really about Prince Bandar's comments and it just indicated again a slight different view toward the Palestinians than was espoused in the past, but a good reminder that that is – was announced to be – his personal view.

I do think, as Prince Turki rightly pointed out, the difference between the two potential occupants of the White House on the evening of January 20th does have to do with Iran and the JCPOA but again, as Prince Turki very nicely explained how do you get Iran to come back to an agreement if there are new conditions on that agreement, particularly with respect to the end dates for some of the different activities in the nuclear realm and then also the malign activity in the missile programs. And I think that would be very very difficult, Iran has made it quite clear that they have distinct views on that, generally have rejected that. Now that perhaps is diplomatic early bargaining, but that is something certainly that Vice President Biden would approach differently. But again, then you're going to have to get the other countries, the P5 plus one, back with you and that will be an interesting exercise as well. Not just the Europeans, but needless to say the Chinese and the Russians and something that perhaps Kevin Rudd might want to talk about is the Chinese initiative with Iran that have really been more rumored than fact so far but could have some very important implications if indeed they provide Iran a way around the current sanctions that have been imposed by the United States.

HRH Turki Al Faisal: And there is a wonderful paper by the Asia Society, Kevin can talk more about that I think, the relationship between Iran and the United States, where it sets out five

different alternatives to how that can be. That's something I think that maybe Prime Minister Rudd can tell us about.

Raghida Dergham: Kevin Rudd, obviously both wonderful gentlemen took my question away, but let me add to it a couple of things, if you don't mind. Do you think that Iran might entertain the idea of revenging from the Abrahams Accords, particularly if Trump is re-elected? Do you think that if Biden is elected, that he will revisit the reset that he did in the region by going back, by reviving the traditional alliances with Arab gulf states and putting a distance with Iran, and with Egypt for that matter? Yes, we all have read the piece that was mentioned, it was excellent actually about what does it take for an improvement of US-Iranian relations. The China pact with Iran is extremely important, but do shed some light on that on that in light of that continued improved relations, economic relations between China and Saudi Arabia and the Emirates and the likes. Forgive me too many things, to you Kevin Rudd, we depend on you.

HE Kevin Rudd: I think it's worth reflecting for a moment where the Middle East and the Gulf fits within China's priorities. We often in various parts of the world assume that we are the center of gravity for all things that happen, I regret to inform that in Australia that has rarely been the case in reality. Our friends in the Gulf have great acclaim to that possible reality given the historical significance of hydrocarbons and a range of other factors. **But I also regret to inform you that the Gulf is not the number one priority of the Chinese either. It's a significant priority, an emerging one because of their continued hydrocarbon dependency. But domestically, the Chinese are doing a very large conversion program to renewables and also seeking to offset strategic vulnerability in hydrocarbons through the strait of Hormuz, through what they're doing with the Russian Federation and elsewhere. My overall point though is that when China looks at, let's call it, 'the wider gulf plus Iran', its strategy is along these lines: be friends to all, be enemies of none until someone finds you out and then duck for cover.** Now with both the Kingdom and with the Emiratis, and to some extent the Bahrainis, there are two sets of interests. One is prosecuting China's long-term energy security, but the second is also to partner with these significant sovereign investment funds of both the Emirates and the Saudis in co-investments around the world, because they see this as a useful way of China defraying its own investment risks. And there are a range of projects which are unfolding there.

Now, on the other side of the ledger the historical relationship between communist China and Iran is much older, much thicker in terms of its dimensions, and much more embedded in the Chinese military, because as General Petraeus would know better than I, the strategic and military collaboration between the Chinese and the Iranians began in the very early days of the Iranian revolution, in the period immediately following the Shah. And so, there is a very thick web of contacts with the Iranians coming out of Beijing to do with military supplies, military links, etc. Then you have this most recent proposal from Xi Jinping, for a grand strategy involving the Iranians as well, a new strategic partnership between Tehran and Beijing, yet to be formed in terms of its actual substance. **But I think our friends in the Gulf and the monarchies need to understand that China will continue to two-time in the Gulf, it will continue to two-time big time in the Gulf and if push comes to shove between the Gulf**

monarchies and the Iranians under a future scenario, it is an open question which way the Chinese would go. They would seek at one level to remain neutral, because they don't wish to become directly embroiled in security policy conflicts with other states against their general policy of being 'friends of all, enemies of none'. But, at the non-public level, you will find significant levels of support within China for Iran and that will continue to be the case.

Finally, to answer your question about circumventing sanctions. As China's power in the world grows, **China's predisposition to step outside American imposed regimes, which do not have their authority in the UN Security Council, will become more pronounced and that is a reflection of China's self-perception of its power and its interests to the extent to which that creates a much bigger lifeline to Iran and is currently the case.** I cannot answer that, because I'm not an Iranian expert, I don't follow the detail of this. **But, I can say that as a matter of global policy China is saying 'we'll take what the UN Security Council determines as sanctions to Beijing, but we will not necessarily accept a unilaterally imposed US regime and its various gradations that applies to the Iranians or elsewhere.'**

I'll leave my comments there.

Raghida Dergham: Yeah but about that pact, the 25-year old pact between Iran and China. Apparently, according to what the Iranians are saying, Hezbollah in Lebanon is saying, they're saying that 'you know we are turning east', that China is actively supporting both the leadership in Iran, especially the one that does foreign policy, that is the revolutionary guards, and even trying to get Lebanon to go its way. So it seems that China is active by that pact, right Kevin Rudd? Or is this what the Iranians want us to know and it's not so? Because it seems that General Petraeus doesn't think it's activated yet.

Go ahead Kevin Rudd.

HE Kevin Rudd: Well, my comment is it's at the declaratory level at this stage and we get to see it operationalized, there's a deep and rich history in the Tehran-Beijing relationship which I referred to, but China will continue to hedge its bets between the monarchies and Iran. **All I'm saying is that the interests and ties and depth of the relationships favor the Iranians over time. On the broader point Raghida, China is constantly in the business of seeking to as it were using the centrifugal force of its economy to actually draw in through gravitational pull economies and countries from around the world.** In this case, Iran is no different from Lebanon and from the Gulf monarchies and the rest, and the strategic logic is clear. **Once you become economically dependent on the China market, Chinese political pressure is then applied so that there is a higher degree of foreign policy compliance expected on the part of those countries which become as it were more economically dependent. That's not a Gulf-specific phenomenon, that's a global phenomenon.**

Raghida Dergham: David Petraeus, do you think that the US will just sit pretty if China really goes into implementing its pact with Iran and really putting a heavy foot in this region as it, you know, as Russia tried to do or is doing through Syria? Will the US, given that the US is

determined not to let China, whether it's Biden or whether it's Trump, that China become the great competitor, do you think the US will do something about it or just sit and watch it? And what do you think the US will do if China goes ahead and sells arms to Iran, although it's the Security Council said that they can, but Trump told us that they will impose huge sanctions, what would that mean? And if it is Biden, and in fact even if it is Biden who is becoming president, couldn't Donald Trump do so from now till January? Can't he go ahead and impose major sanctions on China, if China goes ahead and sells arms to Iran? David Petraeus.

General David Petraeus: Well, these are hypotheticals and I actually think are very unlikely for the reasons that Kevin laid out, and so I just don't think it's worth speculating about if this then that and all the rest of this because I don't see this as again particularly likely. **And what I actually do want to answer, if you will, is your question about whether Iran might take revenge or something like that on the states that signed the Abrahams Accords, and possibly the US. And this is where I think the strike on Qassim Soleimani back in the early part of this year was very significant, and you will remember me saying earlier Raghida, that this re-established deterrence of Iranian action against the United States for direct Iranian action and that largely has been the case.** You'll recall in the reason that needed to be re-established, I'm not arguing for that particular strike and certainly in that particular location, **I'm merely observing that I do think it sent a very very important message to Iran that there were limits to the United States patience,** having allowed the Iranians to down a 130 million dollar drone over the strait of Hormuz to interdict shipping in the Gulf, and then of course to carry out the strike against the upstate oil facility that took out five percent of the world's oil production for a period of time and then killed an American in Iraq, that again the US showed that it not only has the capability, but it has the will to use that capability when Iran crosses certain thresholds. And I think Iran is going to be very leery about action that could force a response by the United States, yet again what you have seen have been fairly limited actions, they are disturbing they are concerning by Shia militia, supported by Iran but there are even reports that some of that is being discouraged by the revolutionary guards force commander corps who the former Deputy under Qassim Soleimani, who now controls that organization. **So, I think it's unlikely that you're going to see the kinds of strikes that perhaps your question envisioned, principally because of that strike that killed the individual that controlled the Iranian revolutionary guards corps force for 22 years and in that position was the equivalent of the JSOC commander, the central command commander, the regional envoy because he actually controlled policy, as well as the paramilitary and various forces that also make him the head of the CIA equivalent, all of that. That was a very very significant action, it sent a very significant message. And I think Iran did receive that message.**

Raghida Dergham: Prince Turki, I know that you want to make comments on what you've heard but I want to add one other dimension here and it's a friend of all of us, Alistair Burt, he is asking, he's saying President Trump surprised many with the Abrahams Accords, should he win again, what chance of any surprise in relations to Iran in terms of some efforts or a rapprochement on sensible terms, or on doubling down on maximum pressure instead? And he says, it is great to see such good old friends. So please.

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal: I thank his Excellency for that question. It's no surprise President Trump announced a long time ago that he wants to negotiate with Iran and that his position of stiffer sanctions on Iran was to bring them to the table. The most recent statement I think was a couple of weeks ago that if he was elected, he is sure that he will receive a call from Iranian leaders to negotiate. So, it is no surprise or it would not be a surprise for us if he was to pursue that attempt, and let's not forget, when was it a couple of years ago I think in a meeting in France that Mr. Macron tried to bring Rouhani with Trump and it was actually the Iranians who turned it down. At that time so that is not going to be a surprise for us. I think what would be different with Mr. Trump than it was let's say with Mr. Obama is that, and going back to the two timing that Kevin talked about, is that Mr. Obama two-timed us that time by keeping his negotiations with the Iranians so secret. He wouldn't tell us anything about it, nor engage with us on what we would wish to have included in the negotiations, for his own reasons of course. **I think President Trump will not do that. I think he will be more forthcoming and open about what he would like to get from the Iranians as he has already announced. So that will be a difference from what Mr. Obama did. And so, that is something I think that should not surprise us.**

And I'll just refer back to the two-timing that that Kevin Rudd mentioned, our part of the world, I think, is very much acquainted with being two-timed by many people, going back historically to mandate times the British, the French, etc. So, it's not new to us to be two-timed. **What I what I'm afraid of for the sake of the Chinese is that, actually maybe the Chinese who the Iranians will two-time the Chinese, in the sense that they will get all the benefits and the Chinese will get nothing in return for that strategic engagement that they want to put into because let's look at the facts, Iran's economy is in a shambles. It was in shambles before the sanctions, and it's going to, I think, to continue to be in shambles because of the nature of the system itself. So, for the Chinese to try to get any economic advantage there, it's going to be I think a very tough hole for them to be able to do that, and it will require a much much bigger investment in terms of finance and so on, although the Chinese are very rich of course, but there will be a point of when they will start saying 'well what are we going to get in return?' And I think there is not much that Iran can offer, at the moment.** In the oil industry, for its oil industry to ramp up to provide China with its oil needs, the Chinese would have to invest a hell of a lot of money to bring it up to par with the least developed oil industry around the world. So, those are tremendous costs for China to undertake and one other aspect, if the Chinese can, as Kevin was saying, can draw Iran into their economic fold, I hope the Chinese will not forget to urge the Iranians that for that development to be productive, that the Iranians have to be less incendiary in their in their relationship with the area, there has to be stability in the area.

Raghida Dergham: I have so many questions coming in, and I really want to speak a bit so that you remind me if I forget, but how well is Russia doing in this region now especially with all the troubles it's having worldwide, and is it sustainable for them to keep doing well in Syria. I want to talk about Lebanon because, there's an important question coming in from Lebanon, but I have a quick question for Prince Turki from Paul Sullivan, he's the New York times columnist,

and he says could his Royal Highness comment on the sustainability of the deal with Sudan?
Can you make a quick comment on that Prince Turki?

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal: Well I'm not in the mood to talk to the New York Times, so ... but for you I will answer anything.

Raghida Dergham: All right please, go ahead.

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal: The sustainability of the deal with Sudan. What deal is he talking?

Raghida Dergham: I know that's exactly what I just asked, maybe while my team asks I don't know maybe he means the deal with the Abrahams Accords, I think probably, is he talking about that? Anyway in the meantime, there's another question while the team is finding out what's going on. 'How does HRH and General Petraeus see Hezbollah's political strength in the post-explosion scenario in Lebanon and a sponsorship by Iran, and it's an anonymous attendee?' So, could you take this Prince Turki before we move on to the other things and start with that please?

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal: I really don't think I'm much knowledgeable about Hezbollah other than to just to refer to you what I hear from my Lebanese friends, who are from all factions in Lebanon. **Their belief is that Hezbollah is like an octopus and the structure of Lebanon, that it has expanded its tentacles in the fabric of Lebanon to such an extent that even though the explosion that took place did take place, even though the demonstrations that took place in Lebanon since last year and so on did take place, that there is really nothing in the horizon, in their view, in my Lebanese friends' view, that can challenge that entrenchment of Hezbollah's influence in Lebanon. And they say that it extends from the south, all the way up to the north.** So that is their view, I'm not one who can comment on that, but I would be more interested in your view on that Raghida, perhaps maybe not at this session, maybe at another time.

Raghida Dergham: Alright, thank you very much, you'll read it always Prince Turki, as you know, it's in Arabic in Annahar Al Arabi, it's in the English in the National, but I don't shy away from saying my view. However, please very quickly General Petraeus, David Petraeus. Very quickly on Lebanon question at Hezbollah, can you just address it really quickly?

General David Petraeus: Well I would merely say, Bil Ta'kid, to what the Prince Turki said, you know, **Hezbollah is in difficult times because the country is in horrifically difficult times, but Hezbollah has enormous street power, political strength and even economic strength. And the idea that these traumatic events, and they have been just beyond belief in terms of again how horrific they have been, but the idea that they could finally break the grip of again these different entrenched interests, Hezbollah being perhaps the biggest of them with a veto proof block in the parliament, in most alignments, the idea that would break that I think was perhaps more than a bit overly optimistic, and tragically we're going to see a reversion to a**

degree of politics as usual, sadly because obviously it's going to require much more than that to get the country back on a firm footing given the collapse of the currency and the economy.

Raghida Dergham: Yeah sad as it is very sad. Kevin Rudd I know you love this country as well. I want to ask you to stop at this answer only. Would you kindly talk to us a little bit about how do you see Turkey doing in Syria and beyond, we talked about the United States, about Israel, about the Arab states, about China, about the United States, but Turkey seems to the view of some creating havoc in some places, and in the view of others, that Reçep Tayyip Erdogan is getting Turkey in trouble himself. So, can you shed some light on that very quickly and then I'm going to go to each one of you for your two minutes concluding remarks, because we have, what is it, eight minutes left until the end of this exciting conversation. Kevin Rudd.

HE Kevin Rudd: I think with President Erdogan's Turkey, there are some parallels with some of the domestic critique that he receives to what we see in policy intellectual circles in Tehran about Iranian overreach. And that is sure you've got [Kurds?], you've got the revolutionary guard and their links with the administration in Tehran, but given the state of the Iranian economy, there is a continued internal critique almost politics to one side about the extent of the economic overreach and the burden on the Iranian economy through, as Prince Turki described, as the octopus. **Why do I say that in answer to a question about Turkey? Because the domestic critique of Erdogan's overreach is significant amongst Turkish intellectuals against the Turkish financial community, against leaders of the corporate world in Turkey, not to mention that those military commanders who haven't been purged who survived the aftermath of the coup attempt a couple of years ago. And so, there is a growing domestic constituency of complaint and concern and critique, if you look at the semi-reliable opinion poll data in Turkey, Erdogan since he became a leader of his country and before he was elevated or elevated himself to the presidency, he's seen a significant collapse in public support, and so therefore my overall argument is before you answer the foreign policy question about the impact of Turkey's actions in various countries in the world, from Libya through to the Gulf, and through elsewhere and not to mention what's going on in Kurdistan itself, and in Syria most prominently, is that for the analytical community to focus on – as we should all focus on – the domestic circumstances upon which all this is predicated. And I think as I look at what's happening in Ankara and Istanbul, it is more precarious than we think.**

Raghida Dergham: Interesting, amazing. So, you know what I'm going to stay with you Kevin Rudd for the last minute so that you could give me your minute and a half in order to leave us with what you want us to think about. Then I will go in reverse, I'll go then to David Petraeus and then I will finish up with Prince Turki, with everybody's permission because we have what is it now, six minutes left.

Kevin Rudd, go for it. What should we be thinking about, and if you care to tell us who do you think is winning the elections in the United States, go for it.

HE Kevin Rudd: Well, I think it's completely unproductive for an Australian barbarian to comment on American domestic politics, I never believe in interfering in the internal affairs of another country.

Raghida Dergham: I don't want to get you in trouble, I'm trying you know, I'm flirting.

HE Kevin Rudd: Mainly because none of us know, so there's no point speculating, it lies in the hands of a whole bunch of competent electoral authorities in three critical battleground states, at the moment and we should all offer a quiet prayer for their effective professional work in the next critical couple of days ahead. So, my concluding comment is about China. One, as David said before the V-shaped economic recovery, the caveat I attached to it though is a private sector which is still to recover, not simply because the export sector has not recovered, but because there is a continued lack of confidence on the part of domestic Chinese private entrepreneurs, in terms of China's domestic economic policy settings where the communist party is now exercising a greater role and greater power over the economy than in the pre-Xi Jinping period. That's the first point.

The second is Chinese politics is not a bed of roses either. There are difficulties we've just had the fifth planetary of the 19th century committee it's a command performance, it's like a night at the opera it all looks good. **But underneath it all there are significant tensions emerging in the leadership around one question and that is as Xi Jinping seeks to secure reappointment at the 20th party congress in 2022 that effectively is setting him up to be leader for life, and this plan through to 2035 over the next three five-year plans is a Xi Jinping plan which would take him through to the tender age of 82.** So, he could then begin a career in American politics I suppose on the age factor alone, but the bottom line is there is a lot of internal opposition to this.

Finally, the foreign policy establishment in China is divided, and they are divided between traditional diplomats who do not believe in overreach and the new [warfare] diplomatic cadre who pursuing their own relationship with the Xi Jinping leadership have been out there much more aggressively asserting China's position in the last month and a half they've been put back in their cage, and we'll see what happens once the US presidential dust is settled.

Raghida Dergham: Kevin Rudd, thank you so very much for being with us, stay with us do not leave and I just have to give you a warning everyone. We have an electricity loss, we lose electricity at the top of the hour that's why I rush you so if we do lose it stay put, don't go anywhere that means I will freeze a little bit then I would be unfrozen. Let me have a minute and a half from you David Petraeus, please.

General David Petraeus: Sure, yeah I was asked the other day what's the biggest geopolitical development and my response was that **geopolitics are back, and they really have to be taken into account in a way that we really did not. There was a period of time where we just didn't pay as much attention to that, but we are in an era of renewed great power rivalries and the world right now is facing enormous global challenges, these aren't just domestic. It is a global**

pandemic, it is a global economic shutdown or slowdown, there are global geopolitical struggles that are ongoing and there's a global climate crisis that manifests itself in ever more dramatic ways each year with fires now in Australia, as well as the US west, severe weather events rising temperatures that are causing desertification which are causing people to move and all the rest of this. And my hope frankly, is that global leaders can recognize global problems and come together because that's the only way to resolve them especially when it comes to the pandemic, none of us is safe unless all of us are safe. And with that I'm afraid I do have to drop off because I have to go to something exactly at 11. So, my power is going to fail right now Raghida.

Raghida Dergham: Thank you so much.

General David Petraeus: A pleasure, Prince Turki, can you give us your minute and a half please. And again, if we lose electricity just don't go yet please. Please Prince Turki, in conclusion.

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal: At the end of this month there's going to be the G20 Summit, it's going to be held virtually in the Kingdom and of course the issue there is not the fact that it is being held virtually, but the fact that it is being held at all under the circumstances of corona and the King's direction of that has been to hold, how can I put it, an impromptu Summit in the middle of the year, several months ago to set the records rate first of all on having it on the ground and also to set the agenda for the Summit in November I think 25th or thereabouts, it's going to happen. And all the things that General Petraeus talked about, whether it is climate change or other issues are at the top of the priorities of that Summit, including corona. And the Kingdom of course has been playing a very important role in that, not just in providing support for all the efforts to challenge this virus that has attacked us, but also to provide relief to the poorer countries whether it is on issues of debt relief by convincing the leadership of the G20 to do that even though it is still not as much as it should be, but still there is the intention to have some relief for the for the poor countries and also getting the G20 to agree to the energy policy that the Kingdom advised the G20 to adopt which is the so-called circular carbon economy, which would make use of all of the energy sources, including the hydro-carbon energy sources, and not simply to discard them by the way in favor of very expensive and very yet to be tested alternative sources. So, these are issues I think that are going to be at the top of the agenda and in the G20, along with course with the other issues of world peace economy whether it is V-shaped, whether it is square-shaped or whatever you want to call it, circular all of these things are going to be there and the Kingdom is going to be proposing very important issues there.

Raghida Dergham: I'm sure of that. Thank you very much. You know, what can I tell you, the time has caught up with me. It has been amazing. **His Royal Highness Prince Turki Al Faisal**, co-Chair of Beirut Institute Summit in Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Board of King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, thank you so very much. **His Excellency Kevin Rudd**, former Prime Minister of Australia, currently President of Asia Society Policy Institute, and CEO also. Congratulations on the Asia Society new roles and we miss you in New York, I will see you in New York, I pray, we all miss New York. Thank you so much for making the effort, Australia

time, I owe you, I owe you big time. And we had with us also, of course, **General David Petraeus** and he served as the fourth Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, he was also the commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Iraq and the Commander of the United States Central Command. He is now partner in KKR, and Chairman of the KKR Global Institute.

Next week, we will have with us, here is the announcement for next week, we have **His Royal Highness Prince Hassan bin Talal**, President and Founder of the Arab Thought Forum. He has initiated, founded and is actively involved in a number of Jordanian and international institutes and committees. HRH was recently appointed Honorary Chair of the World Refugee and Migration Council together with former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. We have with us **HE Boris Ruge**, Ambassador & Vice-Chairman of Munich Security Conference, he was Deputy Chief of Mission of the German Embassy in Washington; former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia; former Director Middle East/North Africa, German Foreign Office. **Mr. Paul A. Brinkley** and he is the Co-Founder and Managing Director of Brinkley Greenwalt LLC, Former Deputy US Undersecretary of Defense (2004 to 2011), Co-Founder and former President and CEO of NAWAH (North America Western Asia Holdings). And finally, the fourth guest would be **Mr. Fyodor Lukyanov**, Research Director of the Valdai Discussion Club that you attended for the wonderful event the other day, Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, and Editor-in-Chief of the Russia in Global Affairs journal.

You honor me, I'm grateful to you, for your support, for your friendship. May God bless you, and I thank you for everything, my dear friends. Goodbye for now.