THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY ROUNDTABLES

The Nixon Administration
National Security Council

December 8, 1998

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The Oral History Roundtables

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INTRODUCTION

The Nixon administration brought far-reaching changes to the National Security Council. Building on a strong mandate from (and a strong policy relationship with) the President, National Security Assistant Henry A. Kissinger achieved operational policy dominance greater than any predecessor or successor. His role and methods generated enormous controversy. They were also tied to substantial policy achievements: an opening to China, arms control agreements with the Soviet Union, and eventually an historic, albeit flawed, Vietnam peace accord.

One means of gaining insight into how the Nixon NSC actually worked is to ask those who were there. This was the purpose of the Nixon NSC Oral History Roundtable, conducted on December 8, 1998, at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. Thirty years almost to the day after Kissinger and other Nixon transition planners developed a blueprint for a new system, we brought together a group of ten veteran practitioners and observers of American foreign policy who were directly involved in the Nixon process to share their recollections with us. The participants drew on their experiences as advisers in the Nixon transition; as members of President Nixon's NSC staff; and as officials who dealt with the Nixon NSC from important vantage points in other agencies. For over three hours, they spoke informally about how and why the new system was established, how it operated, and how it evolved over time. The discussion confirmed much that is already in the public domain, but it also brought to light new facts and insights. We hope students of the Nixon administration and of the modern foreign policy process and its institutions will find it useful.

Participants in the Roundtable were provided an agenda, appearing here as Appendix A, and a set of documents from the Nixon Presidential Materials in the National Archives, which are listed in Appendix B. These served as the jumping-off point for the discussion. Once it began, however, the participants energetically pursued their own thoughts about what aspects of their experiences were most significant, and the moderators encouraged them to do so. Therefore, the reader will find a general congruence between most of the themes identified in the agenda and the subjects dissected at the Roundtable, along with intermittent references to specific agenda items and documents, but not answers to each and every question posed in advance by the moderators.

The publication of the record of the proceedings represents the first fruit of a broader project, sponsored by the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland and the Brookings Institution, to research and analyze the history of the NSC and its role in U.S. foreign policymaking. We aim to publish a volume on the subject next year. We also expect to conduct and publish subsequent roundtables: two, concerning the NSC and international economic policy, and the NSC during the Bush administration, have already taken place.

We are grateful to the participants for their attendance and for their thoughtful and open discussion. We would also like to thank our sponsors; Holly Plank and Karla Nieting, who helped organize the Nixon Roundtable, and above all Josh Pollack, who worked assiduously with us and with the participants to bring this edited version of the Roundtable to publication. Responsibility for any errors in the transcript is ours.

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PARTICIPANTS

DANIEL DAVIDSON, member of the U.S. delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1968 and member of the NSC staff in 1969. He currently practices law at Spiegel & McDiarmid.

GEN. ANDREW GOODPASTER, transition adviser to President-elect Nixon. As Staff Secretary to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, General Goodpaster was responsible for supporting the President's day-to-day engagement in national security issues. General Goodpaster later served as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. He currently serves as Chairman of the George C. Marshall Foundation and Senior Fellow and Chairman Emeritus of the Eisenhower Institute.

MICHAEL GUHIN, NSC staff member from 1969 to 1974, 1976 and 1981 to 1983. Guhin also served in senior positions in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the Department of State. He presently serves as U.S. Fissile Material Negotiator and Cutoff Coordinator at the Department of State.

WILFRID KOHL, national security scholar, NSC staff member for European policy from 1970 to 1971, and analyst of the Nixon national security process. He is currently Research Professor of International Relations at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University.

SAMUEL LEWIS, career Foreign Service Officer, NSC staff aide for Latin America from 1968 to 1969, and official in charge of policy planning for Latin America at the Department of State thereafter. Lewis later served as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, Ambassador to Israel, President of the U.S. Institute of Peace, and Director of Policy Planning at the Department of State.

WINSTON LORD, member of the NSC staff from 1969 to 1973, and special assistant to Dr. Kissinger on China policy from 1970 to 1973. Lord later served as Director of Policy Planning at the Department of State, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, Ambassador to China and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs.

RICHARD MOOSE, Staff Secretary of the NSC from January to August 1969 and author of *The President and the Management of National Security.* Moose later served as a senior staff member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Managing Director of Shearson Lehman Brothers, and Undersecretary of State for Management. He is currently President of the Institute for Public Research.

PHILIP ODEEN, member of the NSC staff from 1971 to 1973 specializing in defense issues and author of *National Security Policy Organization in Perspective.* He currently serves as Executive Vice President of TRW.

RICHARD SOLOMON, East Asia specialist who served on the NSC staff from 1971 to 1976. Solomon later served as Director of the Political Science Department at the RAND Corporation, Director of Policy Planning at the Department of State, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs, and Ambassador to the Philippines. He is currently President of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

HELMUT SONNENFELDT, State Department official and longtime Kissinger associate who served as senior NSC aide on Soviet affairs from 1969 to 1974. Sonnenfeldt subsequently held the position of Counselor at the Department of State. Since leaving the Department of State, he has engaged in consulting, writing, and lecturing on international issues.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE ROUNDTABLE

DESTLER: Let me officially welcome all of you to what is a research experiment. We're calling it an oral history roundtable. We're bringing together for informal, on-the-record discussion individuals who were involved in the National Security Council at different points in time, and we've started with one of the most interesting and important periods in the evolution of the council, the Nixon administration.

We plan to have a series of these, and we're delighted to have this group here. And since most of the participants around the table were, to use the words of another foreign policy player, present at the creation of the Nixon NSC, and because Andy Goodpaster has kindly joined us and will not be able to stay for the full proceedings, we thought it would be a good idea to start with a discussion of that.

As explained in our letter of invitation, we are recording the proceedings. It is our hope to publish the roundtable as a resource for anyone interested in the subject. We would like you to know that participants will have the opportunity to edit their comments for style and clarity.

This roundtable is part of a larger project, cosponsored by the University of Maryland's Center for International and Security Studies, which I lead, and with which Ivo is associated, and the Brookings Institution, where Ivo is currently a visiting fellow, and where we hope to publish a book on the National Security Council in the fall of the year 2000.

Let me now pass the microphone, symbolically, to my colleague Ivo, who will set the stage very briefly about the origins of the Nixon NSC. Then we'll ask for comments, led by General Goodpaster.

DAALDER: I think what we would have done, had Mort Halperin[1] not been appointed Director of Policy Planning, and therefore traveled with Secretary Albright to Europe, would be to turn to Mort in order to ask him to recount what he has written in an unpublished paper for the Murphy Commission back in 1974 on the origins of the system, and its operation in the first six to nine months.

But in lieu of Halperin, let me summarize what Halperin claimed he was trying to do, and what his role in it was. And that's basically the basis for a discussion. He says that he, together with Eagleburger,[2] was asked by Kissinger to develop the NSC system drawing on discussions with and papers written by General Goodpaster, some of which are in the package

[1] Morton Halperin, formerly Kissinger's colleague at Harvard, was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Johnson administration, a member of the Nixon transition team, and on Nixon NSC staff until September 1969.

[2] Lawrence Eagleburger, a former foreign service officer and NSC staff member, was a Special Assistant Undersecretary of State in the Johnson administration and a member of the Nixon transition team.

that all of you have received. And that there were basically two purposes to the system that was being drawn up by Halperin and Eagleburger.

One was to ensure Presidential control of foreign policy. For a variety of reasons that had to do with the President-elect's own views of the State Department and his desire to control policy, the system was set up and designed to ensure there would be control.

Secondly, as a good student of bureaucratic politics, Halperin wanted to set up a system that provided the President with real policy analysis, real options and, therefore, the possibility for real choices on the future direction of policy: hence, an NSC-driven system of studies and decision memoranda as well as an NSC-driven set of meetings.

In Halperin's view, this worked wonderfully until just about when Halperin left, or just a little bit before that, but deteriorated ever since. But his argument is that a system set up with that in mind worked in sort of the first nine to perhaps 12 months, through '69, but then fell apart for a variety of reasons, which we will look into a little later. But that's the Halperin version of what happened in a nutshell. And perhaps that can provide some basis to at least comment and move on. And I think with General Goodpaster here, who had a hand in these early days in the Pierre Hotel in New York on what was going on, and the discussions with the State Department in particular as well, it might be good for you, General, to lead off.

Now, your role came out of your prior relationship with the President-elect; is that not right?

GOODPASTER: That's right.

Let me start from that point. I was serving out in Vietnam at the time as the deputy commander. And I got word through Bryce Harlow that President-elect Nixon would like me to come back and assist in the development of the national security system that he would use during his presidency. And I'd just add a personal note. I'd asked for assurances from Bryce that this would be something very temporary, that I had served my time outside of the military, and I'd be happy to do this, but I would like to come back to my military assignment. And he assured me that that would be acceptable to President-elect Nixon.

And so we started. Henry asked me if I would prepare a memorandum on the Eisenhower system as I saw it, and I did, recognizing that there was a particular difficulty here. And that is that the real Eisenhower process had not been fully understood in a public way. And so the idea here was to lay out what really did go on, which I might say is reflected in the documents that have become available since, which involve considerably more than was in the public view.

I think I might usefully contrast the thinking of Eisenhower and the thinking of Nixon on the role of the President. Eisenhower's idea was to establish a fabric of policy that would reflect the security interests of the United States, which he regarded as one of the foremost duties of the government. In other words, the protection of the people, and a foremost duty

of the President. He would put very high stress on stability and security because, in his terms, he thought that that's what's best for America.

He would recognize that policies would be subject to evolution, but the idea there was, if you had that fabric of policy, then you could delegate the actual operations to carry it out and the conduct of ongoing affairs. His desire was to do that to the maximum possible extent. On matters of high importance, his approval would be obtained through close association with the Secretary of State in particular. Also, there would be decision conferences in his office as major issues came up because the plans prepared in advance will never exactly fit the circumstances that come up. He indeed would frequently remind all of us of this, with a quote, as he said, from Von Moltke. I've never tried to trace it down, but it was "Plans are nothing, but planning is everything." The preparatory work, the analytical work, bringing together all of the relevant facts, fit his comment that he made often then and later that organization cannot make a genius out of a dunce, but it can assure that he is well informed when he makes his decisions, and it helps to avoid unwise decisions.

So that was his general approach. I found that it was clear with President-elect Nixon that he had a somewhat different role in mind for the President. He wanted to be supported by this thorough analysis, and he put a real value on the way that had been done during the Eisenhower time, but he personally intended to take an active part in major initiatives that could reshape the relationships – major relationships in the world – particularly the relationships among the great powers. And to do that, that would be a more active role for him, and a somewhat different role for the NSC and its supporting structure.

He and, I guess, I and others had observed that the so-called "SIG" and "IRGs" of the preceding administration, the Senior Interdepartmental Group, as I recall, and the Interdepartmental Regional Groups, had not been able to dig into issues in the way he had in mind. I mention that because this lies behind what really turned out to be a confrontation between our small group and the representatives of the State Department, and the Secretary-to-be of the State Department.

DESTLER: Your small group consisted of whom, in your memory?

GOODPASTER: In particular, at that time, Henry Kissinger and myself, and I think he was working closely with Mort Halperin by that time. I know that [Kissinger deputy] Al Haig came in a little later, because Kissinger asked me to call Haig, who was then serving at West Point, and have him made available, which I did.

The confrontation with State really was over control of the agenda and the exercise of chairmanship of the principal committees that would be established. Mr. Nixon was never a man who welcomed open controversy. He wanted us to try to resolve it. We tried to resolve it. We were unable, finally, to resolve it. I recall meeting with [Undersecretary of State] Elliot Richardson and Ambassador Alex Johnson, and it was quite evident that this meant a great deal to the State Department. But it would not be consistent with what President-elect

Nixon had in mind. And finally, it was resolved by his decision, overruling the position of the State Department.

The initial paper, which Henry had put together with outside assistance – I don't know how much and from whom – and with some reference to the material that I had given him, was, I thought, well-designed in structure and procedure – that is, in function – and sensible in staffing, and identified the major policy issues that were coming up quite well.

As I reflect on it now, perhaps there was not enough explicit attention given – and this is a bias of mine and I'll confess to it in advance – to defining our interests and our priorities, organizing the interests by priorities, then designing policies and strategies applied within the framework of those interests and priorities to the real world issues that we would be likely to be facing, and finally looking to see how to build public and congressional understanding and support. I think that both Henry and Mr. Nixon had in mind to be somewhat secretive about much that they planned to do.

DESTLER: Shocking.

GOODPASTER: I believe that those are the principal points that I would make in terms of the initial activity. And I'll comment on your agenda item 1(a): "to assure Presidential control of foreign policy." That doesn't quite get it, to my mind. It isn't Presidential control. He was going to *do* foreign policy. And he was going to direct it, he was going to engage himself in it. He had clearly in mind major initiatives, and they would be focused on the major players, the great powers.

DESTLER: So it's really Presidential *conduct* of foreign policy?

GOODPASTER: Yes, but with the support of the State Department conducting the normal pattern of diplomatic and other foreign policy activity. That's what he had in mind.

MOOSE: Would you forgive me? Were you trying to draw a keen distinction between Presidential control and Presidential execution?

GOODPASTER: I was.

MOOSE: You were. Yes.

GOODPASTER: Eisenhower intended to maintain control through laying down the policies, main guiding policies, such as the ones generated through the Solarium exercise,[3] and then allowing that to evolve as the years went on. Incidentally, I would just make an observation which might be of interest to you, and that is after the first few years, the life tends to go out of the policy formulation process. You've got the fabric pretty well established, and the lines

[3] An NSC-managed policy-review exercise in summer 1953, leading to the Eisenhower administration's acceptance of a "containment" policy.

are set for that administration. And they tend to harden, the exception being Nixon, in that he intended to continue to be very active himself.

And just one final comment. A few years later, when I came back on my visits after I began to serve as SACEUR, on one occasion I came back, and after getting through the Palace Guard by asking them to let him know that I'd been back and they were unable to find a time for him to see me, I got a call from him asking me to come right over, and we talked about NATO. And then, as I was ready to leave, with his staff showing signs of anxiety over his schedule, he said, "No, sit down, I want to tell you what I have in mind to do in the Middle East." And he took 20 to 30 minutes to lay out the sequence and what to do in case of the various responses at each stage. He really showed, I would say, extraordinary brilliance in thinking through something that Machiavelli could have been very envious of.

Well, that's one man's view, and others will see it differently, and they're entitled to that.

DESTLER: We welcome others' comments. But first let me highlight one of the main things that the State Department objected to, I understand – and it's unfortunate that we lost Elliot Richardson at the last minute in this, because he would have been a very good interlocutor. This was the structure of the system, as designed in the memo that was at the top of your pile of documents, and as implemented. Essentially, the studies were to be run at the assistant-secretary level of the State Department on an interagency basis, and then went directly to Kissinger's Review Group. The assistant secretaries were, in effect, reporting to the NSC, and that was one central issue that the State Department complained about. Is that consistent with your memory, Andy, or others? Others, please feel free.

GOODPASTER: I'll defer to others as to how it was actually set up, but the pattern we had in mind was that the agenda would be controlled out of the White House.

DESTLER: Right.

GOODPASTER: And as to whether the White House would chair all of these, I really don't recall.

DESTLER: I don't think he was going to chair. I don't think he was supposed to chair them.

Sam?

LEWIS: The idea was, they were supposed to be tasked out of the NSC; the assistant secretary from the regional bureau usually would chair the interagency meeting, and then the product of the NSSM would go back to the NSC. And the big argument was about, where is the Secretary of State in this particular chain of authority? And that was the issue. And Henry won, as I recall. The Secretary of State got a copy, but it was actually a report to the NSC, not to the Secretary of State. Whereas, in the Johnson administration – I was a holdover at the NSC between the two briefly – it was the other way around. The SIG was a

State-chaired committee, and the Undersecretaries' Committee was a State-chaired committee. The assistant secretaries were clearly reporting to the Secretary of State, and then to the President, when they did similar kinds of studies.

DAALDER: And where did the studies originate from, the requests for studies? Also from State?

LEWIS: The requests for studies in the Johnson administration also came out of the NSC, but they were pretty brief. They were usually two or three sentences, unlike Henry's taskings, which were quite long and elaborate.

DESTLER: Phil? Phil Odeen.

ODEEN: I joined the NSC staff about two and a half years after Kissinger started, so I may have a bit different perspective. It was clear when I was there that we, as staff, absolutely had to drive and dominate the whole committee structure. There was no question about it. I chaired, I think, three or four different committees, the Verification Panel, Defense Program Review Committee [DPRC], and a couple of others I've forgotten now. But I chaired several of them. And not only did I chair them, we drove the agenda.

As I believe Sam mentioned, we had these long, very detailed study directives that we wrote. We were expected very much to drive the agenda, to make sure that our options and our alternatives were considered. I don't mean to say we wouldn't consider others, but we were not just coordinating. We were responsible for making sure the studies got done, and got done right, and by the right people. Our role was to ensure that the right people looked at a broad set of issues, and addressed the issues that Henry wanted addressed. There was not much question who was in charge. And the State Department people bridled under that, as you can imagine. Defense less so, as I recall, but State's role, of course, was much diminished in that because we chaired everything. I wasn't involved in the regional stuff very much, but even there I think that was all chaired by Hal Saunders, or Hal Sonnenfeldt, or whoever the appropriate regional groups were.

GOODPASTER: In the interest of full disclosure, let me add a point or two here. And that is, going back into the Johnson administration, and the Kennedy administration – I served as the Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCS], and then as the Director of the Joint Staff for a time – there was a difficulty in having a policy context for military structure, military operations, military undertakings, and so on. And it was our hope, and I know it was General Taylor's[4] hope, that the SIG and IRG process would begin to remedy that.

Well, I can tell you – and this was largely because of the forcefulness of the major personalities involved – the State Department simply could not "wheel" or dominate the process sufficiently to make things happen, in our view. That is the view that I held, and it

[4] General Maxwell Taylor, military adviser to President Kennedy.

entered into the pattern that we developed at that time for President-elect Nixon. Again, that's just my view.

That's an interesting point about where does the Secretary come in on this one. I'll go back to the Eisenhower time. The Planning Board met, and very largely Bobby Cutler and Gordon Gray[5] served as honest brokers, while the Assistant Secretaries, the people at the assistant-secretary level, [Director of Policy Planning] Bob Bowie in particular, and representatives from Defense and from the Joint Chiefs of Staff really worked the thing out, put it together. They were under continuing instructions from Eisenhower to give it their best thought, and not be dominated by departmental considerations – and that, I would say, and a nickel would get you a cup of coffee.

There was something to it, but Secretary [John Foster] Dulles stayed in very close touch with Bob Bowie, and vice versa, I might say, so that the work that was done in that Planning Board really very strongly reflected the views of the State Department.

DESTLER: Win Lord.

LORD: Several comments on some issues that have come up. First, my own background. I came to the NSC staff from the Pentagon with Mort Halperin in February 1969, and I served in the Executive Office Building both as policy planning staff, and also to help on the NSC system with Halperin. So I was not there in the early Pierre Hotel days, but some comments based on what I picked up then and have read and thought about since.

First, on the taskings, there was a whole flood of NSSMs sent out asking for studies right at the very beginning of the administration, and that was for two reasons. One was a genuine search for intellectual depth, analysis and preparation of options for policy by the various agencies. The other reason was to put so much work on the bureaucracy and keep them so busy that the President and Kissinger could get on with running American foreign policy.

Second, just to add a couple of points that have already been made, the key factor here was that so many of the committees were chaired by Kissinger or his assistants, not only the ones that Phil Odeen mentioned, but also the Washington Special Actions Group [WSAG] and many others. The main high-level committee that the State Department chaired was the Undersecretaries' Committee, which was chaired by the Deputy Secretary, and my impression was that that was primarily for implementing policy, not devising or formulating it. So a lot of attention, I suspect, in the early days, was on who is chairing these committees, because we all know in the government whoever chairs the committees helps to run the show. There was the additional suspicion in the State Department, not unjustified, that whenever there were meetings at various levels of the system, the NSC staff would always slap its own views on top, and Kissinger would slap on his own views as it went to the President.

[5] President Eisenhower's first and last Assistants to the President for National Security Affairs, respectively.

Third, my impression is that in this system Kissinger and Nixon got much better control of the State Department than they did the Defense Department. Phil might want to comment on this. But [Secretary of Defense] Mel Laird was a more wily bureaucratic operator. And the one substantive issue that I don't think, despite Phil's and his predecessor's best attempts, that the NSC got on top of, was the Defense budget. You can argue that it shouldn't anyway. But it seemed to me that Laird was always – Kissinger said this – a better guerrilla fighter than the State Department.

Number four – and now this gets into the issues of control and secrecy, which you raised at the outset and, for that matter, priorities, I might add – when all these NSSMs were issued, there was to a certain degree priorities, because views were sought on Vietnam and the Middle East, and Europe, and so on. But my understanding of the three real priorities of the President – and it goes directly to control and secrecy – were Vietnam, Russia, and for its own sake and because of those first two, China. All three lent themselves to secrecy and tight control. You were dealing with Communist, autocratic governments that didn't have to worry about public opinion or parliaments, and could make decisions among a small group. You were dealing with very sensitive issues where the President and Kissinger didn't want a lot of people in on it and a lot of leaks, and so on. And it's a lot easier to deal with these issues running it out of the White House, and the NSC staff, and back channels, and secrecy, and cutting out the State Department, than it would be dealing with NATO, Europe, or even the Middle East and some of the others.

And understandably, Nixon felt that his overwhelming priorities were to get on with other business. So indeed, Vietnam and what the hell we do about it was the first NSSM, NSSM Number 1 [Jan. 21, 1969]. Russia, because of nuclear war and all the other reasons I need not elaborate, was also crucial. And on February 1st, 1969, the week after the inauguration, Nixon sent a memo to Kissinger saying, "How do we establish relations with China?" So concerning control and secrecy, I think with most of their priorities they had substantive reasons for conducting them with secrecy and control.

One final comment on the personalities. Nixon made the specific senior appointments he made because he wanted to run policy out of the White House, conduct it, control it, whatever your word is, and to do that, he wanted a strong conceptual mind. I don't know how he could have guessed that Kissinger would be such a good bureaucratic operator, because he was coming from academia, but he wanted that as well.

GOODPASTER: Faculties don't do that?

LORD: No, not usually, no. Both Kissinger and Brzezinski[6] were pretty good at it coming in from the outside world. Well, I know academia has bureaucratic rivalry and it's very bloody because the stakes are so low. But above all, Nixon wanted conceptual strength in the White House, and also a very strong staff, and his NSC team, next to Policy Planning in the mid-'70s, is the strongest staff I ever saw.

[6] Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser to President Carter.

But in [William] Rogers, he saw a lawyer and a loyal friend who would keep the liberal, suspicious, turgid, slow-moving State Department under control with secondary issues while he and Kissinger got on with these three priorities.

LEWIS: There's another personality factor that's involved here, I think, peculiar to our appointment process. When the Johnson administration leaves, all of the political appointees leave. So the State Department, for six, eight months, doesn't have any Presidential appointees in the assistant-secretary level jobs, which are really the keys for competing for intellectual influence. And you've got all holdovers, career people, "acting" holdovers, whom Nixon and Kissinger both have a fairly low regard for, to say the least.

Meanwhile, Henry fills quickly, of course, the NSC staff, with a lot of bright and very loyal people. So he's in a position to carry out this kind of reversal of bureaucratic influence partly because of the lack of competitive players on the State side.

DESTLER: Dick Moose, and then Daniel Davidson.

MOOSE: I wanted Andy's reaction to this. In reading Dr. Kissinger's structural proposal and reading the papers that you prepared for the President and Henry before the inauguration, and your description of how the NSC system operated in the Eisenhower years, I was struck in particular by your own description of the role that you played in that very system that some people have described as highly structured.

I was interested in that because I still remember the excitement that I had after having served in the State Department Secretariat in the Kennedy administration, watching Bundy[7] and the Bundy staff, and then having occasion to do research for chapters that I did in a book subsequently. I remember being interested in trying to find out how it was, having been in the Secretariat at the State Department in the Bundy era, how it was that things really worked and got done in the Eisenhower NSC staff, because it was obvious that the highly structured staff described wasn't one that accomplished the business of conducting foreign policy.

And I went around and I talked to everybody. I think Bobby Cutler was dead by then, but I talked to Gordon Gray and everybody else I could lay my hands on, Bromley,[8] and so forth. Karl Harr[9] said, "Well, Goodpaster did those things that you're talking about." And I still remember the excitement of going to see you and discovering how the thing had really worked, which nobody on the outside had ever really understood. Your own modesty about your own role had kept people from finding this out. In your memorandum, you describe very clearly, in a matter-of-fact way, what you did.

Now, the documents distributed – Henry's paper, Henry's and Mort's paper – present a structure that gave the State Department heartburn about who chaired the committees, etc.

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[7] McGeorge Bundy, National Security Adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.
[8] Bromley K. Smith, Executive Secretary of the NSC during the Johnson and Kennedy administrations.
[9] Karl Harr occupied several NSC-related roles during the Eisenhower administration and served as Special Assistant to the President.

But this missed a very important point. Henry's paper drew your attention to the structure. And you were supposed to look at the structure outlined in the paper, the process that they had outlined, but don't watch the hands because the hands were doing something else. And the hands – the execution – Henry's role in faithfulness to the description of the way that you say President Nixon wanted to be involved in executing policy. Henry, in fact, builds a mechanism and a staff and a process that executed foreign policy.

What he showed the President on paper looked much more like the Eisenhower NSC system, which I think Nixon was comfortable with. And, in fact, I remember there were a couple of back-and-forths on that draft. We only see one in the papers, but there were some back-and-forths. And the President would send it back to Henry and say, go talk to Andy again, and then the paper would come back each time looking more like the Eisenhower NSC staff, but I never doubted that there was an intention that it would function in a very different way.

Do you have any comment on that, Andy?

GOODPASTER: A very brief comment. This is worth exploring much more fully. When President Kennedy came in, after the Bay of Pigs, and he put all of this together, he combined in Mac Bundy, in effect, both policy and operations. Now, Eisenhower kept those separate, and he made the comment on many occasions, if you combine policy and operations, operations will eat up policy, because that's what everybody wants to get into. But he wanted to keep that emphasis on policy as his means of decentralizing, delegating to the extent possible, and then having a low-level type like me pull the other thing together, to assure that operations were not going to dominate.

DESTLER: So he made the policy person more prominent and more visible than the operations person.

GOODPASTER: And put more emphasis on that. He really felt that what I call the fabric of policy or the structure of policy, built around the main principles that came out of Solarium, would provide the foundation, really, for the actual conduct as he would like to see it done. He had a strong operating Secretary of State, but as Immerman's work has shown, when it came to what the policy would be, there was no question where that came from, and the initials at the bottom were DDE on that.

Well, good luck to you in what you're doing.

DESTLER: Thank you.

Daniel Davidson, you were going to intervene at this point.

DAVIDSON: I wanted to pick up on some of the previous comments. I think Win is right, the system was directed against the State Department far more than the Pentagon, because, as Henry once said to me – and I think it's borne out by this – many Presidents have decided to

give the State Department one last chance, this President-elect had determined they had had their last chance, and they were to be cut down. So the system targeted the ones who had had the central role, or close to it, previously, and never focused, really, on where Defense fit in.

There was another remark that Henry got together this good, loyal staff. I think that the staffing of the NSC was probably the most fatal thing that Kissinger did. He got, I agree, one or two exceptions – or one exception that we called "the gift from the Pierre," a very good staff. But as nearly as we could tell at the time, other than this gift from the Pierre, it was not clear there was a single other person, including Henry, who had voted for the President-elect, which made the whole group highly suspect to Nixon's political staff. I questioned him once during the lead-up to the election. He said, "Three days a week I think I'm going to vote for Humphrey, and three days a week for Nixon. The seventh day I don't know." And I think it is an open question for whom he voted.

But this made the NSC group extremely suspect in the White House.

SONNENFELDT: And the FBI. Right, Dan?

DAVIDSON: And the FBI. I mean, it reached the stage that I was going down to have a weekend with [Averell] Harriman at Hope Sound, and Dick Sneider told me it was a very dangerous thing to do, because that was the enemy. And add to that the fact that a major participant in the preparation of NSSM 1 was Dan Ellsberg, and you have the seeds for the plumbers and all that followed.[10]

LORD: That's why we didn't get mess privileges and parking spaces.

ODEEN: That's right.

DAVIDSON: At the first meeting with the NSC staff, someone asked Henry, "You've upgraded the NSC staff. But the old NSC staff used the White House mess, and we can't."

ODEEN: That was Morton Halperin.

DAVIDSON: To which Henry said something like, "Well, maybe they've upgraded the White House mess more than I've upgraded the NSC staff."

LEWIS: You know, it's fascinating to me, because I was there for the last year and a half of the Johnson administration running the Latin American account, which was not high on Johnson's list at that point, but still, he and Walt Rostow[11] occasionally would look south between bombing decisions about Vietnam.

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[10] Daniel Ellsberg, the RAND Corporation analyst who helped to write NSSM 1 in late 1968, gradually smuggled the Pentagon Papers out of the RAND Corporation's Santa Monica, California offices in 1971. This "leak" led to the publication of the Pentagon Papers in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, followed by the formation of the illicit White House operation known as "the plumbers."

[11] President Johnson's second and final National Security Adviser.

And because Pete Vaky, who Henry selected to take over that spot, couldn't come over from the State Department right away, because he was Acting Assistant Secretary – once again, the problem of how you replace Presidential appointees – I stayed on for a couple of months, or more, actually, into the Nixon period, and I was sitting in the back row in those first staff meetings. It was fascinating to contrast the way Henry was handling this crowd of talent, which was much larger in the first place than Rostow had, and also the things that were being said very openly about politics, just as you're saying, and the suspicions about career people. As a fly on the wall, watching the interaction among those of you who had just arrived, everybody elbowing everybody else for position in the new staff structure, it seemed to me that Henry was quite deliberately downgrading the staff in order to upgrade himself. We all had previously enjoyed the mess privileges and the parking spaces.

SONNENFELDT: And the titles.

LEWIS: And the titles, sure. But I wasn't really smart enough to figure out what was going on about a lot of his relationship to you all, to his own new staff, except that it seemed to me that there were a lot of strange crosscurrents that weren't fully apparent. I've come to understand a little better in later years.

DAVIDSON: You're very right. One of Henry's major objects from the very beginning was to make sure that Nixon didn't fasten onto anyone on the staff as the man he was going to go to. Everything had to be with Henry. Hal, in many ways, had a career so much like Henry's. So Henry was particularly desirous, I think, of keeping Hal away from the President.

SONNENFELDT: My career was not like Henry's.

DAVIDSON: I didn't mean character.

SONNENFELDT: I was a dutiful civil servant.

MOOSE: On the element that Dan has introduced, that Sam commented on, it is always worth remembering that Henry himself was an object of considerable suspicion throughout those early months. After all, Dick Allen[12] had been named before Henry, and he was a person who, by philosophy, was much more congenial to key members of the President's staff, if not to the President himself, than Henry, who, after all, was a Rockefeller man, and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. In addition to his having appointed a whole lot of Democrats and other fuzzy-headed characters to his staff, that was the origin of many other things that happened later, and colored a lot of things that happened in that early period.

He immediately downgraded the staff. He fired Bromley Smith in the most ignominious manner, and did a number of other things to lower the staff in status. Bromley, who had been there forever, and who was a loyal, devoted public servant if I ever saw one.

[12] Richard M. Nixon's presidential-campaign foreign policy adviser.

ODEEN: Just to comment on this suspicion. My impression even three years later was, when we'd be in a meeting and Haldeman[13] would walk in, Henry would get visibly nervous. Win, you may have seen it. It was different with Ehrlichman[14] – Ehrlichman was less threatening. But Haldeman – everybody got nervous when Haldeman was around. He was, at least from my perspective, kind of a fierce guy. I would see Henry seemingly act differently when Haldeman was around.

LORD: I think that's true, and it's partly the background we've talked about. After all, Henry was a Jewish intellectual from Harvard, as well as all the other attributes that you've mentioned. And you had these crewcut Californians [Haldeman and Ehrlichman] in there. Also, Henry, no question, he did keep the staff from having access. I don't know whether some of the rest of you sat in with the President and Henry when they were talking. But my impression was, really, it was just Henry and the President, no matter how important the issue was and the backdrop for it. You would sit in on meetings with foreigners at times, but you wouldn't sit in when he was consulting with the President. And I also think he didn't want us fraternizing with the domestic staff. That's one reason we didn't have White House mess privileges.

LEWIS: That was a great contrast with Johnson, too, because Walt would take whoever on the staff was the expert along to the President.

SONNENFELDT: Just to sort of give substantive assistance to the President.

DESTLER: Just a point of information. Does anybody here at this table have any experience contrary to what Win Lord just said of being brought by Kissinger to a session with the President?

ODEEN: I went into the Oval Office on my last day to get my Presidential cufflinks. It happened to be the day that Henry was approved by the Senate as Secretary of State. That's the only way I was in there. I left the staff the same day Henry went to State. I was in the Oval Office when they came rushing in to tell Henry the Senate had approved his nomination. That was the only time I was ever in the Oval Office, other than at Christmas, when nobody was around and the guards let me take my parents in to see it.

MOOSE: Early on, I mean, really, really early on, Henry had trouble getting face time with the President himself. He very badly wanted to engage the President more than he was able to. I remember his using the occasion of Andy Goodpaster's departure, when he left to go back to resume his military duties, to have a tea in the Roosevelt Room in honor of Andy Goodpaster, because he knew that if he had it in honor of Andy that the President would come. He couldn't be sure that he could get the President any other way. Andy was the bait because of the President's great admiration and respect for General Goodpaster, and I remember the occasion as very stiff and awkward. But Henry said to Larry [Eagleburger] and me that that what he was doing.

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[13] H.R. Haldeman, President Nixon's Chief of Staff.
[14] John Ehrlichman, President Nixon's assistant for domestic policy.

LORD: Didn't Henry have daily briefings with the President at the beginning of the day?

MOOSE: He didn't have them by himself at the beginning of the day. Haldeman or Ehrlichman –

LORD: One of them sat in, anyway.

MOOSE: – were always there. And Henry had a hard time with that, because he was not comfortable with it.

ODEEN: The one exception was Al Haig. My impression was, Al had increasingly direct contact when Henry was away on trips.

SONNENFELDT: That was later, much later. It caused a real problem. A triangular problem.

DESTLER: Let's hear from Hal Sonnenfeldt.

SONNENFELDT: Well, I'm sorry I missed the preliminaries, or even the main bout. Maybe this is the aftermath. I just wanted to say, this is all very interesting, and there are all kinds of anecdotes. And we could put Henry on the couch, and Nixon on the couch, and the rest of us on the couch, and so on.

To me, the interesting issues, however, are how policy did get made, to what extent the staff was involved, and how was it involved, because a lot of policy did get made, and, even if not cleanly, a lot of strategy also got made, whether on China policy or dealing with the Soviets, why and to what end. And on getting us out of Vietnam, however awkwardly and however many detours and disputes there were.

So, in the end, questions like the red tags [FBI Director] J. Edgar Hoover had on various people's files, and whether we parked on the Ellipse and had to walk 12 minutes rather than only one minute, or whether we got into the White House mess, and whether we had any relationships with the domestic policy staff – and certainly David Young managed to have it after awhile – you know, are all very interesting, and I think should obviously be retained for historical purposes. But somehow you've got to get to the bottom line.

DESTLER: Could you talk a little bit about areas of policy that you were particularly involved in – Europe, Soviet Union – and how you remember the mode of the staff contribution on those things, and how that fed in? Was it through NSSMs, was it through responses to *ad hoc* requests, was it through staff analysis that was essentially not part of the interagency process? It would be interesting for you to talk a little bit about that.

SONNENFELDT: It's a rather mysterious process. It's been said many times that the NSSMs were used to keep the bureaucracy busy, maybe the staff members of the NSC also, while decisions were made elsewhere. Early on, the assumption was probably that NSSMs

wouldn't produce much good, since concessions had to be made to the State Department in the production of NSSMs. It was assumed the State Department would be its old self, and we'd still get from them, despite beating on them – or Kissinger beating on us and we were his echo – to come up with genuine alternatives, two extreme options and a middle option which was their preferred option. So there really wasn't a whole lot of faith in most of these NSSMs.

I think the way the process worked is that Henry did read or scan them, and had staff people scan them. But as with many other things, from diverse conversations including with journalists, or what have you, the sources of input to Henry were multiple. Sometimes there were big temper tantrums during this process when somebody suggested something. At the White House and later, as Secretary of State, when things came up from the bureaus, tantrums could have an aftermath: suddenly, two weeks later, the idea would show up in something Henry was actually doing.

And sometimes, somebody mysteriously was asked to come and see the Secretary from somewhere down the line in a bureau. Henry had noticed the person somewhere saying something to which, at the time, he reacted with outrage. But as he reflected on it, it suddenly turned him on. And, incidentally, it meant circumventing the guy's real boss, whom Henry might have respected for other purposes, but in the meantime he wanted to have the subordinate's ideas.

I used to say at the time, when journalists and others said, "Kissinger has his bodyguard" – or whatever guard that was in vogue at the time, and the rest of the State Department was marginalized – that in my experience with Secretaries of State, there were more people involved directly with the Secretary in the Kissinger period, through the line and in other ways, than in any other Secretary's period of service that I can think of. Some of this had to do with his voracious appetite for policy. For example, he gave twenty-plus speeches on various areas of policy. In the process he drew in people from around the building. I counted at one time roughly 250 people in the Department of State who had had direct contact in one way or another with the Secretary of State, which in my experience was not the mean, or average with the six Secretaries of State that I had seen around there from 1947. So I just want to make some points about this that maybe are a little paradoxical, given Kissinger's reputation for secrecy.

DESTLER: Is that very different after Kissinger becomes Secretary of State, he draws on many more people because he has a stronger base?

SONNENFELDT: Yes, it was different from when he was at the White House, because he found himself more directly involved in Oceans and Fisheries, or terrorism, or Latin America, or other issues that were normally handed down the line for the most part. Because of the speechwriting process, and the concrete issues involved – and he became very much interested in South America because of soccer – he was down there several times. So now he had to be briefed on everything there was to know about Brazil, and Argentina, not to mention Chile and so on and so forth.

So that story is a little different. Coming back to the role of all these inputs into the policy process, he may well have had a pretty clear idea of what he wanted to do, but Henry, you know, wasn't always that certain of what he wanted to do. So he actually was open to a lot of ideas about which he might have spoken about in derisory fashion, but which then showed up in policy. And that, I think, was also the case with the NSSMs.

We had this great idea for a move on China policy in the first few months. There was an early NSSM resulting from Nixon's ideas, and Henry's acquired ideas, on doing something about China policy for a complex of reasons. A NSSM was requested on relations with China.

Well, the NSSM had something in it that Henry had never heard of. I don't think many of us had ever heard of it. It had to do with pig bristles for shaving brushes, which the Chinese produce. And as the first gesture that he picked out of the damn NSSM was the pig bristles. We took the pig bristle imports off the list of prohibited imports. It was the first signal that something was afoot.

This may be a caricature of what NSSMs can do for you, but it is also a reality. The same thing happened later on, in the Berlin negotiations. Henry was, of course, something of an expert, going back to the Kennedy administration, but not in any sense an expert on the myriad of intricacies about Berlin, access to Berlin, and so on. And there was a NSSM on Berlin, dealing with them, which proved useful in preparing for negotiations with the Soviets.

DESTLER: NSSMs become important not for defining options, but because there's stuff in them. They're raw material?

GUHIN: I don't know. If I may say, I arrived at the NSC, quite honestly, as a graduate student. And I sort of sat in awe and –

DESTLER: Remind us of when you arrived?

GUHIN: I arrived in March of 1969.

SONNENFELDT: But from what university, tell us all?

GUHIN: Well, I started at USC, but I ended up in London.

SONNENFELDT: But USC was the key!

GUHIN: This is true. I arrived as sort of a graduate student working for Kissinger, but also connected to some of the California group in my student and other days. But I came here in awe of a lot of these guys that are sitting here, and a lot of others that aren't sitting here, in a way – and I still have some of that. But I found out that they were not much older than I am. It's just that they had more experience. But what struck me from the beginning, and I think

it's something Win touched on, is that there are really very different structures operating in the NSC.

If you look at Russia policy, or China policy, or Vietnam, it's running on its own. Some of the Defense stuff and some of the SALT stuff, in time, was running in a system which we've identified as the Kissinger system. I, however, worked in the system which was later rediscovered in State, dealing with things like multilateral arms control, global affairs, science and technology, a lot of areas. And by the way, if you look at the chemical and biological weapons policy today, everybody today still says, "Nixon, 1969, that was the beginning of it all."

SONNENFELDT: It's true.

GUHIN: It set the stage for everything that's happened since. And that system worked openly, the way a NSSM should. We sat there with a 137-page policy paper, with seven issues requiring decision, and how many options under each issue, I can't even remember. And so in that sense, in a number of lesser areas, there was a different kind of system, it seems to me, that really, honestly worked.

SONNENFELDT: I don't think that's inconsistent, because obviously there was a mass of these things that the President wasn't necessarily very much interested in, but as the discussion went on, and the papers started flowing, he said, "Hey, you know, there may be something that's worth doing," for whatever motivation.

GUHIN: Well, there was a public outcry.

SONNENFELDT: But, you know, on the Soviet side, the process, the back channel, wasn't taken from any NSSM. It wouldn't have been in any NSSM, although Thompson had something of a back channel when he was special assistant to Rusk.[15] But the intensity of it, as it turned out, and the abundance of issues that flowed into that back channel over a period of time would have never made it into a NSSM. It was a case where process shaded into substance, because the very existence of that particular way of doing business had something to do with the substance of the relationship. And the same in many ways is true on China policy, where there was subterranean activity that would have never made it into a NSSM.

In fact, until the Nixon administration, the State Department insisted on briefing the Soviets on every conversation that Alex Johnson and others had with the Chinese in Prague and Warsaw. The Soviets probably got the transcripts from the bugging of these conversations. But Thompson religiously called Dobrynin[16] in and give him a full briefing. The suggestion that we might have a relationship with the Chinese without reassuring or telling the Soviets would not have occurred to anybody in the State Department. It was another one of the details that cumulatively brought us to '71 and '72. So I think one has to be very careful. I think you're right that it was a mixed thing. The coincidental utility of a

[15] Dean Rusk, Secretary of State to Presidents Kennedy and Nixon.
[16] Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet Ambassador to the United States.

NSSM is right, and the make-work role of the NSSM writers and drafters and negotiators is also right. In fact, it tied up people who might have smelled a rat if they hadn't been so busy doing the NSSMs.

DAALDER: What determines which process works? I mean, one way I can see it, Win started off saying there are three big issues, Vietnam, China, and Russia. They all have an informal process, very much conducted by Kissinger and Nixon. There are other issues that are less –

SONNENFELDT: There were other informal processes. The first trip Nixon took was to Western Europe. It was my bane, because it meant putting together five different layers of trips, one of them a State Department-organized trip, another one somebody else's organized trip, and then still somebody else's organized trips, and so on. There were talks with de Gaulle, and other talks with de Gaulle, and still other talks with de Gaulle, and so on. The same with [British Prime Minister] Harold Wilson and others. What it led to, eventually, when Henry became Secretary of State, was a secret four-power channel, which still exists, although it's less secret. So many people have been foreign ministers and Secretaries of State that you couldn't possibly maintain the cover. But we kept it from virtually everybody. And it did some work.

There's an example, known by now, in the Italian election of 1976, which looked like the '48 election. It looked like it was going to tilt to the Euro-Communists. The four got together, and talked about how we can do something to influence this. And a battle plan was developed, and the roles distributed. Maybe some people were playing other roles as well, but anyway, these roles were important.

LORD: I think several important points have been made, and we've got to keep in mind sort of the overview, just to quickly summarize, I still feel that Vietnam, China, and Russia, the three issues that were very urgent and lent themselves to control and secrecy, were dominated by transactions outside the system, and by Kissinger's personal role with his staff. Having said that, even there the NSSMs helped provide intellectual fodder. Hal is absolutely right to talk about the intellectual process. A lot of good ideas came from elsewhere, so even if the operations were conducted by Henry, he had these substrata that he could draw upon. Even with China later on, sometimes formulas on Taiwan would come up, for example, having come from the State Department for him to use.

DESTLER: We forget it now, but there were major public actions relating to China before the –

LORD: That's where I want to get to. I was going to give the China example. Mike is right that on second-level issues – it doesn't mean they weren't important, but rather that's from the standpoint of the President and Henry – they couldn't do everything. And so they let State have these issues. One area where there was great tension was the Middle East, where Rogers wanted to play the major role, and Kissinger was restraining him. There was no

contest on the three Communist countries, but on the Middle East there was a contest for a while. Then the others essentially were run out of the State Department.

SONNENFELDT: Henry held back on some issues.

LORD: Now on China, in addition to some material that came up intellectually in the papers, the challenge on China was to work on two tracks. First, secretly, we had to get in touch with the Chinese, with whom we had no contact. And this was done through various channels and was totally, very carefully, restrictively handled out of the White House.

But second, there was the function of publicly signaling the Chinese and other audiences that we were prepared to move in a different direction on our China policy. This was done partly with public announcements and the President's Foreign Policy Report, but it partly drew on the NSSMs, to get back to the NSSM process, where we looked for ways to send signals to China by relaxing trade and travel restrictions, whether on pig bristles, or foreign exchange controls, or journalists traveling in China. In the NSSM process, State and others came up with some ideas, and we looked at restrictions and some of these were relaxed, unilaterally. So that's an example where on one level you had the NSSM process, and on the other level very secret control.

One last comment on Vietnam. I think that it was an example of an exhaustive NSSM, and it really did help. There was an incredible list of questions that you've seen, a lot of work, and different independent viewpoints from various sources. I do think, even though Nixon and Kissinger maybe had some views, that this helped shape their approach, and especially on the Vietnamization dimension of the process.

DESTLER: Sam, were you going to comment on that?

LEWIS: I just want to make one other observation. I think the NSSMs were most – in some ways most useful to the rest of the government when they dealt with these issues that Henry and Nixon didn't have as their top priorities, because they did provide a pretty useful way to force some degree of interagency interaction and coordination. And the new agendas that you were talking about obviously require getting a lot of different players involved. I think where the NSSMs were least useful is where Defense was the key player, apart from the White House and State. There it just didn't work, really. It didn't work then, it didn't work later, it never has worked in any administration.

DESTLER: Not entirely by accident, somewhere in the middle of your package, we reproduced two fairly anguished memos about relations with the State Department, one by Tony Lake, one by Bill Watts. And then a single-page agenda of the issues that Kissinger is supposed to take up with Laird, which Tony apparently wrote with Larry Lynn's advice.[17] You don't find, in the files anyway, anguished memos about problems with Defense –

ODEEN: No, not at all.

[17] Lake, Watts and Lynn served on the Nixon NSC staff.

DESTLER: …but it looks like these were very fundamental questions that were not getting addressed. Phil Odeen wants to say a few things about the Defense relationship, and this is a good time.

ODEEN: Just to react to Sam's comment about the NSSM process, NSSM 3 [Jan. 21, 1969] was one that I personally worked on in the Pentagon. I'm not sure how useful it was more broadly, but I think it was useful within the Pentagon. It forced discussions about issues that a lot of people in the services, and the JCS in particular, did not want to address. They didn't even want to think about them.

LEWIS: Intra-Defense, it *was* a useful vehicle.

ODEEN: Part of the problem we had then – it's less of a problem today – is you didn't have a way to get useful military advice. The JCS' advice was a joke. If you had a powerful chairman, he might personally be helpful, but it was very hard, given the system, to get clear, hard-hitting advice. You either got an OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] product, or you got lowest-common-denominator ideas. The JCS were, of course, an important player, because of the way that the NSC process worked. So the JCS had their say. It made it very hard to get anything useful from the JCS given all the service log-rolling and agreements. It was very, very hard to work issues with the joint staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as they were organized then. It would be a lot easier today, because there have been dramatic reforms as a result of Goldwater-Nichols [the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986].

LEWIS: What I was referring to is that it's very hard to get the State geopolitical view into a NSSM like that. In the first place, we had a weak organizational base in State. Pol-mil [Political-military affairs (PM)] was not a terribly strong institution. But beyond that, unless the Secretary of State has some defense credentials and is prepared to use them, as Dean Rusk did at times in the previous era, it was pretty tough. And Rogers surely was out to lunch on these issues.

LORD: I made the point, before you came in, that Laird was a much wilier bureaucratic operator. And Henry never could get control of him like he could Rogers, who was much more –

SONNENFELDT: Including within the NSC staff, as we discovered later.

ODEEN: My perception of the Defense area was that you had two very different agendas. You had the NSC agenda, which was the NSC staff agenda more than it was Henry's agenda. Four of us that had that Program Analysis job that handled defense issues, Larry Lynn, Wayne Smith, myself, and Jan Lodal. We all came out of the so-called Systems Analysis "whiz kids" operation. So we'd all been working these issues in the Pentagon. I had a somewhat different set of approaches and priorities than Wayne and Larry did. They had agendas they weren't able to achieve in the Pentagon. This was their chance to work those issues and reduce the

number of [aircraft] carriers, or whatever. They finally had their shot. I believe that was Larry Lynn's view. My guess is Henry didn't necessarily reflect this view, although he may have agreed intellectually, but there was the chance that the White House could dominate Defense program and policy issues the same way they were going to dominate the State Department.

SONNENFELDT: The DPRC, of course, never really worked, because Laird never really accepted it.

ODEEN: Well, Laird did, in a way. That was part of the problem. Laird had a totally different agenda. Laird's agenda was heavily influenced by Bob Pursely, whom many of you may remember, a very smart and effective guy. Bob was Laird's military assistant, and a very, very smart guy. Laird's agenda was to use the NSC system to try to get some attention to national security issues in the budget process. His view was that OMB was making budget decisions with little or no attention to the broader national security matters. He said, "Ah ha, this is my club, I can use the NSC and this Defense Program Review Committee," which Larry Lynn had set up as a way to bring, hopefully, attention to broader national security issues and the impact of budget choices – asking what are our priorities, what are we trying to accomplish, and hopefully tempering the budget cuts. The budget was coming down rapidly during that period, as we were beginning to pull out of Vietnam. It was a very difficult budget time, a little bit like the last few years. So there were two very real agendas, the NSC staff's and Laird's, which was part of the reason they kept debating, and not really resolving much.

It is also my impression that when you got into specific Defense issues and push came to shove, Henry didn't have the competence to press hard. If it was Russia or China, or almost any foreign policy issue, he was more than willing to take on Bill Rogers. But he was not about to take on Mel Laird and [Deputy Secretary of Defense] Dave Packard. He just didn't have the depth of background or experience. And so when push really came to shove, Henry would tend to kind of pull back and not impose his views in those issues.

DAALDER: One exception that I can think of, not going through the entire list, was NSDM 242 [Jan. 17, 1974], where he did really push the issue. That's the nuclear weapons deployment issue, which you worked.

ODEEN: But that was a cooperative issue. I mean, that was –

DAALDER: Is that is a good example of a NSSM process working as it is supposed to, in the Defense area?

ODEEN: Yes, I think that was a pretty esoteric issue, and –

SONNENFELDT: It was an esoteric issue, but it was a Presidential issue.

ODEEN: The President was very much involved.

SONNENFELDT: Quintessentially a Presidential issue.

ODEEN: It came up initially, as I recall, in the first annual foreign policy report [in 1970]. By the time the issue was addressed, in 1973-'74, you had a cooperative Pentagon, and so you really didn't need to force the outcome. You had a lot of military guys who weren't very happy about it, but you had the OSD bureaucracy that was very supportive of the initiative. It took a while, but there is no question about it, that was clearly initially a White House initiative, but in time it was picked up by the OSD.

SONNENFELDT: You initially had a weak Assistant Secretary for ISA, and so a lot was essentially done with Packard.

MOOSE: Were there deep issues earlier on, I'm trying to remember, between Laird and Henry, on other than arms control? What were the Defense issues?

ODEEN: There was always a battle on Vietnam, that was a constant – with Laird who wanted to go much faster, and Henry trying to slow the process. The tactic that Laird used every year would just infuriate Henry. DoD would be doing the next budget, let's say this is the Spring of 1971, and we'd be doing the 1973 budget, and Mel would say, it's obviously sensible to assume that we'll be flying half as many B-52 and TACAIR sorties and using half as much ordnance two years out. We'd get these assumptions locked in the budget, along with big cutbacks in Army forces. The thing that especially got Henry was the lack of funds for airplanes and ordnance, because the bombing was the thing the White House always wanted to do when a problem arose.

LORD: And the actual number of troops to be withdrawn on the Vietnamization schedule would be announced by the President. That was always a struggle, where Laird wanted to have more pulled out.

SONNENFELDT: And SALT became a fight.

MOOSE: Who really forced the pace of Vietnamization? Was it Laird or was it Kissinger?

LORD: I think it was a struggle between the two, where Kissinger wanted on the whole to go slower, and Laird wanted to speed it up. Laird, being a Congressman, and sensitive to domestic politics, was particularly attuned to the congressional and domestic mood, as we all were, of course. Henry was more concerned about our ability to maintain military balance and our leverage with the North Vietnamese.

ODEEN: We had a so-called "Vietnamization task force" that met with Laird every morning for about two years, before I went to the NSC staff. It included your friend Warren Nutter,[18] myself, whoever the military guy was that was responsible for Vietnamization, and Bob Pursely. Laird often talked about how, if we're not largely out of Vietnam by '72, Nixon

[18] Assistant Secretary of State for International Security Affairs.

would be history. He was absolutely convinced that the administration had to have made major progress.

But back to the budget thing. Laird would take the money out of the budget, and then two years later when the White House wanted to do more bombing, the military was on Laird's side. They didn't want to take money away from their new ship, tank or bomber. So the Chiefs would say, let's not resume bombing, or only do it for a short period of time. So Laird, by manipulating the budget, got the Chiefs in his corner on these battles. It was really very, very smart bureaucratically.

DAALDER: So this is a good example where the system did not defeat bureaucratic politics.

ODEEN: That's right.

DESTLER: It's also an interesting example perhaps of the contrast between the sorts of things that Defense does and the sorts of things that State does.

ODEEN: Well, they have programs and lots of money –

DESTLER: Because it's easier to control or dominate a negotiating channel or a communications channel from the White House, because people want to deal with the President directly. Whereas, in Defense operations, there are lots of details, lots of planning, which make it much harder to shape – unless you have a very cooperative leadership in Defense.

ODEEN: One other point on bureaucratics. One of the things that I thought Kissinger did well was that he always managed to have a range of options supported by the different agencies. He could always be the guy who comes up with the sensible, compromise position. He would have the JCS over here on the right, and ACDA on the left. And so he could come up with his answer, but it looked like a moderate response. He played that beautifully, and we were always driving to have a wide range of alternatives, so his was reasonable, which is not a new game. That really changed after the '72 elections, when they cleaned out ACDA and suddenly ACDA became to the right of JCS. And then we were often exposed. We were on the left –

SOLOMON: Of course, John Lehman was sent over there.

ODEEN: And Fred Iklé. It was a tough group. And Royal Allison. And all the guys that labored away on SALT I, who should have been heroes, they all got fired.

DESTLER: But that wasn't Kissinger's doing, right? That was the White House, the other parts of the White House, wasn't it?

SONNENFELDT: Well, it was done by the White House, but not with discouragement from Kissinger, because there was a strong feeling that the front-channel SALT delegation wasn't

performing in accordance with its front-channel instructions very enthusiastically. Some front-channel instructions in those negotiations, it has to be said, were to make room for a serious back-channel operation, and somebody in the delegation smelled that the formal instructions weren't going to get anywhere, so they were not very keen on implementing them.

So it was a pretty substantial housecleaning. Fred, really, was reduced to non-proliferation because it didn't really carry much weight at that time.

DESTLER: Fred Iklé, you mean, yes.

ODEEN: Henry would never see Fred Iklé. Fred would ask to see Henry and Henry wouldn't see him at the last minute, and I ended up getting stuck listening to Fred go on for two hours about some esoteric subject.

SOLOMON: Which is why Fred ultimately went public in an attack on Henry in *The New York Times*. Do you remember that?

ODEEN: One other point, though. I thought that the analytic process for SALT, while maybe it did provide some cover, was a productive process. We did really work complicated technical issues very hard and successfully.

SONNENFELDT: It did build on the SALT analytical work in the Johnson administration, which, of course, was shelved when the beginning of talks were aborted because of Czechoslovakia. But there was some continuity there, partly because the same people were still doing it in the agencies.

ODEEN: Anyway, there are some asides from the Defense perspective.

LEWIS: I'm curious about something I just read. I didn't get these papers ahead of time. So, I was just glancing through this memo from Tony and Bill Watts about the State Department. Did Henry respond to these memos, did he do anything about this at the time?

SONNENFELDT: No. But I wanted to make a comment on that. One of my colleagues, by accident, came across a couple of drawers full of carbons of memos from the Johnson NSC staff, and he found a whole folder of outraged memos about the behavior of the State Department.

DESTLER: Well, the Kennedy quotes are legion, of course, about this, too.

SONNENFELDT: It was people not clearing telegrams, going off on their own, and not doing as instructed.

DAALDER: I have written memos to Tony Lake complaining the same way.

LEWIS: But Kissinger didn't really then try to make any accommodation after these memos? I mean, that's the question.

SONNENFELDT: No. Some cosmetic ones.

MOOSE: But it's amusing, knowing as much as is known now about how Henry set out rather successfully to neuter Rogers, and all of the rest of it, to see the pains that both Bill and Tony went to, to avoid telling Henry that it was no great surprise that the State Department was terribly upset with what he was doing because, in fact –

SONNENFELDT: Don't load all this on Henry. Henry didn't know what Nixon's relationship with Rogers was. Rogers was appointed first and they were great friends from the Eisenhower administration, and so on. Henry wasn't exactly sure where he was going to fit in this close friendship and long-time association. I think it became a total surprise to Henry that Nixon didn't want Rogers to play a major role, except publicly.

LEWIS: Both memos actually were very, very sensible and actually would have helped Henry do the things he was trying to do, had he just done some of those things.

DESTLER: And the thrust of the argument is that State is behaving in a way that is not at all helpful to us on a whole range of issues because they're not sharing, we're not getting information.

SONNENFELDT: Trust me, he tried with Elliot Richardson. He had regular meetings with Elliot, and Elliot chaired the Undersecretaries' Committee. That didn't necessarily help with Rogers, but there were some NSC people talking to assistant secretaries.

ODEEN: But that's why he did it, to undermine Rogers.

SONNENFELDT: But he didn't have to undermine Rogers. It was unnecessary because it was being done –

DESTLER: By Nixon, basically.

LORD: Well, also, Henry was smarter and Henry worked harder.

ODEEN: He worked *you* harder. That's a non-trivial point, though. Someone else has talked about his voracious appetite for information, and he really did read. We'd write a 10-page single-spaced paper for Henry with a lot of detail on it. For a meeting, we would have a one-page summary, key issues and options, and these 10 or 12 pages, as well as a big, thick, detailed analysis. Often the detailed report would have all sorts of comments in the margins. Henry would come to a meeting and he had read all that stuff. He'd sit down at the table –

SONNENFELDT: But it isn't only that. The quality, perforce, not because of the brilliance of the NSC staff officers, necessarily – the quality of a paper drafted by one individual with a

couple of assistants is bound to be better than a State Department internally negotiated document, or a Defense Department internally negotiated document. If you had people that weren't just a conveyor belt in the NSC staff, and you put them to their tasks, you are bound to get better stuff.

ODEEN: But he had read it, he understood it, and he'd had a big advantage at a meeting. The Undersecretary of State's background had been done in the car coming over, when somebody gave him a three-minute briefing during that trip from the State Department, and Henry had read this book, knew it, and he'd go into the specifics of the analysis and raise questions. It was a totally unfair fight.

LEWIS: You know, it's interesting, I think the only other person in the White House in the last 50 years that did that was Jimmy Carter. It didn't work very well, but he did. You know, he read every back-up paper. He really mastered the material.

SONNENFELDT: He didn't know how to scan.

LEWIS: But I don't think any of the other Presidents or Secretaries of State have had that absorptive capacity for detail. At least they haven't demonstrated it.

SONNENFELDT: That's why Zbig thought *he* should be Secretary of State.

LEWIS: Well, actually Clinton has it, too.

SONNENFELDT: Clinton absorbs enormously, maybe not his favorite topics.

LEWIS: The assistant secretaries are really in trouble on this point, they're just – they really have the hardest time in the State Department at mastering material, because they're getting just too much.

SONNENFELDT: It has long been said that the dog's work in the government is to be an assistant secretary of State.

SOLOMON: Well, I have seen the sociology of several bureaucratic environments, and what impresses me is how much they change from administration to administration, reflecting the intellectual qualities of the people, especially the top leadership. In the time I was first exposed to the bureaucratic games under Nixon and Ford, you had a lot of political *kabuki.* You had a many-layered, complex game of trying to influence and control policy. I was amazed when I became Assistant Secretary in the Bush administration to discover there was an interagency process, because by the time I showed up on Kissinger's NSC, China policy was a one-man show. It was all run out of the White House. But you learn very quickly that you can't be effective unless you start operating at other levels.

Let me give you one interesting example: the drafting of the Shanghai Communiqué. Winston knows this, and I hope he won't totally contradict me, but the way the thing was

drafted at one point was that Henry brought in Al Jenkins, who was the China desk officer, to work with John Holdridge[19] on some of the second- and third-round drafting. Jenkins was under enormous psychic pressure, so he gave a lot of his drafting – unknown to, I suspect, anybody else – to Roger Sullivan, who was his deputy. The word surreptitiously got around the State Department about what was going on, but nobody could talk about it, because everybody knew that this was an issue that the President and Henry had a lock on.

When did it finally come out? It finally came out at the very end of Nixon's China trip, when the party was in Hangchou. The communiqué had already been negotiated and approved by the Chinese Politburo, but then Henry gave it to Secretary Rogers and to Marshall Green[20] to read. Now, these guys already knew something about it, I think, because there had been scuttlebutt, but they couldn't say anything until Henry gave them the finished product. At the very last minute, Marshall Green had some objections, and Henry had to renegotiate the document. There was stuff like a reference to "Korea" rather than "the Republic of Korea." And there were stylistic issues. The one really fundamental, substantive issue, was the phrase about all Chinese on both sides of the Strait agreeing there was only one China. And Marshall Green said, "Well, they don't all agree, so let's take out 'all.'" And that led to Henry going back to Qiao Guanhua, and Qiao said, "Well, if you take out the word 'all,' the whole communiqué collapses. I can't take it back to the Politburo, as it changes the meaning in an unacceptable way." So Henry dropped Green's objection. But the point is, State in this instance was semi-informed, but they really didn't have a word on the issue until the very end of the process.

DESTLER: And in that case, at least the things you suggest were comments that were real, they were valid.

SOLOMON: But I'm not saying State's objections would have changed anything. My point is that Henry's NSC dominated the diplomacy, and that State had to struggle to get its views expressed.

LORD: We went over in October of '71 with a draft of the Shanghai Communiqué essentially done within the NSC, but picking up some ideas from State. It was a typical diplomatic draft with two sides agreeing and getting together on issues. Chou En-lai[21] totally rejected it after checking in with Mao. He said, "This is crazy. We haven't talked to each other for 25 years. It's dishonest. It will make our allies suspicious, and it won't make any sense to our publics. So let each side state its own positions, and then we can state where our views converge."

We drafted the whole damned thing overnight. They stated their positions on ideology and on specific issues, and we stated ours. I won't go into detail, but essentially it was done without State at all. It was done on that October trip, except for Taiwan, which was left hanging. And we did draw on State's ideas for the Taiwan portion.

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[19] John Holdridge, a career foreign service officer.
[20] Marshall Green, a career foreign service officer, was Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.
[21] Premier of the People's Republic of China, effectively second-in-command to Mao Tse-tung.

And then, you're right. When we got to the actual Nixon trip in February '72, we negotiated the Taiwan issue then, but it was myself and Holdridge and Henry, while the State Department was off talking about claims and assets and economics and exchanges, and they weren't even involved.

We completed the negotiation, got Politburo approval and went to Hangchou. There we had to reopen the whole thing again, because, as you say, Rogers and Green had their first crack at it. So after the Politburo had approved it, we had to go back and renegotiate. This was embarrassing for Kissinger. There were very modest changes. The State Department involvement in the Shanghai Communiqué was almost nil, which of course was a bad process.

SONNENFELDT: There are many stories like this. The back-channel negotiation that broke the SALT deadlock in May of '71 was not sophisticated enough for you people to worry about it. But the package, the SALT package, was all done in the White House, and it was three minutes before the public announcement in Moscow and Washington that it was shown to the SALT team and to the Secretary of State, who had tremendous problems with it. Smith's[22] end of it is described in his book.

The 1973 agreed statement of principles with the Soviets was all negotiated in the White House, and at the last minute was given to the State Department, which had some very valid problems, but it was frozen.

The agreement on the prevention of nuclear war had begun as a Brezhnev initiative in the 1972 summit, at the very end, with practically a treaty against China that he slipped into Nixon's pocket, and Nixon looked at the cracked English in which it was written, and then said, "Well, you know, I'll obviously have to study this, and return it." And *nobody* in the State Department knew anything about the negotiations that followed.

And we brought in the British, and the British lawyers to help us write this statement, Operation Hullabaloo, as they called it over there, and we secretly briefed the French, who were non-committal, and Egon Bahr in Germany, so that the allies wouldn't be surprised. But I was selected to take this thing over to Rogers the day that Brezhnev arrived, and there was a furious memo coming back telling us where we'd gone wrong, and all the allies, and so on.

So, I mean, this procedure, including sometimes the boo-boos that result –

LORD: Including whole trips to Moscow, Beijing and Paris that the State Department didn't even know about.

SONNENFELDT: Right. The secret trip before the Moscow summit in April of 1972 that Henry and three or four of us went on. Scowcroft and Hyland[23] were also over there

[22] Gerard Smith, lead SALT negotiator.

[23] Brent Scowcroft was as this time military assistant to the President. William Hyland was a member of the NSC staff.

separately to advance the trip, and the communications guy in their aircraft found some funny signals, and wondered whether there was another American aircraft in the neighborhood.

And then – this gets anecdotal – I was sent off to see the British Ambassador to brief him that we were there, and what we were doing. It had suddenly occurred to me that the British Embassy was right across the river from the Kremlin. We were being taken sightseeing. And I thought that the British Embassy might notice something was going on and tell [U.S. Ambassador] Jake Beam. This led us to get Jake Beam in to see Henry at the very end of our meeting there to tell him that we'd been there to have discussions. I don't think he was shown any of the documentation.

ODEEN: Hyland was your right-hand man. He didn't know about this?

SONNENFELDT: Well, I think Brent told him, and I think Brent knew about it. But his communications guys did not know about it.

SOLOMON: I noticed in your paper some discussion of how the NSC was designed and put into place. Have you talked to Paul Hammond? Paul Hammond was a predecessor of mine at RAND. He was a consultant to the NSC in the late 1960s. He told me he was a consultant who helped design the NSC system in preparation for the Nixon administration.

SONNENFELDT: Only if Ellsberg and Halperin talked to him.

DESTLER: As far as we know, Hammond wasn't involved in the transition, though he may have been engaged earlier.

SOLOMON: No, but if you wonder how the system was designed, you might talk to him. He went to Pittsburgh; he's probably retired now.

(Brief recess.)

DESTLER: We have intentionally not stuck slavishly or blindly to our list of questions, and I think the discussion has been the better for that. However, we would like to return briefly to the two-page list. I'd like to raise two or three organizational issues, and have people comment if they think there is anything there. One of the dilemmas one always has in writing about something like this is that a lot of the available record has to do with the structure. However, the structure operates or evolves in very different ways from what the formal descriptions say.

For example, one interesting development we haven't really talked about directly was the change from the original Review Group to the Senior Review Group. One source has told me that the reason they had this original Review Group, with Kissinger chairing it and the State and Defense representatives being from policy planning was that in those days, it was very hard to sell the notion of the National Security Adviser chairing a committee that was

very high-ranking. Neither of those in State or Defense was strong at that time, so the agency representation had to be elevated around early 1970 to the Senior Review Group.

SONNENFELDT: But that was a crumb to Rogers to let Richardson chair that. And I think Henry was bored by it, anyhow. It was taking too much time and it didn't turn out to be that useful. I don't know, Winston, whether you have a different –

DESTLER: I'm not talking about the Undersecretaries' Committee, I'm talking about the Senior Review Group.

SONNENFELDT: Yes, well, but that was sort of the same thing.

DESTLER: The other body that was created around that time was the Washington Special Actions Group, right?

SONNENFELDT: That's different, that was for crisis management. That's a different thing.

LORD: That became increasingly important over the years.

LEWIS: Who was S/P in '69?

DESTLER: William Cargo was State planning director in 1969.

LEWIS: Who was in Defense at that time?

DESTLER: It was Warren Nutter who was the was the ISA for planning.

LEWIS: He was at ISA.

DESTLER: Yes, the Assistant Secretary for Defense –

SONNENFELDT: There wasn't any undersecretary for policy, was there, at the Defense Department?

DESTLER: No, there was not. The ISA job was the policy job then.

SONNENFELDT: And under Nitze,[24] of course, it had become so enormously powerful that it was the job everybody wanted.

DESTLER: Right, exactly.

SONNENFELDT: Henry, when he was not yet sure where he stood with Nixon, once asked me, "If they approach me for a job, what should I ask for?" I said, "ISA, no question."

[24] Paul Nitze held the ISA office under President Kennedy.

ODEEN: It was a different world.

DESTLER: Let me return to my question about the committees. Somewhere in the first year, year and a half, you have the creation of these Kissinger-chaired committees that essentially involved the undersecretaries. The Senior Review Group is one, the Washington Special Actions Group is another. Are these real? I mean, to the staff or to people playing the system, are these basically just all the same thing, and you go to Henry and he handles it, or do you target different committees depending on the issue?

ODEEN: Well, the difference was that there were different NSC staff guys supporting Henry. If it was the Verification Panel or the DPRC, I was the staff guy. If it was the Senior Review Group, it was the appropriate regional person. The WSAG guy was probably Dick Kennedy, I've forgotten, but a different member of the NSC staff. There was also a working group supporting each committee, and you had a different NSC staffer chairing each of these.

LORD: I worked with Halperin. Our job was also to help manage the paper flow, working with the relevant regional honcho or functional honcho on the staff. So there was this operation. Halperin was always involved – sometimes more collegially with some than others – with other members of the staff. So it would be Halperin and Sonnenfeldt or Halperin and Lynn, or Halperin and Saunders, whatever it was, as you got ready for an NSC system meeting.

But there were some distinctions. I think the WSAG got more and more important as time went on. Others got less important.

SONNENFELDT: Well, it was the meeting, officially, at the time, for example, of the Yom Kippur War crisis with the Soviets. Contrary to what somebody keeps writing that it was a NSC meeting without the President, and therefore illegal.

LEWIS: Didn't it start, Hal, as a WSAG meeting and then got transformed in the course of the day?

SONNENFELDT: Whatever it was, when it started in the evening, it never changed its name. Most of the same people stayed; eventually it was the principals, not quite all of them, because it got to the DEFCON business. But I don't know that anybody paid any attention that night to what the hell it was, as long as they –

ODEEN: But there were minor differences in membership, too.

DESTLER: What you're saying is, there were some differences in membership, and the staffing was different.

SONNENFELDT: Well, and there were Treasury people involved, for example, doing some of these financial shenanigans, in '71.

ODEEN: OMB was involved in the Defense Program Review Committee. There was maybe one member different in each committee. Just trivial, but to that agency I guess it was not.

LEWIS: I think the State Department and the academic world take more seriously the names of committees and who chairs them than the NSC staff ever does, because they tend to operate with a different imprimatur and be a little bit less concerned about the titles.

LORD: I disagree in the sense of who chairs. That was crucial. I still think that's crucial. You set the agenda, you run the meeting, and you write the follow-up memo to the President. So I think Kissinger was very conscious about chairing most of the key committees, and having his staff people essentially run them.

LEWIS: But not necessarily chair them. The staff people, the lower level in NSC, didn't worry so much about who was chairing, because they controlled the agenda and the follow-up.

LORD: You've got to keep in mind the levels here. You had the assistant-secretary level, where State was chairing it. Then you had the Kissinger-chaired meetings where the basic decisions were either made, or prepared for the President, either on his own or in an NSC meeting, which were fairly infrequent, as I recall.

ODEEN: I chaired the Verification Panel.

DESTLER: You did chair the Verification Panel.

ODEEN: And I did the Defense –

DESTLER: Wasn't Kissinger formally the chair, but you did the working group?

ODEEN: No, the working group, the underlying working group.

DAALDER: But with Kissinger you have three levels of interagency meetings. You have the NSC and then you have these Kissinger-chaired meetings, and then you have State-chaired working group meetings.

SONNENFELDT: You've got to talk to Haig, because the "40 committee," the whole intelligence business, Kissinger officially chaired. Most of the time I don't think he went to them, and Haig or even Dick Kennedy got drafted, pretty much, to do those.

ODEEN: I think the regional issues the State Department did, but the functional issues were done by the working groups.

LEWIS: State was always much more anxious to try to keep some control of the regional issues. It never fought nearly as hard on the functional ones; it didn't have the clout.

DESTLER: What about the NSC? In the end it seldom met, but early on there were lots of NSC meetings, relative to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

SONNENFELDT: I think they were very much intending to keep the President's options open, and not allowing anybody to create a majority position, so that the President wouldn't have to overrule people. But it wasn't a forum where, even though there was a whole bunch of them at the start, matters were left open enough for the President to choose what he wanted.

LORD: He would never decide at the meeting. And often there would be a follow-up, where Kissinger would go in and consult with him on what they ought to be doing.

LEWIS: Hasn't that been true of all administrations, that NSC meetings have never been decision makers?

SONNENFELDT: In theory, but Brom Smith and his people did their action memos – whatever they were called in different administrations – based on NSC meetings. And then they gave the President the agree/disagree choice, and that was it.

ODEEN: Usually cleared them around and them gave them to the President.

GUHIN: I think a difference compared to several other administrations I've seen was that Nixon and Kissinger were very careful not to show their cards in the meeting, whereas in many other cases, whether it was Bush or Reagan or whatever, very often their cards would be shown very early, and in the rest of the discussion was affected very clearly.

SONNENFELDT: It also has to be said that sometimes decisions had already been made, and they were looking for NSC meetings to provide a paper trail that showed that this had been thoroughly discussed, and that nobody was being circumvented.

MOOSE: LBJ used them that way. He had very few, but he certainly used them that way.

DESTLER: Clearly, Eisenhower used them importantly to sort of keep his government together, and give everybody a chance to speak out on those things.

ODEEN: I went to quite a few of them, and I found most of them so terribly *pro forma*, I mean, there was almost –

DESTLER: Can anybody think of an NSC meeting that was important, that made a difference?

ODEEN: I don't know. There may have been some.

SONNENFELDT: There may well have been. It may have been one of those cases where something was said by somebody that clicked in Nixon's mind, or Henry's mind, or Ford's mind.

MOOSE: Those early Cuban missile crisis meetings that are on the tapes that were transcribed. There were a couple of those that were very important.

SONNENFELDT: Well, the point is that in our government these meetings are not decision-making meetings. The President makes the decision. And if he wants to give the appearance of having a Cabinet system, a genuine Cabinet system, it's up to him. But basically, the NSC is a Cabinet committee, under our system. I doubt if any President would let any meeting reach a consensus if he objected to it or had doubts.

DESTLER: But even if they're not decision meetings, the President could use them in an important way to formulate issues and people could feel that they were really important in putting an issue to the President, or people could feel they're a sideshow and that the real communication with the President takes place elsewhere. And increasingly it's the second feeling that dominates.

SOLOMON: What you should do is look at all the preparatory activity that precedes a formal meeting. That's where the issues of who really trusts whom, and who's really relying on whose judgment, and the pre-planning of positions gets worked out – wiring up the formal discussion before it happens.

LEWIS: Some Secretaries of State felt very strongly about reserving their own advice. Dean Rusk would never reveal in a meeting what his view was.

SONNENFELDT: Dean Rusk, as Secretary of State, was ambivalent about whether his primary role was as adviser to the President or as head of a great department of government. And he sort of veered back and forth. And he thought had a confidential relationship with the President, although, as you know, there was a lot of muttering about Rusk on Vietnam.

LEWIS: It became more that way with Johnson.

SONNENFELDT: I think with Johnson it did, indeed.

LEWIS: Johnson had a much easier relationship with Rusk than Kennedy did.

SONNENFELDT: But he was back and forth. And he was very, very discreet about his role as a Presidential adviser.

LEWIS: But that's what he thought of as his first priority, the Presidential adviser.

SOLOMON: The other thing you ought to look at is the fact that these different formal meetings have very different outcomes. That is, sometimes when you would do talking

points, let's say for Henry, the issues would be, "Where do you want to walk the issue?" and "Where do you want to end up?" But for some issues where you don't want a clear decision, you want things left uncertain, so that there is flexibility at the top to make the final decision.

It's like the NSSM process. One view is that they were busywork to give State or other bureaucratic elements a sense of involvement, but after a while, people knew they were just being put in a squirrel cage, doing make-work. But that isn't always the case. There were some issues on which you could really influence policy. So the same bureaucratic vehicle can be used in different ways.

LEWIS: I noticed you have an item on here, the use of NSSMs. I think that's kind of a separate question. One of the tremendous frustrations of State in the Nixon era, in the latter part of the Nixon era, that had been a running theme in other administrations as well, is the inability to get definitive, written NSDM-type decision papers, so you know what the President really wants done. And this has been accentuated by the era of leaks, so that in this administration, they never put anything down in writing, because it's all going to be in the newspaper. And it makes it very hard for the bureaucracies to be responsive and to be loyal, because they're getting different signals on what the President really wants done. Now, if the Secretary of State is really close to the President, and is a good administrator, he can handle this problem. But they all aren't. And they don't all have the relationship.

DAALDER: You had these NSDMs and they were issued to the bureaucracy. Were they so vague that they didn't tell you what to do?

LEWIS: It would depend. The really sensitive ones weren't done, or their products were only disseminated to five people, or less.

SONNENFELDT: Some weren't detailed enough to prevent somebody from circumventing them. Some of them had a lot of detail.

LORD: Some were taken quite seriously, though.

LEWIS: The negotiations among the agencies afterwards about what really was decided –

SONNENFELDT: The NSC staff in that respect were supposed to be honchos to make sure that they hewed to the line, so that they didn't do something to screw up what the White House was already doing anyway. But some of them, maybe on secondary issues like biological warfare, had pretty detailed things in them. Some had virtually a public statement that was then issued. But a lot of them had layers to them. The NSDMs were front-channel instructions which weren't necessarily very detailed, but were intended to keep the execution within some limits, and where necessary, in such a fashion that it didn't undermine what was intended or actually going on.

LEWIS: I think this is one important distinction: the more specific the issue, the more likely you could get a reasonably clear NSDM, but if you had a NSSM study of overall policy

toward Latin America, producing a whole string of recommendations, in the first place, you could never get it reviewed by the NSC or by the President. Secondly, if it got some kind of *pro forma* review, you could never get any kind of written policy decisions out of it because you're talking about a general direction for policy, and that is pretty hard to put down on paper, certainly if you want to keep your options open.

So a lot of those NSSMs that were produced in the early years of the Nixon era never produced any NSDMs, or if they did, they were just totally meaningless, or so vague as to be meaningless.

SONNENFELDT: Some of them weren't even amenable or suitable for NSDMs because they were discussions on the formulation of issues, and you couldn't really issue that kind of an instruction. And then they were maybe refined later. I've given away too many secrets already.

DESTLER: We'll try to bleed you more later. Thank you very much, Hal.

GUHIN: It's also a question, Sam, about the level of issues. I think if you look at the secondary issues, and not the big ones, you had a far higher likelihood of having a civil process, an open process, one that led to definition, one that led to very, very explicit decisions.

DESTLER: Were you involved in the biological weapons decision?

GUHIN: I wrote it.

DESTLER: Would you talk about that? I think it fits into that category.

GUHIN: Actually, it was Mort who gave me that job. I remember I showed up for work, and Mort said, "Nobody else wants to handle this chemical and biological stuff, and you're young enough, you won't have any of these things to worry about."

But that NSSM was put up. I don't know where to begin on that. That, I think, has been used as a model for how the formal NSSM, not the back channel, not the other stuff, not with the White House, but how the interagency process, in a model way, could work.

DESTLER: And you agree with that?

GUHIN: I do agree with that. I remember you had very smart people. You had Tom Pickering and Ron Spiers, and all those smart people in PM trying to work with a Defense Department that wasn't that smart, and trying to put together a lot of issues that involved key Defense Department equities, at least certain segments. It wasn't the nuclear weapons. But you had segments where this was their own, and where they had strong equities. But I think if you watch that process, and even the paper itself, and maybe the NSC cover paper, which we did do, I don't think anybody felt cut out of that process. I did the issues for the decision

paper, and then drafted the NSSM itself. I think you could use that. I don't think anyone felt cut out of that process.

But I think Richard's right. The NSC meeting was a wonderful NSC meeting, but the real work was really done before it. You had Laird in the meeting, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff taking a position in the NSC that was not in support. You did not have a lot of downward loyalty on that issue. In fact, politically, it had become a tar baby, and politically people knew they had to deal with it in certain ways.

And the other interesting thing, which is just a footnote to this, is that you actually had Defense trying to block part of at least the spirit of the NSSM on toxins. And they immediately did it, and we advised them that they were crazy to do this, it could only have one meaning. If you produced it one way, it had to be banned. If you did it another way, well, technically it was okay. And they forced that into another NSSM, and they lost, as you know, a few months later. And they lost worse than they would have lost under a normal interpretation of this.

The other thing that impressed me coming into this system, though, was that a lot of our NSSMs had been driven by the bureaucracy, not by the NSC staff. At Defense, Laird was the first one that wrote in and said, "We've got to do something about our chemical and biological weapons policy. You know, we've got a nightmare growing here, and we've got differences between State and ourselves," and etc. And especially in a lot of the technical areas, the initiative would come, whether formally or informally, from the bureaucracy itself.

LEWIS: I think that's a very good point, because certainly the State bureaucracy, not having strong enough clout, often would look for the NSC to take the lead on an issue in order to bring the other agencies into a workable sort of arena. So I think this is a key point. There came to be some synergy between them over time.

DAALDER: Were there people at State who would go to the NSC and work that?

LEWIS: Oh, sure.

DAALDER: So even if it formally comes out of the NSC, it still could have come out of State?

LEWIS: Absolutely. The system works quite well if there's a good relationship between the key State staff guys and the key NSC staff guys, and they do a lot of taking in each other's laundry all the time. It doesn't work well when they're too competitive.

MOOSE: I was on the Hill stoking the other end of the issue, trying to stir up as much heat and trouble on it as I could. And after a while, I never had any doubt where the leverage of the whole thing was, and it was with Michael [Guhin] and the people in the interagency process, because Defense was divided, impossible, and State just couldn't get its act together on it. And there was only one place to try to deal, and it was over there.

GUHIN: It was an interesting review. But if I may, as a footnote to history, I'd like to look at it another way. That review, unbeknownst to a lot of people, basically challenged the whole way the intelligence community had looked at assessments. I remember Leon Fuerth[25] and I spent a whole week out at the [Central Intelligence] Agency trying to figure this out. In the end, we didn't understand how to compute something from zero, and that was our problem. But there were a whole lot of various layers to the review that brought things to the surface, and in that sense I think it also can serve as a kind of model for the formal structure.

ODEEN: Sam's point about the informal relationship was really key. One of the key factors in my effectiveness was to have very close ties with all the appropriate staff people at State, Defense and ACDA, so I knew what was going on in detail. It was critical. On a major issue going to Kissinger, say, an arms control issue, he had to know where every player was going to come out. He knew in advance exactly. And he used that as part of his bureaucratic maneuvering at the meeting. He knew that this guy had this position, and this one had that one. He could play them nicely, to get the debate going, to shape the discussion and outcome. I don't know if he did it intentionally, but the staff he picked all had very close ties back to the agencies: Hal and Bill Hyland back in State and CIA. I knew the Defense bureaucracy and I had an Army colonel, an Air Force colonel, and a Navy guy, all of whom could work back through the Joint Staff. Most of the NSC regional people came out of State. It was a very close relationship.

DESTLER: But the Lake and Watts memos in the package argue, whether correctly or not, that that system was breaking down. That the State people were cooperating less. That they're being punished.

LEWIS: It was breaking down when they wrote the memos.

DESTLER: And essentially, the argument is that State people are being punished for cooperating because the Secretary is retaliating. Is that consistent with people's memories? Am I overstating that?

LEWIS: I was back at State at that point, and I sure didn't see any evidence anyone was being punished. You know, in the Latin American area in that period, Vaky had just come over from State, to Kissinger. I had just come back to the bureau. We just kind of changed places, basically. And every issue was worked out jointly. This was true in the Middle East area also, later on, after 1969-70, when Kissinger began to take hold of the Middle East. Then the relationship between the NSC Middle East work and the State Middle East work grew together. And actually, ever since 1970, say, up until now – this is 1998 – you've had a remarkably symbiotic relationship between the NSC and the State Department on Arab-Israeli affairs.

[25] Leon Fuerth served as a Foreign Service Officer at this time.

LORD: Sisco[26] used to come over to the White House and work with Kissinger as NSC adviser.

GUHIN: Yes. It's amazing that it's gone on without really any interruption.

DESTLER: I remember talking to Bill Quandt[27] about Camp David and everything at the very time when the Vance[28]-Brzezinski thing was heating up. He said "No, they worked together on the Middle East." On the Middle East things were working fine.

LEWIS: I think that went off the track when Dick Allen[29] was there for Reagan, and there wasn't any effective NSC.

DAALDER: And Lebanon.

LEWIS: Actually, it didn't go off with Lebanon so much over the NSC problem. It went off with Lebanon over the Pentagon problem. The issue really was the Shultz-Weinberger[30] relationship, not so much the NSC-State relationship, although that was also a problem.

DAALDER: That period is atypical.

MOOSE: I mean, obviously, the Arab-Israeli thing is the ultimate sort of special case. State, by and large, has had the lead on that, which has served the White House's purpose, because a President usually will want to stay back. The practice has been for the President to stay at some remove from that in case it goes bad, but to be ready to move in, in case he can make some hay out of it. So that it served their purpose well to play it that way, and to work together. And State has appeared to be the dominant partner in that most of the time, because it's pretty high-risk.

LEWIS: But I would say that Presidents haven't had that reticence much since 1977.

MOOSE: To play a direct leading role?

LEWIS: Since Kissinger took it on.

LORD: Yeah, but he took it on when he was Secretary of State. Rogers was poking around in the Middle East in '69 and Henry was going up the wall, and nothing happened. And then Henry began to get involved more and more.

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[26] Joseph Sisco, a Foreign Service Officer, was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs after Henry A. Kissinger became Secretary of State.
[27] William Quandt served on the staff of President Carter's NSC.
[28] Cyrus Vance, President Carter's Secretary of State.
[29] Richard Allen was the first of President Reagan's six National Security Advisers.
[30] George Shultz was President Reagan's Secretary of State; Caspar Weinberger was President Reagan's Secretary of Defense.

DAVIDSON: But at that time, Henry still felt insecure enough that a Jew shouldn't be dealing with the Middle East. Later, he got more confidence.

SOLOMON: Let me make a general comment that picks up on a point that Sam made. As you do your scholarly analysis, don't take the formal bureaucratic structure too seriously. There's one important element that you haven't discussed, which are people totally outside the formal system who can have a profound effect on policy.

Let me give you a recent example: the sale of F-16s to Taiwan. That was a maneuver worked out by McDonnell-Douglas in advance of the '92 [Presidential] campaign. They knew they had one or two friendly interlocutors in the State-NSC system, but they worked the issue through a political channel. They knew that the State Department was totally opposed to the sale, and I'm not sure, but I think the NSC may have had mixed positions. But basically, they went through a political channel in taking advantage of Bush's need for political support out of Texas, where these planes were produced. They precipitated a favorable decision without any of this policy review activity. I'm sure we could come up with lots of other examples.

LORD: I can't think of an example of that during the Nixon-Kissinger NSC period.

SOLOMON: You cannot?

LORD: No. I don't think there was much political input.

ODEEN: One exception would be the approach to SALT II in that period. SALT I had been this grand triumph, and then in the aftermath we fired everybody that had been involved in it.

DESTLER: The firing may have been a sideline.

ODEEN: There was also a lot of pressure from [Senator] Scoop Jackson and people who shared his views, a lot of it coming through Al Haig, I think. What the issues and goals were going to be for SALT II in part came out of a group on the Hill. Richard Perle was on the Jackson staff at the time, as was Dorothy Fosdick. There was a whole group that had a lot of clout with some of the political types in the White House. This had a major influence on the early direction of SALT.

DESTLER: Wil Kohl.

KOHL: I was going to jump in a few speakers back. One of the problems you have in a study, if you're going to compare different administrations, is the totally different style and structure. Each President sets up his own foreign policy system with different procedures and personalities.

The NSC system, when it functions as a multiple advocacy system, for some people an ideal model, obviously works best if you have an issue area that's new or that requires analysis of a lot of technical information. But this may not be the way things work if a highly charged

political issue is at stake. If the President wants to take early control of that kind of issue, then he uses the NSC quite differently. So it's a really tricky thing to compare across administrations.

LEWIS: You know, the only President since Eisenhower who hasn't wanted to use the NSC as a control mechanism and make it possible for him to make a lot of foreign policy in areas where he wanted to make it was that curious first part of the Reagan administration. That's the only time it didn't work that way. Ford went back to it. Certainly Carter used it that way. And certainly his successors have.

So I think that's the exception. Once you got away from the Eisenhower chief-of-staff concept, which reflected his own background, his own way of operating a large organization, no other President, it seems to me, has avoided using it, a lot of the time, as a way to extend his own arms into the bureaucracy. He could thereby make sure he was in control of those sensitive negotiations and back-channel contacts with foreign leaders that he wanted to keep personal control over. A President can't do that alone, or even with one or two aides. He needs a staff, but one small enough to keep things secret. Whatever else they do, they're used that way.

KOHL: What about under Clinton?

GUHIN: I think there's a difference in Clinton, very much so. I don't want to characterize it unfairly, but I think in Kissinger's time you saw what I would call overt efforts to use and manipulate the system in a way which gave you the flexibility to do what you thought were constructive or positive things, active things. I would characterize the process today as hedging and damage limitation, with fewer opportunities for creativity or initiative.

LEWIS: Well, you now have a President who is not by temperament or instinct an activist kind of operator in foreign affairs. And therefore he has tended to rely more on other people to do the action. But every now and then he has used it that way. Gerry Ford didn't use it that way. I mean, once Kissinger went to the State Department, basically Ford did not use Scowcroft's NSC staff in that model. So there's another exception.

DESTLER: Wasn't the Nixon system unique in the degree to which there were several major lines of action and negotiation going on, in which the senior people were seriously excluded?

LEWIS: But Kennedy had an equal number of White House initiatives, it seems to me, though the staff was smaller.

SOLOMON: So much smaller.

DESTLER: The staff was much smaller. You may be right, but I don't have the sense that it was operationally exclusive to the degree that Nixon was. With Kennedy, there was a lot of initiative from the White House.

LEWIS: That's right. It was unique. In numbers of initiatives.

MOOSE: Bundy worried about the State Department doing things that he didn't know about, such as the whole MLF [Multilateral Force] cabal, of which Hal was a junior member at the time, run by Bob Schaetzel and George Ball.[31] You know, it drove Bundy crazy trying to figure out what they were up to.

LEWIS: Nixon and Kissinger carried White House initiatives to the ultimate expression.

LORD: And it got to be very awkward. For example, often on Vietnam, or China, or arms control, you'd have to prepare a meeting of senior officials, or even a trip. State might not even know about the initiative. But if they knew about it, then they would get a sanitized MEMCON, as opposed to the real MEMCON. The classic example was the trip to China. We were on this small plane, purportedly going to India, Pakistan, Vietnam and Thailand. We had briefing books, and I had to maintain three sets of briefing books, on the same small airplane, that we were passing around. I'm dead serious.

DESTLER: And if you make one mistake you're dead.

LEWIS: Were there different color covers?

LORD: One set for those who were going into China, namely Smyser, Lord, Holdridge, and Kissinger. Another set were for those knowing that people were going into China, but were part of the cover team staying back in Pakistan, namely Hal Saunders and one or two others. And then the third briefing book was for those who didn't even know there was going to be a China leg. And I swear to God, we'd get them all updated and I'd put my head on a pillow, and Kissinger would then wake up and look at it and want it redone again, and I've got to do all three all over again. It's one thing to redo a memo, but to redo three versions! But that was the classic sick case.

DESTLER: Now, is the third group actually – the third group is actually on the airplane?

LORD: They were all on the airplane. You not only had to be careful. You can't have people looking over your shoulder. You'd got to hand out the right book to the right person.

DESTLER: And they had to be taken care of during the two days or so in Pakistan.

LORD: And Kissinger, if the right person got the wrong book, would not be overly relaxed in his reaction.

LEWIS: If you read, you know, his first volume, he talks about –

DESTLER: There's a fair amount of that in there, right.

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[31] Robert Schaetzel served as Assistant Secretary for European Affairs under President Kennedy. George Ball served as Undersecretary of State under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

DAALDER: We have a memo here from Scowcroft to Kissinger regarding classified information that State is requesting. It's a wonderful memo: provide the summary, but take the following four things out of the MEMCON, just ignore the request as recommendations; Sonnenfeldt, do a sanitized summary, and, subject to your approval, then provide it to State. It's a wonderful memo on how openness in government contributes to good policy.

(Dinner Break.)

DAALDER: What I think would be helpful is, one, to ask if there's anything that somebody thought of in the last half an hour, and with some liberal use of alcohol, really wants to say that hasn't been said before. Otherwise, I think there's sort of a couple of issues that we would be interested in. One is to step out of the Nixon administration. Mac and I are writing a book that goes well beyond the Nixon administration to the whole NSC. And if there's anything that you would like to discuss about the NSC as it works today, or how you would structure it in the future, if you were asked to do so. A second issue that we would be very interested in is, what do you think – this is the issue that Mac raised at the end, or I think Sam Lewis raised – is the impact of the NSC on the performance of other agencies? Dick Moose was just starting to get into the question of how you reform the State Department and the relationship between that and what the President wants out of the State Department, doesn't seem to get out of the State Department, and therefore seems to get into the White House. And third, any other issues that you would like to bring up. We have 45 minutes, because we have a number of people who need to get cars out of the garage.

SOLOMON: Let me give you one perspective. You're cutting into this problem from the inside out. And one thing you might find of interest is to talk to a Korean, talk to a Brit, talk to a you-name-it. They see a measure of interagency coordination that most foreign governments do not have. The Koreans and the Japanese, you know, are locked into a system of bureaucratic turf wars, which are natural to the system. But this interagency process that grew out of World War II works reasonably well. It works very differently under different administrations. But at least there is a structure that has grown up over four or five decades that does structure interagency policy, policy fights and coordination. And a lot of governments around the world don't have that.

ODEEN: I'd like Mac to ask the question to Win Lord that we mentioned over drinks, namely, whether with the three priority issues in the Nixon and Kissinger period, the NSC system made a difference?

DESTLER: Yes. The big defense of the Nixon system has been results. Look what happened: we got a Vietnam agreement, we got a SALT agreement, and a new relationship with the Soviet Union. Exhibit A tends to be China. So the question becomes, could these things have been done by more democratic, more participatory, more open means?

LORD: The first issue I should point to is that I think it can never be done again this way. The government just cannot function the way the NSC did in the Nixon era, in terms of

secrecy and exclusion of other agencies. I just don't think it's possible with the leaking and with the press attention. I think that era is gone. Whether you consider it good or bad, I don't think you're ever going to have as secretive or controlled an operation.

ODEEN: How many independent counsels would have been named if you had that now?

LORD: That's right. That wasn't your question, but I wanted to give you the answer anyway. Secondly, Kissinger himself, whether he did it for PR reasons, or out of genuine anguish, or politeness, has said that this was in a way, in many ways, a crazy system. He would, of course, also explain that he got good results. And that, lo and behold, he mistreated Bill Rogers and so on, although a lot of this was President Nixon's fault, not his. But he would admit he didn't resist the Nixon approach.

So far I haven't answered your question. I'm giving you what is a typical State Department answer now. I'm slicing this thing. Did you have to be as secretive as we were, or could you have had more openness? I think the answer is, you could have brought in a couple of key State people on each of these issues and sworn them to secrecy and used their expertise and had more bureaucratic support in a crunch. On China, I think we could have had Marshall Green in there, and I don't think it was foreordained that everything had to leak. You would have to tell Rogers, too. We would have had more expertise. Holdridge knew something about China, I didn't know a hell of a lot even though I was married to a Chinese, and Kissinger knew nothing about China. I think we pulled it off extremely well, but I think we could have probably had some greater help, even though we did get some help on some of the papers.

ODEEN: But you couldn't have done a NSSM or something like that. You would have been dead.

LORD: Yes, I don't think you could have gone to a much more open process. I would argue a real case for tight control and secrecy on China. We paid a price with Japan and others. That's another issue where we could have done something different. So I think, if I have to give you a quick answer on China and Vietnam, if I had to do it over again, I'd say, "Keep a very tight hold." We would probably have to do the secret negotiations – even those would be tough now – to make progress. But also involve State in a very close-held way. And I think it would have been worth running that risk.

But that's retrospective. And I would certainly argue in the case of China we did pretty damn well, despite this crazy system. In the case of Vietnam, that's an emotional issue, and everybody can disagree on that. On Russia, I yield to others.

DAALDER: On China, the involvement of State would be important in order to get the expertise, or because you want an open system, or because the results would have been better?

LORD: Frankly, to be honest, and this is self-serving, I don't think the results would have been any better, because I don't see how you could do much better than we did, except for the fallout with Japan, and then the question is, could you have at least done better there? But in terms of negotiating with the Chinese, I don't think we would have gotten a better communiqué or a better deal early on if we had State. But I still feel it would have been useful to have State there in dealing with the Chinese, and also it would have been much less messy at the end, where the State Department had to climb in on the communiqué at the last minute, for bureaucratic support.

DAALDER: It would have been more useful in terms of the internal bureaucratic politics to have the State Department, but from the perspective of whether this is a good or a bad policy –

LORD: I don't think there would have been a major policy difference. And I think the counter-arguments would be that we would have had leaks, we would have had people knowing we were dealing with the Chinese, and therefore our allies, the Congress and the conservatives would have caused a backlash and boxed us in. That's why even the trip had to be secret. We didn't dare go to the Japanese, the argument ran, because it would leak out of there. I still feel Holdridge or myself or somebody should have gone to Tokyo, seen the prime minister and said, "You can't tell anybody, but at least you can say to the press afterwards you knew about it in advance."

DESTLER: Alex Johnson went part of the way – he flew to California –

LORD: No. Alex Johnson found out about it on the way to California from me on the airplane.

DESTLER: Wasn't he supposed to fly from there to Tokyo, and then he was called off?

LORD: He was on the way to San Clemente. So the counter-arguments therefore were that the opening would have leaked, and we wouldn't have gotten it. And also, you've got to remember, the State Department, at least parts of it, basically were saying that we would alienate the Russians if we opened up with the Chinese. Also, at least from Henry's perspective, the State Department was hung up on trade, cultural exchanges, and all this stuff which was secondary compared to the geopolitics and the Russian and Vietnamese dimensions.

SOLOMON: That was the Vance-Brzezinski fight.

MOOSE: I want to suggest that, you know, as legitimate as it is to look at why things happened in the way that they did in the bureaucratic politics then, that as you who are doing this study are looking forward, you don't want to make yourselves prisoners of a process of analysis that looks and says, everything has to be determined on what is a right and proper role of the NSC or the State Department, or this or that. What happened was that as

circumstances changed, Kissinger was operating outside of an established dynamic, and he was drawing on different people.

You were a Foreign Service Officer at State, weren't you, Win?

LORD: I had been laundered in the Pentagon under Halperin and [Leslie] Gelb.

MOOSE: You know, when we talk about how the system should evolve, you want to break out of traditional notions of the role the State Department ought to play, the appropriate role the NSC ought to play, because it's varied widely among Presidents, and ask, in the modern world, the world that we live in, what is an effective way to mobilize the energies in the decision-making process of the nation and all the constituencies. Chuck Krulak is carrying on a campaign as Commandant of the Marine Corps to review the National Security Act [of 1947], saying that you've got to bring in lots of interests that are not now reflected in there. You know, you need to get governors, and you need to get other kinds of people in there, because we're going to be involved, and the national security threat is much larger than is recognized in the National Security Act of 1947. And we're still trapped in analyzing this national security decision-making process in the old forms that many of us came into the government with – the White House and the NSC and the State Department and the Department of Defense – but the world has changed. There are many more players now, and they relate to each other in very different kinds of ways.

LORD: And the obvious economic dimension. But that's a very important point. There's no ideal system. First of all, it changes because the world changes and the agenda changes. But secondly, what counts is what the President wants. And I think you had a unique confluence in the early '70s that we'll never have again, and not just for the reasons I mentioned: the newspaper attention to leaks, and the nature of the agenda, but you also had a very knowledgeable President, very versed, and wanting to control policy, a brilliant National Security Adviser, a strong staff underneath him, a loyal and not particularly aggressive or hard-working Secretary of State, and issues, as I said earlier, that lent themselves to secrecy and control, at least with the Communist autocrats. You put all that together, and it's not going to happen again.

SOLOMON: The question about what the President wants is critical. If the President says, "What do I do?" that's a very different situation from the President saying, "I want to do *this*, help me make it happen." And clearly what you had under Nixon and Kissinger was a President who knew what he wanted to do, and he used the NSC mechanism to make it happen.

SONNENFELDT: With our current President, it may be a situation of "What is it that I have to do?"

MOOSE: Or "What do the polls suggest that I should do?"

SOLOMON: Again, don't be too rigid in your analysis of bureaucratic structures. There's an awful lot that goes on outside of the official lines of authority. On the NSC in my time, particularly on the Asia issues, I developed a dialogue with some press people because what Henry was telling them was usually very different from what I saw going on, and I had to know the difference between Henry's "inside" game and his "outside" game. You know, I couldn't do my job unless I knew the difference.

DESTLER: And that's how you found out what was going on, to some degree.

SOLOMON: Similarly on the intelligence, one of the big costs –

MOOSE: That's the way it was with me in Vietnam. I mean, I was in charge of coordinating, you know, in Vietnam, the press coverage. I didn't believe anything in the intelligence community, but what could I believe?

SOLOMON: The one price that Henry paid in terms of the China opening, in terms of his dealings with the intelligence community, was that the compartmentalization of the policy process meant that he couldn't even turn to the CIA for support in learning about senior Chinese leaders that Winston and others ran into in Pakistan on the first trips. These leaders had been dealt with by the OSS in the 1940s in Chungking, Yenan and elsewhere, and there are bales of documents on these contacts out in Warrenton, or wherever the CIA has its files. But because no one was tasked to go look at this material, we never drew on our past experience in dealing with people like Zhang Wenjin, Han Xu, or whomever. We had past dealings with these people, and it had been reported back during World War II. But because the management of the issue in the Nixon period was so compartmentalized, it never got looked at.

Finally, I developed a covert "off-line" arrangement with CIA analysts to draw on the intelligence community's expertise and grasp of history – despite Henry's efforts to compartmentalize the process. We were getting stuff in the discussions with Chinese leaders in '73 and '74, very interesting stuff related to China's internal politics. Well, Henry didn't want any of this information out of the NSC system, but I had a relationship where I could at least test some of my own ideas about what was going on with these intelligence analysts who did have access to history and a database that otherwise was not being brought into the system.

ODEEN: There's a lesser issue you might look at, and that's the difference in makeup of the NSC. Compare Henry's people who had these relationships with Brzezinski's NSC staff. You had lots of outsiders who had little or no experience with the bureaucracy. They didn't have those long relationships. They had to work with these people, and didn't understand them or have the ability to tap into the bureaucracy for data.

LEWIS: One of the great costs of the Nixon-Kissinger kind of NSC, over time, is that very few key facts from their operations get into the regular repositories of information that we alluded to. People who in the next administration, or an administration later, end up having to deal with some of the same people, leaders, don't ever see the MEMCONs, the telegrams, the

real historical record, what actually goes on in Kissinger-style diplomacy. That all goes away with Kissinger, who takes it home.

DAVIDSON: The State Department has had the problem with its own files.

LEWIS: Much less so.

DAVIDSON: No. Not less.

LEWIS: Much less so. And also the sensitivity of the kinds of communications is slightly different.

LORD: Well, we did brief Oksenberg[32] and company, including on MEMCONs. I'm not sure that's entirely right, Sam. Not the system, but certainly Oksenberg.

LEWIS: Oksenberg, as a scholar, he left.

DAALDER: But that's a problem that is endemic in this system of government. I mean, you walk in on January 21st –

LEWIS: No, but it's not. It's endemic about the White House.

DAALDER: About the White House, right, exactly.

LEWIS: I'm saying that this disconnect between the White House operations and all the regular statutory agencies –

DAALDER: But that's not a Nixon-Kissinger issue, it's a White House issue, right?

LEWIS: But it's accentuated when the White House is doing the sensitive diplomacy.

MOOSE: It's critical that there be a corporate memory for dealing with some of these problems. I was confronted the last time I was in the State Department with some declassification cases, which had come to maturity, I guess, over 20 or 30 years. And I had occasion to go back to some of our ambassadors currently serving, and talk to them and ask them if they knew, in specific countries, of certain decisions or strategy tactics that were followed at the time. Some of cases were Asian, one of them was in Latin America, concerning things that we had done in the middle '50s and later. And they didn't really know, and they were playing their hand in those countries without really understanding what it is that the United States had done at that time. And in these cases, there were things that were really driven out of the White House. They were playing a blind hand when the government leaders in these countries, many of them, understood they had been the target of our tactics. That is really serious. I can't say that any bad things happened as a result of this, but the potential was there.

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[32] Michel Oksenberg served as a senior Asia specialist on the Carter NSC staff.

DESTLER: One solution, and I'd put the "solution" in quotes, is to have some continuity in the NSC staff. But obviously that, number one, depends on the incoming President, and his willingness to do that. And number two, only if the continuity really means something. Because if the people who continue on are suspect, or thought of as the people whose policy you're trying to change, or with the wrong set of political loyalties, they may not be included in the real policy discussion.

DAALDER: That doesn't work. I know when you moved from Bush to Clinton, there were a number of people who were the same in the NSC staff, but their files were gone, literally. On the 20th of January, they had files, on the 21st of January, they had no files.

LEWIS: Things can't be opaque because the NSC files don't go.

MOOSE: Johnson's NSC files were totally cleaned out. That is what's in the vault.

LEWIS: Each of the files of the staffers was maintained intact. That is, the stuff in the EOB was all still there after Johnson left.

MOOSE: That's what the staffers chose to maintain, which may have been a highly subjective choice.

DAVIDSON: I would repeat that I don't think the State Department, itself, is that different. I can think of two incidents, both of which are very major. One was when Nasser closed the Gulf, Abba Eban came and read to Rusk a statement guaranteeing the United States would keep it open, which we gave them in the previous war.[33] Rusk stormed out and said, "Where the hell is it? He wasn't making it up." And they found it in Princeton in the library.

SOLOMON: The Israelis do that all the time.

LEWIS: Wait a minute, Dan, the story is not quite that. It was a letter from Eisenhower. Therefore, it was a Presidential file, not a State Department file. Eisenhower took it off to Gettysburg, and they found it in the Gettysburg Eisenhower library. That's where it turned up. That's not a State Department problem, that's a White House problem.

DAVIDSON: I'll give this, the one I know because I was involved in. Just around the time Adlai Stevenson died, there was something in the newspaper that he told something to [UN Secretary General] U Thant, who called up Rusk with some real serious [Vietnam] peace initiative. Rusk remembered something happened. He didn't know what. I was given everything that a secretary took listening on the phone, every bit of documentation, and after a day I reported back to him, there's no way to reconstruct it.

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[33] A month before the outbreak of the Middle East war of June 1967, Egyptian President Gamal Abd an-Nasser had closed the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping. Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban visited Washington to appeal to President Johnson for assistance on the basis of a guarantee given by President Eisenhower after the 1956 Sinai War.

MOOSE: There is no institutional history of a controlled sort in this government. It goes back based on the amount of documentation that you can put in a file drawer, or the tenure of a country director.

LEWIS: These bureaucratic tensions and divisions, and personality things that we're talking about, put our country at a disadvantage in being able to play its role.

DAALDER: Well, it's well to remember, I think, what Dick Solomon said at the outset, that we do a lot better in terms of interagency coordination than anybody else does.

SOLOMON: It depends on the particular administration or government. The Filipinos don't run a systematic government. They don't do systematic analysis. During the military bases negotiation in 1991, we had to coach them through the whole process.

MOOSE: Do you think the Chinese don't do a better job?

SOLOMON: The Chinese are very disciplined. All of Henry's discussions, or Nixon's with Mao, were recorded verbatim in little booklets. I remember when Deng Xiaoping and Henry had a difference over what Chairman Mao said about Taiwan and how long it might take to solve the problem. Mao had mentioned it might take 100 years, and there was a difference of opinion over the phrasing. During an exchange with Deng on this issue, a little gal ran in with a little pamphlet, a little booklet, which had the verbatim Chinese of what the Chairman had said, and of course we had good records for that period, so we could handle the dispute in terms of the record. But there's a long history of the Israelis, for example, coming to us with our own documents from other administrations that our officials do not have access to.

LEWIS: The Israelis have a great file system. And besides, the same people are still there. So they have both the memory and also the files.

MOOSE: I used to live in Chelsea, and we had an apartment that looked down over a park that had a chess table built into a concrete thing there on the corner, and there was one guy who played chess there all the time. He was really good. And, you know, he played everybody who came. It was a revolving cast of characters. And if you think about the Israelis or the Chinese, or some other characters, they're the guy who was always there on the park bench, and these other challengers come and go. And they're always sitting there, and our team is coming and going, and this one is fighting that one, and then the whole team changes.

SOLOMON: The lack of that institutional continuity in the U.S. government really can hurt your policies. There's a famous – infamous – example in the China case where the Shanghai Communiqué had an involuted phrase about the United States acknowledging that all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait say that there is one China, and the U.S. does not dispute what the Chinese say. Well, when it got to the Carter administration handling normalization, the Chinese played a little game. They got the Carter people to agree *directly* that *we*

acknowledge there's only one China. This was a critical modification of our position; it pushed us over the line in a significant way. This was a result of somebody not really holding that record of the past discussions in their heads and realizing what the Chinese game was.

MOOSE: You see, if you think about what are useful, effective solutions for tomorrow today, we're hung up because we're analyzing – as we look forward, we're still captured by Henry versus the State Department, and whether the State Department is going to do this or that, or these kinds of machinations that go on. But they're not a very good model. Actually, they're a bad lesson to apply to tomorrow. You can't operate like that anymore. It's not appropriate.

ODEEN: Let me raise one issue, maybe in a different direction. A problem, perhaps not in the State Department, but at least in the Pentagon, is that the civil service quality had deteriorated dramatically over time, and especially since the Cold War ended. I assume it's probably true at the State as well. But the quality of the career people at the Pentagon has declined. I'm not talking about the political appointees, necessarily, and it may not be true at the State. At the same time, you've had a dramatic improvement in the quality of the military officers that are working these issues. The power has really shifted.

DESTLER: The military has a better system, too, now, after JCS reform.

ODEEN: Well, you get the very best people into these "joint assignments," also.

LEWIS: When you get to analyzing the Bush NSC experience, it might be interesting. It seems to me that from what I saw from the outside – I wasn't in the Bush administration, but I've read quite a bit about the product – and it seems to me that the Secretary of State with his little entourage and quite a lot of secrecy, because of his close relationship with the President, worked well with the White House. The NSC staff and the State Department were actually meshing quite well during the Bush years. And it was more open, also.

DESTLER: Open at that level, anyway.

LEWIS: Yes, at that level, and open to enough people, so that you were drawing on quite a lot of expertise from the bureaucracy without sacrificing Presidential control. And I don't know, but that depends an awful lot on the peculiar situation of having a President with foreign policy interests and expertise, and a Secretary of State who is his best friend, more or less, and very able guys –

DESTLER: And these guys who had all gotten together first in the Ford administration. They knew each other, and they worked with each other.

DAALDER: This was a very small group.

GUHIN: I was going to say, I thought the complaint was that State was basically out of the picture.

LEWIS: The Secretary *always* complains about being out of the picture.

GUHIN: I understand that.

DESTLER: The Secretary was in the picture. But the Secretary was not that popular outside the 7th Floor.

SOLOMON: First of all, if you read the Bush/Scowcroft memoir, you almost never see the name of [Secretary of State] James Baker. Yes, they were good friends, but there was a lot of tension there, and there was a lot of sniping in that volume about Baker. What happened is, you had compartmentalization of management of China policy. Baker dropped China like a hot potato right after Tiananmen. The NSC-State coordination, which was pretty good, was basically carried out by Scowcroft and Larry Eagleburger. The two of them liked each other, they worked very closely, they lived together on the phone. That was the level at which you had bureaucratic coordination.

DAALDER: On Europe and Russia, they had it. But that was because you had Zoellick and Condi and Blackwill[34] and they all worked together.

LEWIS: OK, but they worked together within a context set by their bosses, which made it work. The people are key, I agree with you.

DAALDER: Europe and Russia is the exception.

LORD: It was pretty smooth and harmonious-looking from the outside. It might have been misleading, but certainly compared with Brzezinski and Vance or Kissinger and Rogers, anything would look harmonious.

LEWIS: Or Shultz and Weinberger.

DAALDER: Clinton looks harmonious from the outside, too.

SOLOMON: The worst outcome, frankly, I've seen is in the Carter and the Clinton administrations, where people don't want to fight, and therefore they don't argue about policy, and it ends up producing bad policy.

LORD: Yes. Drift.

SOLOMON: There was a lot of punch-pulling in those administrations because they held the notion that "We don't want to have big fights like our predecessors, and we're all going to try to get along."

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[34] Robert Zoellick served as counselor to Secretary of State James Baker. Condoleeza Rice and Robert Blackwill served on the staff of the Bush NSC.

LORD: That's the downside of harmony.

LEWIS: They had fights over Russia in the Carter administration and the Clinton administration.

MOOSE: But isn't that one of the stories of the first Clinton administration? Bill Perry[35] moved in and said, "If nobody's going to make a decision, I'm going to do something."

LEWIS: Warren Christopher[36] didn't like to fight. That was part of the problem. He really didn't.

GUHIN: But I think this comes back to what Richard and Win said, this really reflects the President's interest and where they're going and what they want to do, because if the President had certain desires, you would have a Secretary of State that wants to fight. That clearly reflects, I think, the overall leadership, how people want to organize themselves.

SOLOMON: You've got to look at the individual senior officials – Shultz and Weinberger, for instance, really did not like each other. But they'd work together; they would have lunch together every week. They kept their differences under control. Vance-Brzezinski, you know, that was a nasty relationship – and it permeated down through the layers of the system.

LEWIS: Wait a minute, Dick, come on. Shultz and Weinberger kept it under control between the two of them, but there was no coordination of the policy. Each one carried out their own policy. And nobody in the White House would crack the whip. It was a disaster.

GUHIN: Can I get away from the bureaucratics for a minute? Something that keeps striking me here – and I guess I'm very fond of this era, and the group of people here, but I think we're looking at a crack group. I'm wondering how much of this is cultural and built-in. In other words, you saw in our time both the President and a National Security Adviser who wanted to keep things mixed up, and to exercise their authority. They were not afraid of decisions. And I think one has to take a look at what Win said is the objective policy that flowed from that. I would suggest, by the way, it was a very high-quality policy.

The mood in many administrations is just the opposite. You don't want conflict, you don't want dissent, you do not want options. The last thing you want, as a President, is options. You want, in fact, to see if you can iron things out below, and if you can't, then you will have to take a look at some, but you didn't thrive on difference or controversy. And my sense is that in the Nixon period there was a thriving in the policy sense. I remember one of the differences I've seen, and it's purely personal – I remember spending ages doing studies, trying to get agreement at least as to what the facts were, just what were the facts, quite apart from arguments, what the hell were the facts. Nowadays, in many senses, I think the facts are irrelevant. You don't have facts, in a sense – you have "Some people believe *this*, other people believe *this*," or "One can view it *this* way, others can view it *this* way."

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[35] William Perry served as President Clinton's second Secretary of Defense.
[36] Warren Christopher served as President Clinton's first Secretary of State.

LORD: On that point, I remember Henry just going ballistic once when Laird and Rogers sent over a joint memo to the President. Henry went absolutely crazy, you know.

LEWIS: "They're ganging up against me."

LORD: The diplomacy wasn't working.

ODEEN: That's right.

LORD: They're putting the President – as he said – in an impossible position, because how is he going to deal with it?

LEWIS: I think there's a little too much generalization here. Christopher was a great guy for consensus. Madeleine[37] is not a person for consensus. Today there is far more argument about policy than there was with Christopher. So the system changes with the players. Moreover, I don't think necessarily you can say that –

DAALDER: On Madeleine, she doesn't take it to the President. And one of the interesting things – and I think Mike is right about this – one of the interesting things is that the President wants a consensus decision from his principals, and if he doesn't get it, he doesn't want to hear about it.

GUHIN: On the other hand, he leaves it up to her and others to do a lot of things.

LORD: But he doesn't back her up on a lot of things, such as "Let's get tough on Netanyahu," "Let's get tough with Saddam," "Let's get tough with the Serbs."

DESTLER: Yes, she's gone out on some limbs, and she hasn't been –

DAALDER: I agree with you, she's a very different player than Christopher, but with this President you've got that problem.

LEWIS: And also, you've that kind of Secretary of Defense. You know, Carter was not adverse to controversy at all. Carter wanted options. Carter got options, he'd wade through them all himself.

LORD: Sometimes in the same speech. The famous Russian speech was half by Vance and half by Brzezinski. Unbelievable.

LEWIS: But I think it's a mistake to generalize, it wasn't only in the Nixon era that you had Presidents who wanted to have issues brought with variety. You know, the problem wasn't that he didn't want to see options.

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[37] Madeleine Albright, President Clinton's second Secretary of State.

GUHIN: I agree with you. I'm not characterizing one system as – I think there are gradations all along and it depends on the leadership in many ways. I mean, you can even look at the early years – you look at Reagan's years sometimes and there was a tremendous surge in a lot of areas towards consensus again.

DAALDER: He didn't want options.

LEWIS: He had three ideas. As long as people followed those, everybody else can do what they want to.

DESTLER: What you seem to be saying, Mike, is that there was a level of professionalism, both in the staff work and in the willingness to fight, that has not always been present in Washington, in subsequent administrations.

GUHIN: I would call it – in fairness, I hate to be self-serving, because it's not for myself – a level of professionalism, and where he got his group from. When Kissinger put that team together, 95 percent of that team was hardcore professionals who knew where things were. I don't mean to be demeaning to others, but there was also, it seemed to me, an intellectual rigor which I have at least seen absent in a lot of NSCs, without characterizing any specifically.

LORD: Kissinger was very demanding.

GUHIN: Unbelievably so.

LEWIS: But you don't have to tell these guys.

DAALDER: You were the subject of the infamous "do it again"?

GUHIN: I went through that. I went one week with four hours of sleep. I think everybody went through that in one way or another.

LORD: One point I want to make very quickly is on the Kissinger era in the State Department. Hal touched on it. The conventional wisdom is that Henry ignored the foreign service and just dealt with the small palace guard, Eagleburger, Lord, Sonnenfeldt, Hyland. It really is not true, as Sam will tell you, and others. What he did was to combine us, and many of us were former FSOs [foreign service officers], with the very best in the foreign service, and he promoted the best FSOs, like [Tom] Enders, [Alfred Leroy] Atherton and [Arthur] Hartman, and – I don't mean to leave anybody out – Brown, Pickering, and these guys to the top positions. And Hartman was as much involved in European policy as Sonnenfeldt. Obviously [Philip] Habib and others in EAP [the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs] were as much involved as I was on China. Atherton worked with Saunders and Sisco on the Mideast. And this was true on all the key issues.

Now, what he did do was two other things. One, he was adverse to having too many people below the Assistant Secretary sitting in on meetings with him, which was pain in the neck, because we had to take the notes, and also you just have to pass it on to your staff at some risk that you'd get in trouble with Henry. I always thought everybody involved should know what the hell was going on, but I was running some risks sometimes. That was a pain in the neck. And secondly, of course, he continued to mistreat and ignore most ambassadors. There were exceptions. When Hermann Eilts was sitting in Cairo, he dealt with him. But others, he would deal behind them. Overall, however, the fact is that morale in the State Department under Henry, particularly if you were at a fairly high level, was very high.

LEWIS: Morale on the sixth floor was good. Below the sixth floor it was terrible.

LORD: That's correct. Also, State was clearly in the lead in influence because of Henry.

LEWIS: But you know, I think this question of how he treated ambassadors, and how some other secretaries have dealt with ambassadors, is worth at least, you know, a few paragraphs somewhere in your book, because you really do, I think, hinder the ongoing nature of American diplomatic impact abroad when the Secretary of State deliberately makes it clear to everybody that he regards the ambassador and his staff as just water boys. If he's got lousy ambassadors he ought to change them. But when he's got good ones he ought to use them. And occasionally, Henry would use them.

LORD: Absolutely.

LEWIS: You know, most Presidents are rather discriminating about the ambassadors they use and don't use. But Henry was the worst, I think. He used the fewest. And when you go to a country, and more and more, you know, Secretaries of State do a lot of diplomacy and travel. If you go to the country and you carry on sensitive negotiations with the head of state, with your personal assistant, and the ambassador is sitting outside in the anteroom, it's really like he's having both his arms cut off.

LORD: I don't get the impression it's happened in recent years very much.

LEWIS: Yes, it still happens. Not so much, but yes, it still happens. Not as much, but it's a continuing – but Henry really set, I think, the model for that, a bad model.

You worked with both the Clinton NSC staff, and of course the Kissinger and Scowcroft NSC staff. How would you characterize the NSC staff in this era?

DESTLER: And also the Reagan administration.

LORD: I was in China.

LEWIS: But in Washington, you were an intimate. How would you characterize the NSC staff in this era?

LORD: Well, it sounds self-serving, but it clearly isn't the quality that we had. Henry's staff really was special. Along with my policy planning staff, it was extraordinary.

SOLOMON: Henry recruited a whole generation of first-class specialists. If you look around the system today, he recruited the key players in many fields in a way that hasn't been done before.

LORD: The big difference, though, and it was a big advantage for me, was that in the Clinton administration I had someone sitting in the NSC, namely [Senior Director for East Asia] Stan Roth, who was totally open, and also very good. And so he'd be drafting a memo to the President and give me a crack at it, and vice versa. And that really makes your work a lot easier and more pleasant. And that was true of some relationships between State and White House under Clinton, and it was not true of others. Stan and I had the best one I've ever seen, actually. It was just fabulous. But you cannot generalize. It's a mixed bag on quality, it seems to me. I'm talking about the first term, now, I can't judge the second term. You had some strong people and some weak people. You had some areas where State was clearly in the lead, others where the White House was in the lead.

LEWIS: There wasn't any – in my experience in the first couple of years in the administration, there really wasn't any sanction against cooperation.

LORD: Well, I think it's fair to say there developed some tension between Lake and Christopher. There's no question about that. And there were some issues where there were significant differences. One of the things I worked hardest on was Vietnam normalization. And my biggest problem was not Hanoi but the White House.

LEWIS: But that's a policy difference.

LORD: Yes. So there were differences. So the answer to your question is obviously that State was more in the lead on the whole in this administration than it was during the Nixon administration. But I do think it was fairly congenial, with not too much tension during the first Clinton term.

The one problem is that the NSC had the disadvantage in that they had a President, Clinton, particularly in the first couple of years, who didn't care about foreign policy. And it was hard to get decisions, and he wouldn't get back, and he wouldn't discipline the agencies. The classic case, whatever you thought of modest conditions on MFN with China, was when any chance we had of moving the Chinese on human rights enough so that we could continue MFN without reversing our policy was lost by the economic agencies' undercutting the policy, and the President's not disciplining them. Christopher gets his head handed to him in Beijing in March 1994, comes back and there's no statement out of the White House backing him up. So this was one of the problems you had with Clinton.

SOLOMON: The irony is that this situation was a replay of what Deng Xiaoping did to Christopher's mentor, Cy Vance in '77, an absolute replay of Deng's putdown of Vance in 1977. They put him down because they wanted to stall the normalization talks, but they also wanted to increase their leverage on normalization issues, so they humiliated Vance by saying his positions were a setback and his trip to Beijing had been bad. In this way, they gave an opening to Brzezinski, who picked up the opportunity to supplant Vance as the primary interlocutor with the Chinese. He thus played into Deng's hands.

DESTLER: That's a subject we haven't gotten into, which is very interesting – the degree to which foreign governments play on our rivalries.

SOLOMON: In my book on Chinese negotiating behavior, there's a lot on that issue.

LORD: But in the Kissinger-Nixon era, there was such an unequal contest that other governments didn't try to play it. They knew that they had to deal with the White House.

LEWIS: But on the other hand, the Chinese had psyched Henry out. And they played Schlesinger[38] against him, and they'd drive him crazy.

LORD: Yes, but this was after a few years, in the mid-1970s.

LEWIS: One of the issues that was in your agenda that we haven't touched on is the role of the NSC staffers – not so much the National Security Adviser, but the staffers – was dealing with foreign diplomats, which is an interesting question. I have pretty mixed views about that.

DAALDER: How much of that happened of that under Kissinger?

LORD: The first year, when I was working with Halperin on the NSC planning staff and operations, I wouldn't have had any contact anyway. But after that, when I was Special Assistant for key issues, I didn't have contact either. As for the substantive NSC experts, it varied, but on the whole I don't think there was a great deal. Kissinger had the contact with the ambassadors.

LEWIS: During the Reagan administration, in the Middle East, there was a hell of a lot of it. It was very complicating. It really was, I think, very damaging in many respects.

DAALDER: Well, there is now. I mean, any foreign dignitary coming to town, it has to not just be at State but at the NSC. And depending on what level, they'll meet with the Assistant, the Deputy Assistant or the Senior Director.

LORD: Well, when I was working in the Clinton administration, with my good relationship with Roth, this just didn't happen. And I would often invite Roth to come over and sit in with me, with an ambassador. He may have occasionally seen an ambassador, but if he did, he

[38] James Schlesinger served as Secretary of Defense under President Ford.

would let me know in advance, and we'd go over what would be done. But we had a particularly good relationship.

LEWIS: I think it's okay, we can do it that way, but that depends again on how good the relationship is between the players. But of course, the Israelis have always believed that you have to get to the National Security Adviser or the President.

LORD: Domestic politics.

LEWIS: Correct. They have been playing that card for years, because they know the State Department is historically full of Arabists.

SOLOMON: Not to mention the Congress.

LEWIS: Not to mention the Congress, but a lot of other governments have now followed suit, following the Israeli track.

DESTLER: But it was suggested earlier in our discussion that the Middle East is one of the areas where the record has been most cooperative.

LEWIS: I think it's been cooperative, except in this period of the Reagan era, the early Reagan era, the Lebanon War period, and just after. And then the Iran-Contra mess, which was not a period of great cooperation between the State Department and the White House, to say the least. So the Reagan era is really an exception.

And on Arab-Israeli negotiations, which basically has been okay all along, the Lebanon War and the Iran issue, the hostage issue, these were the ones where the White House went off in one direction and the State Department didn't know what they were doing. Everybody was playing everybody else off against the middle, there was no real National Security Adviser – it was a mess. And Reagan didn't care. He never made any decisions.

DESTLER: On that note, we will conclude. Thank you all very much. This has been both an interesting, and in a lot of ways, a highly professional discussion. And we've enjoyed it. I should say to those of you, Win in particular, who traveled for this, send your expenses.

LORD: You're lucky. It's only going to be one way.

DESTLER: That's what you told me, we're grateful.

LORD: I could have taken the easy route, but it wouldn't be right. Nixon's favorite line.

APPENDIX A: AGENDA

The agenda consisted of the following list of questions, distributed to the participants in advance of the meeting.

1. Beginnings

    a) What was the overriding objective of the new NSC system?
        (1) To assure Presidential control of foreign policy?
        (2) To present the President with the best analysis of available policy options?
        (3) To counter bureaucratic (State) inertia and provide room for policy innovation?

    b) How was the system designed and put in place? What were the roles of Nixon, Kissinger, Goodpaster, Halperin, Eagleburger, others?

    c) What were the main objections from State? Defense? To what degree were they accommodated by White House organizational changes? By defensive actions taken at State and DoD?

    d) To what extent did the system perform as designed in its early months?

2. Broad organizational changes–which were most important?

    a) NSC staff expansion and restructuring

    b) The NSSM process

        (1) What were examples of successful NSSMs?
        (2) What was the trend in their use and utility over time?
        (3) How often, if ever, were there NSSMs on topics proposed by non-NSC officials?

    c) Creation of Senior Review Group (SRG)

    d) Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG)

    e) Defense Program Review Group, Verification Panel, etc.

    f) Use of NSDMs

3. When and how did the system change over time?

   a) From broad policy choices (NSSMs) to day-to-day policy management?

   b) From NSC meetings to SRG to *ad hoc* processes?

   c) From relatively broad agency participation to closed system?

4. The NSC, the President, and the Assistant

   a) What was the role of NSC meetings, and how/how much did the President use them to help reach decisions? How frequently was a NSSM the main agenda item? How successful were Nixon and Kissinger in keeping attendance limited to principals? How and why did the pattern change over the first term?

   b) In his mode of operation and rise to dominance, to what extent did the Assistant reflect the President's desires in managing foreign policy? To what extent were these a product of the Assistant's own ambitions? Did Kissinger's ideas about the Assistant's proper role change over time?

5. How did NSC-State conflict develop, and how was it managed?

   a) Early White House predominance and State response (Lake-Watts memos)

   b) Undersecretaries' Committee and Kissinger-Richardson breakfasts

   c) How and why was NSC-DoD conflict different?

6. The NSC System at Work

   a) What best describes the pattern of operations from mid-1970 to mid-1973?

   b) Did the NSC staff become as operational as Kissinger (in meeting with ambassadors, traveling abroad, negotiating, preparing Presidential communications not cleared with or seen by State, etc.)?

   c) What was the role of the NSC staff after Kissinger moved to State?

APPENDIX B: LIST OF DOCUMENTS

The following documents were distributed to the participants in advance of the meeting.

NA/NPM = National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials.

- NSC Staff Organization, 1969-71, Summary Chart.

- List of all Nixon-Ford National Security Study Memoranda (NSSMs) and National Security Decision Memoranda (NSDMs).

Establishing the System

- Memorandum for the President-elect from Henry A. Kissinger, "Memorandum on a New NSC System," December 27, 1968, 20 pp.

- Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger from General A.J. Goodpaster, "Security Affairs Staff Responsibilities Under President Eisenhower," December 15, 1968, 12 pp.

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