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**From:** Mike Fuchs [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 8, 2012 8:54 AM  
**To:** H  
**Cc:** Jake Sullivan  
**Subject:** Summary of new book on the administration's foreign policy

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Madam Secretary -

Jake asked me to send you a quick summary of the recent Brookings book, "Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy" by Martin Indyk, Ken Lieberthal, and Mike O'Hanlon. The book runs very quickly through the President's foreign policy agenda, focusing in particular on: China, Iraq, Afghanistan, CT, Middle East Peace, the Arab Awakening, DPRK, Iran, and energy and climate (the "soft security agenda" as they put it). The book looks not only at the policies, but also President Obama's personal approaches to these issues, and thus the book spends very little time on any other administration official (you feature more prominently than any other - Donilon is only mentioned about four times, and Gates about a dozen, most of which are in reference to Afghanistan and Iraq). Most of the narrative is spent recounting the events of the last few years, rather than trying to analyze the inner workings of the administration.

Below is a quick synopsis of how the book portrays your role in various issues:

Overall: The introduction states that "in the first year at least, Clinton showed a serious desire to prevent any daylight from showing between herself and the president." But, it goes on to say, "By about the second year, with her popularity soaring and Obama's plummeting, the balance of dependency shifted as talk of putting her on the ticket for Obama's reelection bid emerged. Nevertheless, on the one occasion that she inadvertently showed independence - over whether Egypt's Hosni Mubarak should stay or go - the White House backgrounders pounced with alacrity, and she took care not to let it happen again, expressing her frustration instead by making clear that she intended to resign her post at the end of Obama's first term. However, as Obama entered his fourth year, his necessary preoccupation with reelection left Clinton with greater room to take the lead in foreign affairs, staking out a stronger position than Obama had expressed on democratic transitions in the Arab world and nurturing the effort to counter China in Asia."

China:

- South China Sea - The book spends a couple pages describing the discussion of the South China Sea at ARF in 2010, including the specific points you made in your remarks, and makes clear that the SCS became a contentious issue in the relationship.
- The Pivot - The book briefly describes the turn towards a "tougher stance toward China" by 2011, which it chalks up to a variety of potential factors, including the departure of Bader and Steinberg, which supposedly allowed State and DoD to push the tougher stance.

Iraq: There is a brief mention of a 2009 Oval Office meeting when you and Secretary Gates were discussing the complexity of dealing with Iraq (the decreasing military role and the increasing role of State), trying to figure out whether it made most sense for State or DoD to take the lead on the issue, and in the end the President tasked Biden with taking the lead.

Middle East Peace:

- Your role in this issue is mentioned a number of times, but most mentions are brief as the authors recount the events of the last few years. The "unprecedented" line about settlements is singled out, but portrayed as follows: "On the face of it, this settlements moratorium was unprecedented - a Likud-led government had been persuaded to agree to freeze all residential building in the West Bank settlements for ten months. But when Secretary of State Clinton said as much in

a press conference in Kuwait welcoming the decision, she was met with derision across the Arab world, particularly among Palestinians in the West Bank. They focused on the exceptions rather than the rule."

- In discussing the end of attempts to get direct negotiations going, the authors outline your remarks to the Saban Forum in December 2010, stating "This time Obama left it to his secretary of state to announce the pivot... In other words, Obama was finally abandoning both the effort to achieve a settlements freeze and the effort to engage in direct negotiations."

Arab awakenings:

- Egypt - The chapter on the Arab awakenings mentions your comment that "the Egyptian government is stable" as an example of how no one understood how profound the changes in the region would be.
- Bahrain - Your speech in Doha - including a specific mention of the "sinking into the sand" line - is included in the part on Bahrain, and is portrayed as a message to Gulf leaders, rather than to the entire region.
- Syria - In the section on Syria, the authors spend a couple paragraphs describing your "serious reservations about allowing a gap to open up between administration rhetoric and the results it could hope to deliver." The authors also portray your statement on August 18th, 2011 that "it's time for Assad to get out of the way" as the declaration of this new administration policy.

"The Soft Security Agenda": The authors quote at length from the QDDR as a primary example of the "significance of the nontraditional security agenda in Obama's eyes."

One final note about the book in general: The vast majority of the narrative is dedicated to relatively quick and to the point descriptions of the events, rather than a deep analysis of any of the issues in particular. The book is a quick look at the landscape of major issues the administration has had to deal with, but is little more than 286 pages worth of news articles and op-eds and stitched together.

Best,  
Mike