THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY ROUNDTABLES

The Clinton Administration
National Security Council

September 27, 2000

Ivo H. Daalder and I.M. Destler, *Moderators*

Karla J. Nieting, *Rapporteur*

Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland
School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland

The Brookings Institution
Washington, DC

The National Security Council Project

Co-Directors: Ivo H. Daalder and I. M. Destler

Research Assistants: Karla Nieting
Shakira Edwards
Khushali Parikh Shah

Funding for this program has been generously provided by the John M. Olin Foundation.

The Oral History Roundtables

The Nixon Administration National Security Council (December 8, 1998)

International Economic Policymaking and the National Security Council (February 11, 1999)

The Bush Administration National Security Council (April 29, 1999)

The Role of the National Security Advisers (October 25, 1999)

Arms Control and the National Security Council (March 23, 2000)

China Policy and the National Security Council (November 4, 1999), forthcoming

The Clinton Administration National Security Council (September 27, 2000)

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM)
School of Public Affairs
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
(301)405-7601; fax: (301)403-8107
www.puaf.umd.edu/CISSM

The Brookings Institution
1775 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20036
(202)797-6000
fax: (202)797-6003
www.brook.edu

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Clinton administration entered office at a time of great opportunity and challenge. The end of the cold war meant that the new administration had the rare opportunity to craft a foreign policy for a new age. The defining U.S.-Soviet rivalry was gone and the United States had emerged as a uniquely powerful state. The question – and the challenge – then was how the United States would use its power and for what purposes. What were the new threats in the new world?

Among the challenges that the new administration identified were the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and the vulnerability of civilian and military infrastructure to cyberattack, and the rise of internal conflicts with potentially huge humanitarian costs. But the new era also offered great opportunities, not least by advancing democracy and economic prosperity. Therefore, U.S. foreign policy would increasingly have to take account of economic policy. The Clinton administration structured its National Security Council staff to reflect these priorities. It created new directorates—including the first ever dedicated to nonproliferation and export controls, as well as a directorate addressing global issues and multilateral affairs, with responsibility for managing the growing challenges and opportunities in an increasingly globalized world (ranging from drug trafficking and counterterrorism to peacekeeping, humanitarian affairs and the promotion of democracy). It also established the National Economic Council to integrate domestic and international economic policy. The NEC staff dealing with the latter set of issues was dual-hatted, reporting to heads of both the NEC and the NSC.

Another innovation of the Clinton NSC was the creation of a communications and press component. Traditionally considered a function of the White House press staff, the new administration began to see the need to more effectively articulate its foreign policy in the wake of crises in Somalia and Haiti. The emphasis placed on an effective communication was not without controversy, however, as the administration as a whole was criticized for placing too much emphasis on style rather than substance.

This is the seventh in a series of roundtables held by the NSC Project, which is co-sponsored by the Center for International and Security Studies at the Maryland School of Public Affairs and the Foreign Policy Studies program of the Brookings Institution. Transcripts of five previous roundtables – on the Nixon NSC, the role of the NSC in international economic policymaking, the Bush NSC, the role of the national security adviser, and the role of the NSC in arms control policy – have already been published and are available on the Brookings website at *http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/ nsc.htm*. A sixth transcript on the NSC and U.S. policy toward China will be published in the near future. These seminars have been conducted for their own independent value. They also provided useful insight for "A New NSC for a New Administration," a policy brief published by the Brookings Institution in November 2000 (also available on the Brookings website at *http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/nsc.htm*) and a book to be published in 2002.

We are grateful to the participants for coming and talking with candor and insight. We are also particularly grateful to Karla Nieting for her help in organizing the roundtable, editing the transcript, and working with the participants in bringing this edited version of the proceedings to publication. Responsibility for any remaining errors rests with us.

Ivo H. Daalder
Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution
CISSM Research Director (1991-99)

I. M. Destler
Professor, Maryland School of Public Affairs
CISSM Director (1992-99)

PARTICIPANTS

R. RAND BEERS, deputy political adviser, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, 1973-75; deputy director, Office of Policy Analysis, Bureau of Political Military Affairs, Department of State, 1982-84; director, Office of International Security Policy, Department of State, 1984-86; deputy director for military contingencies, Bureau of Political Military Affairs, Department of State, 1986-88; director for counterterrorism and narcotics, National Security Council, 1988-92; director for multilateral affairs, National Security Council, 1993-95; senior director for intelligence, National Security Council, 1995-98; assistant secretary for international narcotics and law enforcement affairs, Department of State, 1998-present.

PHILIP CHASE BOBBITT, associate counsel to the president, 1980-81; legal counsel, Select Committee on secret military assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan opposition, U.S. Senate, 1987-88; director for intelligence, National Security Council, 1997-98; senior director for critical infrastructure, National Security Council, 1998-99; senior director for strategic planning, 1999; professor, University of Texas-Austin, 1976-present.

LAEL BRAINARD, McKinsey and Co. 1983-85; Ford Foundation, 1986; Harvard Institute for International Development, 1987; Council of Economic Advisers, 1990; associate professor of applied economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sloan School, 1990-95; special assistant to the president for international economic policy and senior director, White House, 1995-97; deputy assistant to the president for international economics and deputy national economic adviser, National Economic Council, 1998-2000; and G7/8 Sherpa, 2000; senior fellow, The Brookings Institution, 2001-present.

STEPHEN J. FLANAGAN, professional staff member, Select Committee on Intelligence, U.S. Senate, 1978-83; associate director and member of policy planning, Department of State, 1989-95; national intelligence officer for Europe, National Intelligence Council, 1995-97; senior director for Central and Eastern Europe, National Security Council, 1997-99; vice president for research and director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 1999-present.

ELISA D. HARRIS, Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, 1980-83; guest scholar and senior research analyst, The Brookings Institution, 1988-93; director for nonproliferation and export controls, National Security Council, 1993-2001.

KENNETH LIEBERTHAL, special assistant to the president and senior director for Asian affairs, 1998-2000; visiting fellow, The Brookings Institution, October 2000-December 2000; professor of political science and William Davidson Professor of Business Administration, University of Michigan, 1983-present.

JAMES M. LINDSAY, professor of political science, University of Iowa, 1989-99; director for global issues and multilateral affairs, National Security Council, 1996-97; senior fellow, The Brookings Institution, 1999-present.

DANIEL B. PONEMAN, director for defense policy and arms control, National Security Council, 1990-93; senior director for nonproliferation and export controls, National Security Council, 1993-96; counsel, Hogan & Hartson L.L.P., 1996-97; partner, Hogan & Hartson L.L.P., 1998-present.

WALTER B. SLOCOMBE, staff member, National Security Council, 1969-70; principal deputy assistant secretary for international affairs, Department of Defense, 1977-79; deputy under secretary for policy planning, Department of Defense, 1979-81; principal deputy under secretary for policy, Department of Defense, 1993-94; under secretary for policy, Department of Defense, 1994-2001.

TARA D. SONENSHINE, deputy director for communications, National Security Council, 1994-95; transition director, National Security Council, 1996; senior adviser, United States Institute of Peace, 1998-2000; president, WomensNewsLink.com, 2000-2001.

JAMES B. STEINBERG, deputy assistant secretary for analysis, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, 1993-94; director of policy planning, Department of State, 1994-96; chief of staff, Department of State, 1996; deputy national security adviser, National Security Council, 1996-2000; senior adviser, Markle Foundation, 2000-2001.

ANNE A. WITKOWSKY, assistant for European security negotiations, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1990-92; assistant for Russian, Ukrainian, and Eurasian affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1992-93; director for defense policy and arms control, National Security Council, 1993-2000; director, Commission on Science and Security, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000-present.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE ROUNDTABLE

DESTLER: Good afternoon. On behalf of the Brookings Institution and the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland, we welcome you and thank you for your participation in the seventh in our series of oral history roundtables on the National Security Council.

This roundtable is unique because we're discussing a process that is still ongoing. We've had two other roundtables on specific administrations – one on the Nixon administration and one on the Bush administration. We've had three on subject areas – international economic policy, China policy, and arms control policy. And we had one where five former national security advisers talked about how they played the role, problems they had, etc.

Four of the transcripts have been published and we are happy to share them with you. Two of them are in the editing and feedback process. As that suggests, the discussion is on the record, with some general and particular caveats for this meeting. The general caveat is that nothing will be published in your name before you get a chance to review the transcript and edit it. We will edit it for style and accuracy, and you will have a chance to work it over. Specific to this roundtable is that nothing will be published before 2001. Nothing will be used in any way before the November election and nothing will be used between the election and the inauguration without consulting the individual who provided it.

We might start by moving around the table with brief introductions. I think most people know each other but please state the period of your involvement in the NSC, or related organization, during the Clinton period and any other prior relevant experience you've had. Then we will move to the discussion. Jim, do you want to start?

LINDSAY: I'm Jim Lindsay, I'm a senior fellow here at Brookings and in 1996-1997, I was the director of global issues and multilateral affairs under Dick Clarke.[1]

BOBBITT: I'm Philip Bobbitt. In 1997 through 1999, I worked at the NSC, principally on critical infrastructure.

STEINBERG: I'm Jim Steinberg. I was deputy national security adviser from December 1996 to August 2000. Before that I was director of policy planning at the State Department and briefly deputy assistant secretary of state for intelligence at the Bureau of INR [Intelligence and Research].

PONEMAN: I'm Dan Poneman. I joined the NSC staff in September 1990 in the defense policy and arms control directorate, and then in January 1993, I moved over to the newly established nonproliferation and export controls office, where I stayed until October 1996.

---

[1] Richard A. Clarke was the senior director for global issues and multilateral affairs on the National Security Council throughout the entire Clinton administration. In 1998, Clarke was also appointed the national coordinator for infrastructure protection and counterterrorism on the National Security Council.

WITKOWSKY: I'm Anne Witkowsky, and I joined the NSC staff in February of 1993, in the defense policy and arms control office. I'm still at the NSC until Friday [September 29, 2000].

SONENSHINE: I'm Tara Sonenshine. I was deputy director of communications on the NSC staff in the first year of the first term. I was transition director in the second term, and I hold the record for coming in and out on an assortment of projects throughout the last seven years.

HARRIS: I'm Elisa Harris. I joined the NSC in January of 1993 to be part of the new nonproliferation office, and I'm still at the NSC and not leaving on Friday.

LIEBERTHAL: I'm Ken Lieberthal. I joined the NSC in August of 1998 as senior director for Asia. I'm still there, but three weeks from now I'm hoping to be here at Brookings for a few months.

DAALDER: And, for the record, I was on the NSC staff from August 1995 through December 1996, serving in both the global affairs and European affairs directorates.

I want to thank all of you for coming and taking time out of busy schedules to be here – beepers and cell phones notwithstanding. I'm sure we'll have an interesting discussion.

As we have done in the past, we've tried to structure the discussion by handing out a set of questions.[2] I don't want to imply that we have to go through all the questions or we can't go in a different direction. If you think that perhaps we're barking up the wrong tree in terms of the assumptions that underlie these questions, it'd be good to hear that.

Our purpose here is to get a full and complete understanding of how the Clinton administration's NSC system worked in order to see both how change over time, external to the White House and the administration, influences the development of organizations and how organizations themselves can influence the development of policy. This is in part in order to be comparative with other administrations and in part to have recommendations on how we might structure the NSC in the future.

Just to start off, I think it might be good, because I know some people are not going to be here for the whole time, to start with the first question about marching orders given in 1993. We have at least four people who were at the NSC from the very beginning of the administration. Perhaps you could talk a little bit about your experience at noon or so on the 20th of January when you walked into these empty offices with no files in them.

DESTLER: Did anybody tell you what your job was?

DAALDER: What were your marching orders? What was it that you thought you were doing? What was it that they thought you should be doing? Who were they? Dan, since you were in the

[2] See appendix A.

unique situation of having been part of the Bush/Scowcroft NSC and staying on, maybe you could start off.[3]

PONEMAN: My first marching order actually preceded January 20. At the first NSC staff meeting that occurred after the November 1992 elections, General Scowcroft said, "President Bush is the president of the United States until January 20, and you are fully empowered to do everything to advance his agenda. That having been said, now would not be a wise time to embark on radical departures. And if there are any major initiatives, there is a transition team. You would do well to make sure it's not hostile to the direction they may want to take. There's a fine line."

Tony Lake had some temporary office down in that corridor, and all of us were convoked at some point to go down there.[4] We were right in the middle of a very intensive part of the HEU [highly enriched uranium] negotiations with Russia.[5] This was the one area where I was concerned, because we could either push to get it through by January 20 before we had the big changeover, or not. So my only question to Lake, at that point, was: "Do you want to push for the HEU deal?" And he didn't hesitate. He just said, "Yes, absolutely."

I would say that actually carried through to January 20, in terms of style. My instructions from Lake were to push this agenda of nonproliferation and to integrate it into the bilateral relationships through the PRD process.[6]

Tony's intellectual contribution was to say, and this is his phrase: "We need to weave nonproliferation into the bilateral relationships around the world." So I would say, at that very broad level, it was not to go do this for the MTCR or that with the CWC, but to select the best people for the team.[7] It was a very conscious decision to set up the nonproliferation office to push this as a higher agenda item. So we were blessed to have the nation's leading expert on CWC [Elisa Harris] who was already very highly valued by Tony. And other than that, we assembled the team and pressed ahead.

It was not highly prescriptive in level of detail. The only other piece of guidance, and it wasn't very early and it wasn't from Tony, and this might be the only place I could really

---

[3] Lt. General Brent Scowcroft was national security adviser to President Bush from 1989 to 1993. He also earlier served as President Ford's national security adviser from 1975 to 1977.

[4] W. Anthony Lake was national security adviser in the first Clinton administration from 1993 to 1997.

[5] An agreement was reached with Russia in 1993 for the sale to the United States of 500 metric tons of highly-enriched uranium.

[6] The Clinton administration issued Presidential Review Directives (PRD) on a range of issues early in its tenure, including PRD-8, which addressed the whole gamut of nonproliferation issues.

[7] The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) was a Group of Seven (G-7) initiative announced in April 1987. It originally focused on nuclear capable missiles. The definition of missile technology was expanded in 1993 to include delivery systems for chemical and biological weapons and the number of countries adhering to the MTCR also increased.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, or Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and On Their Destruction, was opened for signature on January 13, 1993, and entered into force on April 29, 1997, after the United States ratified it on April 25, 1997.

identify more of a jagged edge in terms of the historical development, was very early on when we faced – and Elisa will remember this in detail – a very difficult issue involving Russia and India and missiles.[8]

There were staff options that had been developed over many months, but if you count back many months from January, that brings you to a different administration. Basically Leon stopped that process.[9] And I remember very clearly, he said, "We will be tested many times. This is the first time. So let's get this one right."

This was without prejudice to what had been developed, but he wanted to be very conscious that they thought this through, that they were the people who were working for the president-elect, and that they managed that issue in a way that would reflect on the higher attention they wanted to give nonproliferation. And I think you would agree that that was how it worked out.

DAALDER: So one of the interesting points is that Leon Fuerth is part of the "they" team.

PONEMAN: That was a big surprise.

DAALDER: He was there from day one.

PONEMAN: I still remember the first staff meeting of the new team, I had no idea who this individual was and when I heard somebody from the Office of the Vice President was right there in the front row and a very major player, that was a real change. Without reflecting any discredit on any predecessors, it was just a very different level of integration of the Office of the Vice President into the process.

DESTLER: Dan, did you have any instructions or guidance or suggestions as to what you should or shouldn't do? Should you be dealing with Congress; should you be dealing with foreign governments; should you by yourself take the initiative on issues? To what degree and in what form should you defer to the agencies? Jumping in, stopping them, whatever? Did you receive that sort of procedural guidance?

PONEMAN: There were both substantive and stylistic differences that I think you can see. I can't speak to this because I wasn't part of the transition, but my impression was that it was felt that nonproliferation A) was sufficiently important in priority and B) sufficiently crosscutting that the chairmanship of that policy process could no longer comfortably reside at State. So, if anything, it was not an issue they wanted to defer on. They wanted this to be an issue that they had their hands on. I was not instructed to defer to State. I wasn't instructed to run roughshod either, but I think they clearly – Elisa, if you disagree, say so – wanted this to be a White House-driven policy. I would say they had picked a point on the opposite shore without knowing all the

---

[8] On January 29, 1993, Russia announced that it would supply India with rocket engines that were capable of boosting ballistic missiles above the MTCR range. Russia agreed to halt the sale and comply with the MTCR on July 16, 1993.

[9] Leon Fuerth was Vice President Al Gore's national security adviser from 1993 to 2001.

beating and tacking between. It didn't get down to the granularity of what to do about Korea per se.

With respect to Congress and the press, I think the relationship evolved. I think early on – and this is natural – the new team was nervous having anybody, especially a holdover, talk to the press. But with time, they got used to that. I think they really realized that it's not enough to have a smart policy; you have to have a smart policy that enjoys support from the important constituencies.

I would also say that rather quickly we were encouraged, and always with coordination, to be very much in contact with the press. The one place where we were urged to be deferential, and I think this was as much something that we worked out among ourselves as it came from on-high instruction, was that State was very sensitive about NSC going up to the Hill. Even our lawyers were somewhat sensitive about that, so I think we showed a different degree of deference. The exception to that was when we rolled out the president's nonproliferation policy – PDD-13 – and Leon and I, and probably Elisa and others, went up to the Hill and we tried to have some outreach.[10] But we did, I think, defer to some degree on congressional issues. We would have been completely consumed by that Hill activity, if we had allowed that anyway. We didn't spend probably as much time on the Hill as maybe we should have, looking back.

DAALDER: Staying on the same subject matter, Elisa, you were in a slightly different position in that you came in from the outside. Will you share how you came in with empty file cabinets and had absolutely no knowledge of what had been in there. At least Dan had some prior knowledge of what was in the file cabinets.

HARRIS: He at least knew who to call to get the documents he needed, which I didn't know. I simply may not be remembering, because this was seven-and-a-half years ago, but I don't recall anyone really articulating any directions to us about our role in the executive branch. I don't remember anyone telling us what role we should play within the White House, what role we should play vis-à-vis other agencies, whether we were to be sort of the honest broker resolving disputes between agencies, or whether we were to be more proactive in terms of pursuing policy objectives.

The ballistic missile issue, the Russia-India missile issue, certainly preoccupied us very much at the beginning of the administration, and I was one of a number of people that traveled to Moscow to try and work that issue. We wanted to try to solve that problem with the Russians, but I think apart from that, much of our first year, at least the first six to nine months, was focused on our nonproliferation policy review.

Dan, correct me if you have a different recollection, but I don't remember any real guidelines from Tony or others on how we were to approach the PRD [Presidential Review Directive], or what role we were to play in this process. I think part of the problem we faced as we proceeded was that we had a new team at the NSC, but we didn't have new teams in place at

[10] Presidential Decision Directive 13 laid out the Clinton administration policies on nonproliferation and export controls.

senior levels across the agencies. So we were trying to tackle some very important questions in the PRD, by and large with people in place at agencies in acting positions.

DESTLER: Because you didn't have confirmed people in place.

HARRIS: Precisely. They were at best political holdovers, who were at a more senior level, and at worst working-level people, who had the day-to-day responsibility for the issues. So it made for a very unsatisfactory policy review process in the nonproliferation area. In their own ways, both the holdovers and the action officers worked to stifle new initiatives or significant policy changes. I'm being pretty blunt here, as I'm known to be. I think that was unfortunate because had we had people in place at senior levels across agencies, we might have been able to do more from the outset and set a bolder vision for our nonproliferation policy than, I think, turned out to be the case.

DAALDER: Interestingly, when we had our meeting on the Bush team, this was a complaint that Kimmitt made.[11] He said the problem with the State Department was with the holdovers from the Reagan administration. The Bush-Reagan transition was worse than an inter-party transition, and he said, "We couldn't deal with these people." So it was really the undersecretaries working with the NSC, who were also the new people, who set the policy via Kimmitt and Bartholomew.[12] Plus the senior director and the deputy, and they did it all.

DESTLER: The assistant secretaries started out behind when they came in and never really got into the process.

DAALDER: They ignored the assistant secretaries.

HARRIS: We didn't even really have undersecretaries.

PONEMAN: I don't want to prejudice this, but Elisa has triggered a memory and it does go to the question of guidance. Tony did say, "I don't want a homogenized PDD recommendation." There we picked our shots. We picked three shots to try to really push something in a different direction. One was on the MTCR; one was on the BW transparency issue; and one was on fissile materials.[13] I would say my impression was that in terms of the PDD we ended up with the right

---

[11] Robert Kimmitt was under secretary of state for political affairs from 1989 to 1991 and ambassador to Germany from 1991 to 1993. For his comments, see National Security Council Project, "The Bush Administration National Security Council," *Oral History Roundtable* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland and the Brookings Institution, April 29, 1999), p. 2.

[12] Reginald Bartholomew served as the under secretary of state for international security affairs from 1989 to 1992.

[13] The Biological Weapons Convention was signed on April 10, 1972, and entered into force on March 26, 1975. The BWC, however, did not contain means for verification of compliance. As a result, this issue has come up at each of the review conferences, which take place every five years. Measures taken to improve the ability to verify include the adoption of confidence building measures and the creation of an ad hoc committee of scientists and experts to review possibilities. At the next review conference scheduled for 2001, the Biological Weapons Prevention Protocol is to be considered as a means for establishing a BWC transparency regime.

The Clinton administration attempted to achieve a fissile material cutoff to limit the production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium.

answers. But I think the implementation phase is where I encountered the hobbling effect that Elisa has described. I still think we came out right on the BW issue. But when you are working with people who have a very different agenda, it's very hard – and you know much better than I do – to get that punched through. Our MTCR policy is still producing some of that aftermath.

WITKOWSKY: I'd like to elaborate on something Dan said about the Hill. Cleaning out my files and this discussion have reminded me that very early on I was in a position to coordinate the interagency process to move the Open Skies Treaty through the Congress.[14] This is not a treaty that has a terribly high profile, but it turned out it was the first one out of the box because the Senate had scheduled hearings on it. They were in March and we had to coordinate our team to go up there. It was assumed that we would work to get the treaty ratified, even though it had been negotiated and completed in the Bush administration.

I do recall two things about that process. One, it was the impetus to set up a process for dealing with arms control treaties on the Hill that was coordinated by the NSC with the State Department. That process pretty much carried through. Second, I remember acutely this problem of the lack of appointees, new faces in other agencies, as we were trying to coordinate testimony and get the right people up to the Hill.

DAALDER: I want to just mention that Lael Brainard and Randy Beers have just joined us. We started off on the first question, and, Randy, it applies to you. You were there in 1993, right?

BEERS: I was there in February of 1993, yes.

DAALDER: You were not a holdover though. You went and came back.

BEERS: Yes, I went and came back.

DAALDER: Can you and Lael state for the record when you were at the NSC or worked alongside the NSC?

BEERS: You want the whole history or just in this administration?

DAALDER: Well, in Randy's case, I don't know whether we have enough room in our transcript, but, yes, the whole history.

BEERS: I was hired during the Reagan administration by the then national security adviser to work on the Ollie North-memorial portfolio of terrorism and drugs, which because of the reorganization, was no longer an independent directorate but part of the intelligence directorate

[14] The Treaty on Open Skies, a concept originally proposed by President Eisenhower in 1955, was proposed anew by President Bush in a speech on May 12, 1989. The end of the cold war and negotiations beginning in 1990 in Ottawa paved the way for the treaty's signature in Helsinki on March 24, 1992. It was ratified by the U.S. Senate on December 3, 1993.

at that particular point in time.[15] I was not North's successor. I was the successor to North's successor, who was Ted McNamara.[16]

I remained through that transition into the Bush administration and stayed on until July of 1992, doing essentially the same job – drugs and thugs. They reorganized and it was a separate directorate at that particular point in time, which included the 150 account and also refugees/migration issues.[17]

I left in July of 1992 and came back in February of 1993 to essentially the same office. Again it had been reorganized as global issues at that point and had an even larger mandate, which included democracy and peacekeeping and international organization activities. In that sense, it was a series of transitions across administrations as well. I stayed on the NSC and went on to the intelligence directorate from there.

DAALDER: You went to the intelligence directorate in –

BEERS: In the summer of 1995. Then I left in January of 1998 to go to the State Department, where I am now.

DAALDER: And Lael.

BRAINARD: I have been working at the White House in the international economic area since 1994 and have been the deputy assistant to the president for international economics for the past few year. The National Economic Council is my official institutional home at the White House, and I have never been a formal member of the NSC, but I have worked very closely with the NSC from my first day because the issues I deal with are at the interface of economics and foreign policy. And somewhat anomalously, several members of my staff are formally members of both the NEC and the NSC, while the majority are NEC only. It has nothing to do with their areas of responsibility; it is more an accident of the way the two organizations evolved.

DAALDER: Tara.

SONENSHINE: Dan had mentioned the press piece of it. I laughed a little when I first saw these basic marching orders because for a piece of the puzzle that would become so important over time – the communications policy – very little thought had actually been given to the press piece of the foreign policy side of the house.

A lot of thought, I sensed, had been given to the broader press functions and the daily press briefing, but when I arrived, Don Steinberg was running the press office, almost single-

---

[15] Lt. Colonel Oliver L. North was director for political-military affairs on the National Security Council from 1981 to 1986.

[16] Thomas E. McNamara served as director for counterterrorism and narcotics on the National Security Council from 1987 to 1988.

[17] The 150 account is the account in the federal budget for non-defense international affairs programs.

handedly.[18] I asked him when I came where he had gotten his marching orders from and he had basically debriefed Roman Popadiuk from the Scowcroft side.[19] So nobody had really told him quite what was expected on the public diplomacy side of the ledger. There was no decision or thought to a daily press operation on the foreign policy side versus longer-range strategic thinking. This was sort of a new concept. I think that's certainly one area where I would be hard pressed to say there was any guidance or rulebook.

DAALDER: How did it develop over time, or in the first year?

SONENSHINE: In the first year you began to see some of the downsides of not having it. When the criticism began to emerge, and it may have been around the Haiti period or the Somalia period, the press got negative on the foreign policy.[20] That really set, as it often does, people to thinking that maybe we hadn't quite structured this thing right.

As I say, I don't remember a lot of attention paid to it. George Stephanopoulos was even briefing in the early days before the job went to Dee Dee Myers.[21] There was even still some shaking out going on, on that press side. But the interaction between that press office and the NSC press office had not really yet evolved. I would say the impetus was when things began to not resonate in the press in a way that people were comfortable with. That was the motivation for sort of ginning up and staffing that office and the beginning of the attention to some of those issues.

DESTLER: It was a decision to staff the NSC press office as opposed to the White House press office on the international issues.

SONENSHINE: There was a NSC press person. Don Steinberg was the press guy.

BEERS: There was always a NSC spokesman certainly going back to the Carter administration, as far as I remember.

SONENSHINE: But spokesman was always a funny word.

BEERS: Yes, but it was a single person or a couple of people, and all they did was press appearances. They didn't do communications policies.

PONEMAN: But no one did what Tara did.

---

[18] In 1993, Donald K. Steinberg served as the deputy press secretary and senior director for public affairs on the National Security Council. From 1993 to 1995, he was the senior director for African affairs on the NSC.

[19] Roman Popadiuk served as both deputy press secretary and senior director for public relations on the NSC from 1989 to 1992.

[20] On October 3, 1993, eighteen U.S. soldiers were killed in street fighting in Mogadishu, Somalia attempting to capture the Somali leader Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidid. That same month, there was an aborted attempt in Haiti to land the U.S.S. *Harlan County* carrying U.S. and Canadian police trainers to retrain local police forces.

[21] George Stephanopoulos was a senior adviser to the president from 1993 to 1997. Dee Dee Myers was the White House press secretary from 1993 to 1994.

BEERS: No, not at all. Tara was the first person that ever did that.

PONEMAN: To come in there and see what was going on and to try to take a proactive stance. That was what Tara contributed to the whole picture that poor Steinberg or anybody couldn't possibly do apart from responding to daily press.

DAALDER: The traditional model used under Carter, and even by Don Steinberg, was to have somebody in the NSC to field the incoming questions and to make sure the guidance got out through White House press or State or a NSC directorate or whatever. Whereas this is a strategy of communication, which is different. Jim, did you want to jump in this point?

BRAINARD: I just have another question. How long has there been NSC speechwriting, independent from the White House?

DAALDER: To my knowledge, since 1995.

BRAINARD: There was no one before that?

DAALDER: There weren't any NSC speechwriters in the Bush administration. There were people in the White House who did foreign policy speeches, but they were part of the White House shop.

PONEMAN: The NSC would generate text and sometimes there was some recognition of the material that came out from the speechwriters.

STEINBERG: Who did Jeremy [Rosner] work for?[22]

SONENSHINE: He was in legislative affairs.

DAALDER: He became the speechwriter.

STEINBERG: But he was a White House and a NSC staff member.

DAALDER: Absolutely.

STEINBERG: When Tony Blinken was still there, they had White House jobs.[23] The chief NSC speechwriter is still, in part, a White House job.

DAALDER: Absolutely.

---

[22] Jeremy D. Rosner served as senior director for legislative affairs and counselor on the National Security Council from 1993 to 1994. From 1997 to 1998 he also served as a special adviser to the president and secretary of state on ratification of NATO enlargement.

[23] Antony J. Blinken was senior director for strategic planning on the National Security Council from 1996 to 1999, and senior director for European affairs on the NSC from 1999 to 2001.

SONENSHINE: But Jeremy resided in the legislative affairs office and there was this whole question of separating out what was to come from congressional affairs, from speechwriting, from communication, from press. All that needed sorting out.

DAALDER: I do want to come back to that later, because I think it's a development that's quite unique to this administration. There are real consequences and we want to get to the reasons for that. Jim, you wanted to shift course.

STEINBERG: I just wanted to talk a little bit more broadly about the start of the administration since I have an imperfect perspective on the first months of the administration. I was part of the transition and then gone for the first six months, so I definitely saw a lot of what went on up until January 20 or so and then missed the first part. I think others could do a better job explaining that time period. But you've asked a basic question about how people thought about previous models of the NSC. As you all know, most of the senior people had served in the Carter administration. Most of the senior people were heavily informed by their negative view about the way the process worked during that administration. I don't think there was anybody who felt that, as a structural model, it was particularly successful. Rather than creativity coming out of the struggle, a struggle came out of the struggle.

I think there was a real determination on the part of key architects of the transition, both in terms of personnel selection and in terms of certain styles that they wanted to convey, that the Scowcroft-Baker model was just quite successful.[24] They didn't agree with the policies, but they thought that this was the way people ought to do business. They felt that what went on between Vance and Brzezinski wasn't helpful.[25] And you had people there who had been on both sides. Madeleine had worked for Zbig and Sandy had been at State.[26] And certainly Chris had seen – and quite painfully – what the consequences were.[27]

DESTLER: President Clinton was also on record, I think during the campaign, as saying that he wanted his economic team to work the way the Bush national security people had worked.[28]

---

[24] James A. Baker, III served as secretary of state during the Bush administration from 1989 to 1992.

[25] Cyrus Vance served as secretary of state from 1977 to 1980. Zbigniew Brzezinski was national security adviser from 1977 to 1981.

[26] During the Carter administration, Madeleine K. Albright was a member of the National Security Council staff from 1978 to 1981 responsible for legislative affairs. In the first Clinton term, she served as the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations from 1993 to 1997, and in the second term she was secretary of state from 1997 to 2001.

Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger served in the Carter administration as deputy director of policy planning at the Department of State from 1977 to 1980. He subsequently served in the Clinton administration as deputy national security adviser from 1993 to 1997 and national security adviser from 1997 to 2001.

[27] The reference is to Warren Christopher who served as deputy secretary of state during the Carter administration and as secretary of state in the first Clinton administration from 1993 to 1997.

[28] Edward Walsh and Maralee Schwartz, "Clinton Calls Bush's Foreign Policy Outdated," *Washington Post*, August 14, 1992, A1.

STEINBERG: But even more important than having the president say it is having people who have been scarred by this entire experience and really internalized it say that this was the model they wanted. I think that that was a very important part of what took place.

I think the second part – and it would be interesting to hear from my colleagues who were there – is that there's always a complaint about the imperfection of the policy review process. But the problem is you have, as everybody said, a very small number of people, and very few who are confirmed, and a bunch of crises on your plate. So there's no question that during the transition, at least as I saw it from afar at the beginning, what little human resources we had were inevitably drawn into dealing with the crisis-management problems. We had Haiti even before the administration started. You had gays in the military; you had Bosnia; and soon you had Somalia. Somalia wasn't a big problem initially, but it turned into one fairly quickly and in the first six months before you had people in place.

It's an ultimate challenge when you would like to deal with the bigger, longer-term questions and do the kind of work that you do little of during the campaign or the transition but can't really attend to with the kind of depth necessary because you don't have the resources. You want to do some long-term, bigger policy analysis, but the reality is that these crises take up all your time.

The third big point that I would make is that a lot of the structure that evolves is a function, not of the formal kind of what the process ought to be, but of the special characteristics of the players and the problems. So, for example, you had a process, which is reasonably well-defined, in terms of procedures. This was true for everything except Russia. But then on Russia, you had this totally sui generis process that was informed by the fact that you had a very important figure in the process, who didn't fit very well into the model. And so you quickly had a process emerge that involved Strobe plus the senior director at the NSC and that was really its own entity.[29]

I think the other thing that you see a lot is that you have a basic model that develops for the normal part of the process and very quickly things evolve that you have to deal with. And you see this develop all through the first term. You end up with something like the creation of the EXCOM [executive committee] for Haiti. There were a number of times where the procedural innovations came about because of some unique characteristics.

DESTLER: You get Bob Galluccis doing North Korea.[30]

STEINBERG: Exactly.

---

[29] Strobe Talbott was ambassador-at-large and special adviser to the secretary of state on the New Independent States (NIS) from 1993 to 1994 and deputy secretary of state from 1994 to 2001.

[30] From July 1992 until August 1994, Robert L. Gallucci was the assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs and from August 1994 to June 1996 he was an ambassador-at-large dealing with efforts to freeze the North Korean nuclear program.

DESTLER: Randy, you came in after having had experience in the past two administrations. Were there any particular differences that struck you in terms of what you were expected to do?

BEERS: Having served throughout most of the Bush administration, the point that I would make about the Bush administration is that the NSC moved from more things being handled at the interagency working group level to things being handled at the deputies level. And the deputies level also developed much more of a crisis-management function than it had had in previous administrations. To a great degree, that ended up being preserved into the Clinton administration.

But in terms of crisis management, I think there was also, to some extent, a return to the IWG having a more vibrant function. In part, it occurred for personality reasons, and, in part, it occurred because one of the traditional problems that people who work in international affairs and especially in the State Department realize is that it's very difficult to get an assistant secretary-level person to focus full-time on an issue in a way that's necessary to really run an IWG with a crisis-management function. Given the various players in the State Department who often feel they should, or have to, play in that process, it's very difficult for State to speak with a single voice. So at least in the case of Somalia and Haiti, it migrated to this EXCOM function, which was something new that emerged early and solidified over a longer period of time with respect to the way that the NSC did business.

To some extent, that created some tension with the State Department that hadn't existed before. Under the Bush system, you had this sort of working relationship between Baker and Scowcroft, where Scowcroft always knew he could go to the president, but Baker didn't want anybody shining a greater light than he did on the policy process. Whereas at the beginning of the Clinton administration, those factors didn't play a part. So there was much more of a balancing out that had to take place. I think in that process there was a frustration that I heard within the NSC about the need to have a structure that is streamlined and focused and gets things done and a concern that State has difficulty providing that kind of leadership in this function. So we had very early on the Somalia EXCOM and the Haiti EXCOM and then the Bosnia EXCOM as well. Now we have also have a Colombia EXCOM, but it isn't located in the NSC. Things change. The main point I'm making is that to some degree, while the deputies committee maintained its primacy in the overall policy formulation process, the IWG became more important, at least for crisis management, than it had been in the Bush administration.

PONEMAN: This follows right on Jim and Randy's points. It also goes back to a tasking I had forgotten about. Tony did come in with what he called the "chart from hell," which was some chart that had been generated with all these little boxes representing the interagency groups working on proliferation issues. And I think there was initially a thought that it must be a bad thing to have so many. In fact, it's still a very common thing to show up with an organizational chart with 64 boxes and to feel it must be a failure because it is not streamlined. But what happened could be conceived as something like what happens after a heart attack in promoting your collateral circulation. That's how these little groups crop up. You have people doing their jobs. If a sui generis issue comes up, why should somebody who only cares about CWC sit through an interminable IWG about this other material? Why not set up an ad hoc interagency group? As long as there is the top-down guidance and as long as it is functioning, to have that

kind of sui generis approach to things, I don't think is a bad thing. I think it shows a suppleness and a robustness, but it can get out of hand if you don't have the right people. It really does come down to having the right people.

Mac, you mentioned the SSK [the Gallucci-chaired senior interagency policy group on Korea] situation with North Korea. It's a perfect example of that. That is something that in certain areas was very robust in the Bush administration. The now famous "Ungroup," that I hope you've heard about in other sessions, was uniquely capable of handling really complex arms control issues.[31] They knew they had the authority of their principals, they liked each other, they were all very able, dedicated people, and they sort of checked their institutional affiliations at the door. I think that is the kind of preconception you may come in with about the clarity of lines of command. You do need that in certain ways, but I think you can oversimplify it and miss the ability to have a more tailored approach to the specific problem.

BOBBITT: There's one enormous difference in structure between the Clinton administration and their predecessors, and that's in the role of the counsel. You might at some time want to convene a meeting between the people who gave legal advice to Scowcroft and his group and the people who worked for the Clinton team. There's a dramatic difference. Scowcroft was not eager for legal advice.

BEERS: That's a really fair point. There was much greater democracy in terms of people getting to principals in the NSC in this administration.

BOBBITT: I also want to emphasize the role of the counsel.

HARRIS: You mean NSC legal counsel?

BOBBITT: Right. In the Carter days, Kimmitt was about as close to a counsel as Brzezinski had and it was really largely for foreign and military assistance. After Iran-Contra, you had this big push to institutionalize a general counsel in the NSC, but the NSC repelled it like a foreign body, even though they located a lawyer there. The NSC didn't know how to use legal advice. I think they were prejudiced against it. The White House counsel was always in an ambiguous role vis-à-vis the NSC. It was really only the Clinton people who put in a general counsel who had access to the national security adviser on a daily basis. This institutionalized legal advice as part of the policy process.

WITKOWSKY: Speaking from the perspective of the year 2000, I can tell you by now it's very institutionalized.

HARRIS: It was from the beginning. I think Phil is right. I remember doing my very first memos. I wouldn't have thought of doing something on most of the issues that I was working on

[31] For a description of the "Ungroup," see National Security Council Project, "Arms Control Policy and the National Security Council," *Oral History Roundtable* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland and the Brookings Institution, March 23, 2000), pp. 46-47.

without consulting with Alan Kreczko, who was the first person to hold that position.[32] It was just a given that they had to be part of the coordination process.

DESTLER: Is this good?

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yes.

BOBBITT: It was good. I also think it was greatly helped by the fact that you had a guy like Kreczko, who came out of State, who knew the Hill very well. He was quite a good lawyer. And I don't know if it would have functioned so easily if you had had someone who came from a law firm, for example, who was just popped into the process.

BEERS: Phil, I would also say, that this is also personality specific. You have had a succession of lawyers who were far more prepared to get to yes than to give you straight legal advice and tell you why you couldn't do something. That's an enormous difference. That's not a traditional function that you get from State Department lawyers. So I think you have to give Alan some credit for uniqueness and Jamie Baker in the same regard.[33]

DAALDER: For the record, when Mac asked the question whether this was good, everybody was saying yes or nodding yes.

It does matter that you have somebody who was there to help you to figure out how to do the job and also tell you where the red flags are. "You've forgotten about the following five red flags." I imagine that's why everybody agrees it was the right thing to do. But if you have a lawyer telling you here are the 15 reasons why what you want to do can't be done and every time you bounce up to that, you're in trouble. You need a special person who helps you get to yes.

STEINBERG: I actually don't think you need a special person. I think you need someone who functions as a normal lawyer.

DAALDER: That's right.

STEINBERG: I agree with Randy that State Department lawyers are often not like that.

BEERS: I think you're right, Jim. I think in private practice you are more likely to get what you get.

DAALDER: You need somebody who doesn't become a bottleneck for your policies.

SONENSHINE: Yeah, but what's so interesting about Phil's point is that you can't discount the fact that because the technological communications age also rapidly changed and you suddenly

---

[32] Alan J. Kreczko was legal adviser on the National Security Council from 1993 to 1997.

[33] James E. Baker held the position of deputy legal adviser on the National Security Council from 1993 to 1997 and legal adviser from 1997 to 2000.

had e-mails for the first time that were something new to contend with. How many times did Alan ask us to check back and look at something?

I think you also had these changes in the world that were forcing you into a place where legal issues and information issues demanded keeping things clean on the policy side, but in a sense it drove some of the power to that office at the same time.

HARRIS: "Legally available." That was Alan's phrase.

LIEBERTHAL: Currently one of the key dimensions of that office is to make sure that the records are ones that can be defended, if they need to be defended.

DAALDER: Well, they've changed over time.

LIEBERTHAL: I think the environment's changed.

DAALDER: This may be a good transition to the second set of questions – the differences between the first and second NSCs. Were there, in fact, differences? You did have continuity of personnel, as well as discontinuity. But the national security adviser was the deputy in the first four years. It was a major source of continuity – the same administration, the same party, the same president. In a general sense, is it good to talk about continuities or discontinuities when you think about first and second terms, in relation to the NSC?

SONENSHINE: I have listed four big differences. Jim [Steinberg] was also there, which was a major plus in terms of having an ability to review the first term at the onset of the second term. So one big difference is you had a record. By the time the second term came, we were involved in reviewing the priorities and goals of the first term, so you had somebody coming in who was also in the system and had been at State and was able to seamlessly move in and organize what you were going to keep from the old and what you were going to change in the new. And I think that whole exercise of reviewing what the goals and priorities were and coming up with a new set of pillars was an important shift.

I don't know the mathematics, but I think the small staff got bigger between the first term and the second. I was thinking back to what a small staff there was at the NSC, and the first term NSC was really small. I think Sandy's vision of a small staff grew, but it's an interesting point.

Then I also think the whole press view changed from one term to the next.

DAALDER: In some sense, that started to change a little bit before 1997. You had different people, but Sandy was the driving force in both instances.

STEINBERG: I think there was obviously a lot of continuity in the sense that there were not dramatic policy differences between Berger-Albright-Cohen, and Lake-Christopher-Perry.[34] I

[34] William S. Cohen served as secretary of defense from 1997 to 2001. William J. Perry preceded him in that position from 1994 to 1997.

think that there were clearly stylistic differences in the second term. The principals committee – and I obviously saw a great deal more of the principals committee in the second term than in the first term – became somewhat more of a focus for big decisionmaking than I think it had been before. The principals made decisions in the first term, but I don't think the principals committee meetings were the same sort of decisionmaking arena that the principals committee meetings were in the second term.

There clearly was some difference in the first and second term in the relationship between the national security adviser and the deputy. With Tony and Sandy, there was more a division of labor. Tony had some issues that were basically his and Sandy did not play a big role on them, and conversely. There were some things that Tony largely, almost exclusively, delegated to Sandy.

DAALDER: Can you be specific just for the record?

STEINBERG: Well, the issues that Lael dealt with, like international economic issues. Tony didn't play much of a role in those issues and Sandy, because of his background and interest, did a lot of that. I think that was the division. There was much less of that between Sandy and me – with a couple of exceptions. I did a lot of the technology-related issues that Sandy didn't do quite as much on. But for the most part we had an alter-ego relationship, which had more to do with function rather than substance.

For us, as it evolved in the Bush administration, the deputies committee became the principal, daily operating committee of the interagency process, and in particular in crisis management. I tended to focus on that, while Sandy focused more on the broader policy questions, the interface with the public and Congress, and the like. But there were no issues that he was doing that I didn't do, or vice versa. I think that that is an interesting question as to whether those are the best divisions. A lot of it depends on the individuals in question, but there's a lot to be said for having somebody who is close to the national security adviser, who is sufficiently well informed on all the issues, who can take an issue up if something else intervenes and requires the national security adviser to focus on something else.

Frankly, it is helpful to have somebody in-house who is always available for a second opinion or further thought. In our case, I thought it worked extremely well as a kind of model for how the relationship should go.

DAALDER: You suggested a slight division of labor in the sense that as the deputy you were more of an inside manager and Sandy dealt more with the outside.

STEINBERG: Not exactly. I would say two things. One, he was part of setting the big policy guidance, that is, the principals set it with him. I think that there were obviously exceptions, but on the whole, the principals did a somewhat better job in the second term in using the principals committee to provide a framework, and then the deputies were kind of the implementers. So that would be one distinction.

DAALDER: Right.

STEINBERG: There's some of the inside-outside division, but I think it's more one between broad policy guidance and day-to-day implementation and crisis management. On the functional level, there clearly was a difference and the principals looked to the deputies to take the brunt off them and do the day-to-day work.

BEERS: I think there's another feature here and it's about continuity and difference. Recall that in the move from the Bush to the Clinton administration, you had the creation of a quasi- or semi-second deputy within the structure. I think over the course of time between the first and second administration, the role of the second deputy became more substantive and he or she was more likely to chair meetings. I don't remember Nancy chairing much of any deputies committee meeting.[35] I certainly remember Don and Mara chairing more of those meetings than was true in the first administration.[36] Is that an accurate perception? I'd appreciate other people's reaction to that.

BRAINARD: That's basically right.

SLOCOMBE: Nancy chaired the deputies meeting on Africa.

HARRIS: She was very up on Northern Ireland obviously.

DAALDER: But there was no deputies meeting on Northern Ireland.

BEERS: I think the major thing is that the Clinton administration as a whole began to evolve a notion that having a national security adviser and a single deputy wasn't an adequate leadership structure. I still think it's under evolution. It's always been an issue because the principal deputy has always had much more to do and was much more interested in being immediately involved in everything, and so it's been hard to find a division of labor. Jim, you could speak to that issue more directly.

BRAINARD: The division of labor in the first NSC, as Jim suggested, was somewhat particular to the individuals and there were some issues which substantively Nancy did steer. I think more generally you can say that the role of the two deputies has shifted in line with the particular substantive expertise and functional experience of each of the deputies. I also agree that the role of the principals and deputies committees changed from the first to the second Clinton administrations in the sense that Jim was suggesting. I do think there was a big difference. I think it's partly because of the change in the administration's role. In the second Clinton administration, the broad policy framework had been set, and principals meetings had a clear focus on decisionmaking. The first administration was engaged in setting overarching policy

---

[35] Nancy E. Soderberg was the deputy national security adviser from 1995 to 1997. She also served as the staff director of the National Security Council from 1993 to 1995.

[36] Mara E. Rudman served as deputy national security adviser from August 1999 to January 2001. Prior to that she served as senior director for legislative affairs on the National Security Council from November 1997 to January 1999.

Lt. Gen. Donald L. Kerrick was deputy national security adviser from January 1997 to August 1999 and from July 2000 to January 2001.

guidelines from scratch. Some of the participants were going up a steep learning curve on a whole range of new issues. Right at the beginning of the administration, there were lots of meetings that were very thoughtful and reflective but were not necessarily oriented to making a concrete decision.

SLOCOMBE: Fortunately we stopped that.

DAALDER: The reflective wandering.

SONENSHINE: I think there was a general tendency over time to move to just a much more focused set of issues. This is what we need the deputies for; this is what you need principals for. Don't waste the principals' time unless you heat up the decision. Similarly, the deputies were not going to get together and have conflicting meetings unless it was necessary. So I think that was an evolution. It kind of happened more generally as the administration became more focused and disciplined and in better charge of its burden, but had partly a personality tendency as well. There were also differences that were very hard to speak to in the specifics in terms of the relationship between Sandy, Tony, and the president. I do think the role of the national security adviser, as must be true generally, is very heavily conditioned by the relationship with the president, and the two of them had pre-existing personal relationships with President Clinton. But they were different and that was reflected in how they got briefed, what role they played vis-à-vis the chief of staff, the president, their own staff.

HARRIS: I think that the two of them saw their roles differently. When I look at Tony's interactions with the press or with the Congress, they were really very limited while he was national security adviser. You really had to make a case to him as to why he should call Senator Pell or someone else to try and move an issue forward.[37]

I think Sandy saw his role in a very different light. I think he believed that he had part of the responsibility for communicating our foreign policy to the public. As a result, he has been much more visible speaking to groups and talking with the press. But even more profound, I think, is the difference between them on the congressional side. The list of phone calls and meetings that Sandy gets from our legislative people today, for example, would never have happened with Tony. Some days, Sandy is given a list of six or eight follow-up actions to pursue, in terms of talking to particular members or going up to the Hill to meet with a particular caucus. From the outset, he has seen his role, vis-à-vis the Congress, very differently. He's much more proactive, much more engaged, and, I think partly as a consequence, we've accomplished substantially more than we might have, even with a Congress controlled by the other party. I think it's made a real difference.

STEINBERG: I think it's part of a broader point, too. I think that with a divided government and the growing difficulty dealing with Congress on foreign policy issues, the need for an administration to deal with Congress has grown dramatically. The good news for us was we had three principals, all of whom liked to engage with the Congress. We had a secretary of defense

[37] Senator Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) served in the United States Senate from 1961 to 1997. He chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1987 to 1995.

who came from the Congress and who has excellent relationships up there and uses them all the time. A secretary of state who did congressional relations in the Carter administration and who developed very strong relationships there, including with people who historically have been difficult for us on policy issues. Then Sandy, who as we've said, also had a sense that it was not simply a specific chore but it was an integral part of his job and something that he wanted to do.

But I think that this is something that is not going to be a matter of choice in the future for national security advisers, because it is so important to try to develop congressional assistance and support on foreign policy and it's so hard to do. I had a certain amount of engagement with the Hill, but if you really want to make the sale there's nobody short of the principals that can make it.

SONENSHINE: I think this whole discussion about Tony's approach to the press versus Sandy's should be put in the context that Jim set out originally. The experience in the Carter administration, which I think colored in some way Tony's view of this, was to avoid a contentious relationship and the kind of friction that emerged in that period of time between State and the NSC on who spoke to foreign policy. Some of what Tony did was avoidance of that kind of competitive press environment.

The second thing that had changed, was, again, that there was so much press, so many press outlets, and the proliferation of media. I think Sandy recognized, particularly by the second term, that to get above the clutter, to sort of break through the noise level, you couldn't really afford to have only one person out on a Sunday talk show. You had to blanket two or three. The whole Sunday talk show discussion and debate that began in the first term about who went out continued to evolve so that by the time that we got to the second term there just was no choice but to field as many people as you could on as a unified page as you could. So some of that difference, again, I think comes from the historic context of how those relationships played out.

DAALDER: Walt Slocombe has joined us. Thanks for coming. I know you're not going to be able to stay the whole time so I wonder if you could do two things. One, state for our record how you have interacted with the NSC and what your positions were in the Clinton administration and previous administrations. Second, look at two issues that we have begun to discuss. When you came to your position in early 1993, what did the NSC tell you its role was with regard to the Department of Defense and, in fact, to the interagency process. What was your expectation of that role?

DESTLER: How did it look?

DAALDER: How did it seem? And then on the second issue, the question of the continuities and discontinuities between the first and the second term, which you saw from roughly the same position looking across the river. It would be very helpful if you could help us on those two things.

SLOCOMBE: Well, for the record, my name is Walter Slocombe. I am now the under secretary of defense for policy. I have been in that position since September of 1994. Previous to that,

from May of 1993, I was the principal deputy. Prior to that I was officially a consultant, but de facto a part of Aspin's team of advisers.[38] Before that I had been in the Carter administration where I was principal deputy for ISA [International Security Affairs] and then deputy under secretary for policy planning, both in the policy office at DOD. I was also head of the task force that supported Harold Brown on SALT issues.[39] Earlier than that, I actually worked on the NSC staff, when most of you were in grade school, in 1969 and 1970, for Kissinger and President Nixon.[40]

I think I'm almost the only person here who was in a cabinet agency job at the beginning of the Clinton administration, so my perspective on the NSC was from a cabinet agency. One of the striking things, as far as I can remember, was that there never was very much explicit discussion of what the NSC was going to do. You knew what the NSC did: it called meetings and produced papers, and, especially at the beginning of the administration, generated the overview studies of policies.

One of the differences that I've observed from my particular position is that the process within the government has gotten more open laterally than it was at the beginning. There are more meetings that the principals "plus one" attend as opposed to being principals only. Maybe that was part of the sense of building teams or that due to the fact that nobody was confirmed, it was awkward to have formal meetings [attended by anyone but the principals].

As far as the difference between the first and the second term, I think the discussion you were having when I came in, which was that Tony Lake and Sandy Berger are different people and do different things, is right. They were interested, to some degree, in different things so the issues were different. Certainly the relationship with Congress has become much more important as time went on, although I must say I don't think our congressional relations were significantly better in the first two years than the last six.

DESTLER: Are they any worse than the first two years?

SLOCOMBE: No, it's just that it wasn't as if in the first two years there was this terrific partnership, everything worked out just fine, there was never any problem getting stuff agreed, and the Congress always felt it was consulted. It was easier in many ways. The Democratic leadership in the Congress was substantially more receptive. They weren't usually just trying to make trouble, which the Republicans sometimes are.

I guess one of the most interesting things from the point of view of the Defense Department is the relationship between the NSC, in its capacity in advising, and the president, in his capacity as commander-in-chief. That is a whole specialized aspect of the relationship – what the NSC expects of the Pentagon, how the Pentagon interacts with the national security system, its operations and the potential use of military force and contingencies.

---

[38] Les Aspin was secretary of defense from January 1993 to February 1994.

[39] Harold Brown was secretary of defense from 1977 to 1981.

[40] Henry A. Kissinger served as the national security adviser from 1969 to 1975 and secretary of state from 1973 to 1977.

DESTLER: One question about that would be: Does that look very different in the Clinton administration than it did in the Carter period? Has it changed during the Clinton administration?

SLOCOMBE: I'm not a good witness on that, because when I was in the Carter administration, I worked largely on nuclear issues. The actual operational use of that force mercifully was not a constant preoccupation.

DAALDER: We'll come back to many of these issues, but to keep the conversation flowing, we'll move on to the issue of consensus recommendation, which is our third question. Mac and I had lunch with Tony Lake today, in part to get some of his perspectives on these issues. He didn't think that there was a preference for consensus, certainly in the four years that he was there or at least less so than we may imply. But one question is the issue of consensus among principals – whether that was something that was desirable or whether, in fact, the system was trying to prevent it.

SLOCOMBE: One of the things that I've seen all three times that I've been in the government, is that it's much, much easier for people at any level below the principals level to come in and announce that the Defense Department is no more going to do that than it is going to go fly a kite. Or for the State Department to announce that the State Department takes the position that it must be done this way and the hell with the rest of you.

My sense of all the Cabinet officers I've worked with has been they are very reluctant – and this may be partly because it's the Defense Department – to put the president of the United States in a position where he potentially will have to overrule the secretary of defense.

Richard Nixon certainly *liked* consensus, but he *hated* confrontation. He hated face-to-face confrontations about anything. And my impression is that although he didn't succeed in getting it, Carter would have been happy not to have had to constantly supervise the nursery. I think all three secretaries of defense that I worked for in this administration, but also Harold Brown were very conscious that you don't want – if there is a way to avoid it – to force the president to decide important issues by picking between the secretary of state and secretary of defense. Normally it's the Defense Department, and as many allies as you can get, against the State Department.

DAALDER: At least you did not work for Casper Weinberger, who certainly had that problem.[41]

SLOCOMBE: When it's about money, it's easy. That's just a fight about money.

DAALDER: Weinberger and Shultz, of course, had fundamental differences on lots of things.[42] But I think your point is well-taken.

---

[41] Caspar W. Weinberger was secretary of defense from 1981 to 1987.

[42] George P. Shultz was secretary of state from 1982 to 1989.

STEINBERG: The part that I think is particularly important to stress is Walt's institutional point, which is that the institutional imperatives tend to dominate over the foreign policy ones. As Mort Halperin would say, people are where they sit.[43] It's understandable in terms of their need to retain their loyalty to their bureaucracies and the institutions behind them. But you need to have a process that at least asks people to say if there are genuine differences of policy that you can't find a common basis on or if these are just simply because we have institutional positions that we're upholding.

What I think we tried to do with the deputies committee, and I know they did it with principals, was to say, "Check your institutional hat at the door when you come to this meeting. If we have differences, we have differences. We'll pass it along. But at least sit here as a committee of the whole of people who all work for the same administration and not just for a building, and see whether we can't find common ground." In most cases, people found common solutions that they generally felt pretty good about. I don't think people felt that they agreed for the sake of agreeing. I think that they recognized that there were difficult tradeoffs. They were able to see it from the other person's perspective and understand why they were arguing for it.

I think you do need a part of the process to push to see whether there is a consensus that can be had. You shouldn't go for it at all costs – and we didn't go for it at all costs. But I do think that if you left the system alone, you would have more conflict than the system could possibly bear, with a sense of winners and losers all the time which is not what this is about.

SLOCOMBE: Also, the president is not elected to be an arbitrator of bureaucratic disputes. He has to do it more than he should, but that's not what he's supposed to do. The other thing we should not do, unless you absolutely have to, is force the president to choose between his principal advisers. On trivial issues, you don't bother him. We've got one now about some ship and where it's going to go. It's an important issue, and we feel strongly about it and other people feel strongly about it. The last thing we want to do is go ask the president to decide, which is the only power we can turn to if we don't figure out some way to settle it. We can pull rank – it's our Navy – but short of doing that, what should we do, except try to work out a compromise.

The hardest problem in foreign policy is the awful tyranny of the inbox of the day-to-day crises. If you don't have a process which tends to produce a consensus, the president or the principals have to spend all of their time like a district court on a Friday morning hearing motions.

WITKOWSKY: We've talked a lot about the policymaking process, but there's the policy implementation piece. Speaking as someone coming from a more junior level to Mr. Slocombe and Jim Steinberg, who has to watch over the implementation of policy once it's formulated, it's a lot easier to do that if you've reached it through a consensus process. The lower down the

---

[43] Morton H. Halperin was deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs from 1966 to 1969 and then served on the NSC staff for nine months in 1969. From February 1994 to March 1996 he was the senior director for democracy on the NSC and from December 1998 to January 2001 he served as the director of policy planning at the State Department. He is the author of *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Brookings Institution Press, 1974).

better, because agencies have bought into the decision and they're much more prepared at all levels to follow the marching orders.

I have found that when decisions have been taken at a higher level and perhaps have been more difficult to reach consensus on, they are relatively more difficult to implement in the months and years after the decision has been taken. So that, I think, is another incentive to try to drive the process to consensus.

SLOCOMBE: By the way, I don't believe that Ronald Reagan was particularly eager to dump a decision on his people especially when there were sharp differences between them.

BRAINARD: It's interesting to hear the differences between presidents, and some of the reasons why it's sensible to try to reach a consensus early on. I would say that the pressure really does come in at the deputies level to reach agreement. The feeder processes at the sub-deputies level preserve, to some degree, interagency differences.

As the head of the deputies group, that's a burden. On some issues where repeated attempts fail to find a good, broadly accepted outcome, you can feel that you are somehow failing. Making judgments on where to push for consensus, where to adopt an outcome that some oppose, and where to move the debate to the principals without resolving differences is an incredibly important part of your job, and it's a very delicate balance. At some junctures you know at the end of the day what the acceptable, politically-balanced answer is going to be, and you sometimes have to push people toward it. On the other hand, it is extremely important for the president's national economic and national security advisers to play the honest broker role. On a policy you really do want all of the deputies to feel that the process is producing outcomes where everybody is given a shot at making their best case.

DESTLER: When you have a situation where you're having great trouble getting agreement on an issue, it is sometimes helpful not just to bump the issue upstairs as a choice between Treasury and USTR, or whoever the players might be, but to try to bump the issue up as a fundamental priority choice.

BRAINARD: I was going to get to that. I think there are choices that you make in terms of what goes up and what doesn't. As Walt said, I think there's a certain test of seriousness. The range of issues and non-policy functions that are dealt with in the course of a day is tremendous and so it is important to make a judgment.

The other thing, in terms of how things move up the chain, is figuring out which issues are so important that the principals will want to deliberate and make their case regardless of whether agreement can be reached at a lower level.

In terms of the ultimate recommendation to the president, there is no shame in reflecting disagreement among Cabinet members when the issue is of sufficient importance and complexity. I think all of us feel a certain sense of failure if a recommendation memo goes to the president with attached memos from certain Cabinet secretaries because this suggests that they do not have confidence that their differences will be fairly reflected in the White House memo.

On issues of great importance in the area of international economics, the memos were made available to the Cabinet secretaries before they were finalized to instill confidence that their views were fairly represented.

The other thing that is important is that you never want to put the president in a box by formally offering only a single recommendation if you know that political or non-foreign policy imperatives are going to push in another direction.

DAALDER: Let me frame the issue slightly differently. So far the discussion has looked at consensus among agencies and agencies having fixed positions, so they either agree or they disagree. Another way to look at it is as presenting choices which may or may not be supported by certain agencies but which are clear choices or clear differences that cut across agencies.

DESTLER: For example, do you enlarge NATO?

DAALDER: Well, not necessarily as a policy issue. But one of the functions of the NSC could be not just to present the differences among agencies – agency X believes X and agency Y believes Y and here's how you may reach a consensus – but, in fact, state on this particular issue there are three choices. The choices are not represented by State or Defense or the Joint Staff, but they are three logically different choices. Then you ask agencies to weigh in on those choices, perhaps in order to get to consensus. But it's a different operational style to take it away from the bureaucracy.

STEINBERG: First of all, the nature of these discussions, especially at the deputies level, is not simply, "This is what Defense thinks." People sit around and say, "What should we do?" That's very typical. Deputies have a special role in crisis management. We didn't go into a meeting with the Pentagon already knowing what it wanted to do. Usually on the perplexing problems where we would have conversations, we would start with, "What are the choices here?" We would have a discussion about what the choices are. I think that part of the advantage of this extremely long collegial association of people in this administration is that this is very easy to do. We sat in the same room for 375 deputies committee meetings in three and a half years. This became a very easy thing for people to do.

So I don't think that it was, in terms of our internal discussions, just sort of debating between the Pentagon's position and the State Department's position. It really was people who were looking at a problem. People would often change their positions in the course of a meeting. I think it's different from what you do if you can't reach a decision and have to pass the divergent views up to the president. Then you're not really going to give the president a memo with options that nobody thinks you should do. At the point you give it to the president, I think you have to have somebody who's advocating a position, rather than saying, "Mr. President, you should know that there are fifteen conceivable options here. We've ruled out twelve of them." At a minimum, I think you owe it to the president to try to narrow the field. But I also think that we do go through this process.

BRAINARD: I agree. All of the decisions are framed in terms of the strategic options in the policy debate. Agency positions don't drive the framing of the choices or the recommendations.

We don't say, "Mr. President, Secretary X wants to pursue China WTO and Secretary Y is opposed." We say, "There is a major strategic decision facing you that will affect our strategic and economic relationship with China, the dynamics with the WTO, important interests here at home, etc. Here are the options. Here are the substantive arguments for and against. And this is where you Cabinet members come out."

LIEBERTHAL: Actually this comment is obvious, but may be worth stating anyway. This is a very dynamic process and the biggest single problem I sense you face in the government is you have more problems to deal with than anyone has time to handle, so the whole driver of the process is to try to refine the questions that have to be dealt with. Anything that can be handled at a lower level is developed at a lower level and then passed on to higher levels so that they can handle it more expeditiously. In other words, you try to shape the issue for the next level to deal with. I found this to be true just in dealing with Asia. Jim's dealing with the whole world; Walt is dealing with the whole world. Asia alone, I found, can keep you fairly busy during the course of the day.

Very often when we're working interagency at my level to work out an issue, I go to Jim to find out what his perspective is so that I can bring that to the interagency and can say with some authority, "I know this is where Jim's going to end up on this issue." This helps to move that process forward and I think these issues are dealt with in general conceptually but you owe it to the next level up to be able to tell them what the lay of the land is and what the others that are sitting in that deputies meeting are likely to be bringing to the table. It refines the discussion and lets you get more done.

PONEMAN: I'm sorry I missed the beginning of this while I stepped out of the room. I think I have different answers for the three bullets here [in the agenda], and for me, the time I witnessed crisis management most closely was in the North Korean nuclear crisis, when I think the principals really acted in the form that Jim described the deputies now.[44] The principals met, as Walt will tell you, sometimes multiple times a week. All of the things that we read in textbooks about where you sit depends on where you stand really did not follow there, and it really was very similar to the way that Jim described it. I have to say, up and down, this wasn't a matter of the principals providing adult supervision, or everyone below just sitting pat on a position. I credit a lot of it to the individuals involved and to the deputies' ability to pull that together. I saw none of the classic bad stuff. There was some disorganization, but it was never the kind of sclerotic consensus problem.

On the PRD/PDD process. The PRDs I'll leave aside, because they didn't really generate that much. On the PDDs, there was a tendency for this kind of gridlock that would produce the lowest common denominator. They [i.e. Lake, et al.] were conscious of it, and they did try to fight against it. The place where the rubber really hit the road, however, was in the budget process. The classic thing was: the lower the stakes were, the worse the problem. The only time we really hit a bump in the whole North Korean thing was over $7 million for the spent fuel. Forget nuclear war, right?

---

[44] The crisis involved the effort to halt North Korean nuclear activities. It culminated in the signing of an agreed framework on October 20, 1994.

BEERS: What about all your commerce cases, Dan?

PONEMAN: You take a really bureaucratic issue like jurisdiction over commercial communication satellites. It's a different story, okay? That whole world is a mess. That is a place where people at lower levels around the agencies, in my view, won't do their jobs because they know their particular vested interest and their friends on the Hill and their friends in the press expect certain things of them. And they will be rewarded if they live up to those expectations and they will be punished if they don't. That, I think, is a disservice to the whole process and can force issues up to levels that they should never reach.

I can remember one time somebody was asking me to ask the president what length antenna should be the proper spec on a military commercial satellite. I don't know what to do about this kind of thing. I do think that the point Anne made earlier is valid. On those nasty issues, where you know the minute the decisionmakers are going up to the Hill and will run up to the press, it's helpful if you are able to say, "Hey, this was a unanimous recommendation."

I don't know if there are any prescriptive aspects to your studies, but if you could somehow come up with some kind of recommendation for those kind of low-stakes, but high-octane, political issues, that would be very, very helpful.

Jim, you were with us in the first term. It was really awful. I guess the only place where I would say we found some relief was in that very same debate on commercial satellites. At one point we said, "If we pick the antenna length and all that stuff and have the president check the box, we are still going to be back here in six months. Why don't we get a process solution?" We had just had a newly-minted Executive Order in December 1995 on how to do dual-use licenses, and it had certain features supposedly built in.[45] (I hope it's operating now.) The bulk of decisions, where cases would escalate as opposed to just stagnate, if some of those kinds of nitty-gritty issues could somehow be consigned to a process where there is accountability and you could turn to the secretary of commerce or whoever it is and say, "if such-and-such is not resolved in 90 days, report to the president," you might get them to lead. That for me is the worst aspect of this problem.

DAALDER: I remember the one issue in Dayton peace implementation that we spent more time on – and, Walt, you will remember this – was the question of who would fund, not the building of the road, but the feasibility study for building the road from Sarajevo to Gorazde. There were more deputies-level meetings, and even principal-level meetings, on that issue, which was about $3 million. I think I'm right. And we never did build the road, did we?

(Harris and Witkowsky leave.)

SLOCOMBE: I think the road actually did get built.

DAALDER: It got built, but nobody paid for it.

---

[45] Executive Order 12981 – Administration of Export Controls (December 5, 1995).

SLOCOMBE: It was built but it was built with somebody else's money.

STEINBERG: I just want to make one last point. There is a big difference in the character of this problem when there are big outside interests. In the classic foreign policy problem, I talked before about how people represented a building. At the end of the day, senior policymakers can overcome having to represent the State Department or the Pentagon or the armed services. But it's much more difficult – and Lael had it more than I did – when you have real-world constituencies out there where the effectiveness of that deputy or Cabinet secretary depends on having his or her constituency feel like the secretary or the deputy is in there fighting really hard for them. So in those situations, the split memos to the president were more likely. You just had either different political and economic constituencies, or you had agencies that had political and economic constituencies and agencies that didn't. I think it's a very different world than in the traditional national security problem.

DAALDER: This might be a good transition time to turn to the communications part of it. You get more involved when you have constituencies that you need to communicate with, or worse when you have people who are not your constituents. They are your opponents who are trying to undermine your policy. Tara, maybe you can start off by explaining how the communications part got grafted on over time and became central to the daily operation of the system.

SONENSHINE: Well, I think the mistake is when it's grafted on. Because I think what happens, if it is the last thing on the agenda, everybody wrings their hands when it doesn't come out right in the public arena. The ideal way – and I think Sandy is particularly good at this – is where you integrate the communications piece into the congressional spoke on that policy wheel. I think one of the two cases where it was most successfully integrated was NATO enlargement. You had, particularly in Jeremy's shop, a real understanding of the relationship between the Hill, the press, and the actual policy, and you had people with experience in all three looking at it.

The other case was the CWC ratification fight, where we really created a cluster. Bob Bell was instrumental in this.[46] You had, again, the Hill component, the policy issues, and the public diplomacy piece so that you planned public events, op-eds and articles, Hill calls, and presidential speeches all around a single, unifying theme. It works best, frankly, when you have a clear-cut thing that you're doing.

DESTLER: When you have congressional fights, too?

SONENSHINE: Where you have a congressional fight or where you have a sort of war-room mentality on something and you bring the right people around an issue. I took issue a little bit with the way this was framed [in the questions handed out]. To talk about the growing politicization of foreign policy as being responsible for placing the premium on communicating policy effectively, I think, is the wrong emphasis.

---

[46] Robert G. Bell was senior director for arms control and defense policy on the National Security Council from 1993 to 1999.

The reason we place a premium now on communicating policy is, in part, because the power of the press has changed the means by which we reach people above the heads of government. If you don't see this in the globalization context, I think you miss part of that. So you say you do this for politicization reasons. I think we came to understand that you do this because, if you're not in the game, you're not in the game. I'm articulating a vision. So I think that by not grafting communications on, to come back to your question, but seeing that it has a real stake in the game and is a player at the table changes the view somewhat. I think both Jim and Sandy particularly understood this. Communications evolved over the course of the seven years into something more integrative.

PONEMAN: Also on that, I agree with what you said. But I think I'm remembering something that Sandy said about how they understood where one part began and where one part left off. In fact, I would say there is an element of consistency in that because I heard the same from Gates when he was deputy.[47] He would say to us on a number of things: "You tell me what the right thing to do is from a national security perspective and then we'll work on how to implement it." I don't want this to sound inconsistent with what you said, because I agree, but they wanted the first order issue to be to figure out in a straight national security analysis what's in the U.S. national interest. And then, it was my impression, to work from that to develop the constituency for it as opposed to starting with what the constituencies say and backing into the only available option left. I think starting with the national security analysis is the right way to do it. I always felt that was my guidance. And even once you reached that initial decision, it was critical to do all of the things you [Tara] were so good at, but I still think you want to have that clean analysis up front.

STEINBERG: In fact, I'd go further. Since so many of the things we did were inherently unpopular and often criticized, part of the reason we had the good communications strategy was because you knew the policy wasn't going to be popular initially.

PONEMAN: Right.

STEINBERG: Therefore, you were going to be on the defensive from the get-go unless you developed a strategy to convince people. The truth is, if you look at almost all the major foreign policy decisions that have been made, all the big, high-risk ones, you didn't start with either majority support in Congress or majority support in the public. And I think the one that people might cite to the contrary is NATO enlargement, but even there it was not so obvious at the time you started doing it that it was that obvious. So it becomes critical to go out and do it. When we did it right, it helped, and when we didn't, we did it badly, like in the most famous public relations failure in Ohio.[48]

SONENSHINE: I wasn't there for a while.

---

[47] Robert M. Gates served as deputy national security adviser from 1989 to 1991 and director of central intelligence from late 1991 to 1993.

[48] See Barton Gellman, "Top Advisers Shouted Down at 'Town Meeting' on Iraq," *Washington Post*, February 19, 1998, p. A1.

SLOCOMBE: You ought to have been.

STEINBERG: It's not that these things are politicized, it's just that if you're going to succeed in the policy, you've got to integrate the strategy for making the case in support of what you've decided to do.

SLOCOMBE: That's exactly right. I'm sure that the communicators and the people who have to work with the Hill think policy people sit there in some ivory tower and just assume that since the president is commander-in-chief, it'll be all right.

But nobody worked harder at communications and no one had been more successful at this in Congress than Les Aspin. But as secretary of defense, the result was a total disaster. If you let the communications part drive your agenda, because you think it will look good on television or something, you will fail. To be sure, there are some people who can do it, and you always think your opponents can do it. But in the case of Aspin, it was a total failure to try. He even had a special committee called the committee on "news holes" that was supposed to figure out how to make Les look good in the press. You can imagine what that committee rapidly came to be called.

SONENSHINE: Well, the only other piece I would add is the reactive pattern that I think we fell into at times. Rather than being ahead of the process on the communications front, we ended up responding, because the news engines were moving sometimes faster than the administration. And the classic case was Carter going over to North Korea.[49] I remember we stood there and watched him come out and hold this live CNN press conference on what had just transpired. There you get caught in the position where you really are part of the communications cycle. You're not driving anything. You're simply in react mode. So again I think we sometimes look at these problems and think in a vacuum as if there aren't media influences going on around you that you're inevitably caught up in.

PONEMAN: That very incident actually, I think, underlines Jim's point of a few moments ago. It was a huge internal discussion and, as it turned out, it came out okay. He went to the North Koreans and then heard them say, "We'll do a freeze." And we defined what a freeze meant. We jacked up what we would call the bar to resume talks with the North Koreans so they had to shut down the five-megawatt reactor, and it was essentially the only time we got exactly, word-for-word, back what we asked for in terms of North Korea meeting our conditions. So it actually worked very well. A couple weeks later, the president said, "I knew I was going to take a hit on that for subcontracting our foreign policy to Carter. But I also knew that the North Koreans were out on a limb and there was no way that they could get off of it and still save face, which we know is important to them, unless they said something like: 'Well, we can back down since a former president came here.'" So even though he knew it was going to be very heavily criticized, he took that step. I think that you could probably pretty clearly demonstrate that point. I'm sure Jim and Walt have got dozens of examples, time and again, where they went out exactly

[49] On a visit to North Korea on June 18, 1994, former President Jimmy Carter conducted negotiations with North Korea over its nuclear program. See David E. Sanger, "Carter Visit to North Korea: Whose Trip Was It Really?" *New York Times*, June 18, 1994, p. A6.

at the point where they would be most vulnerable in the press. That did make Tara's job that much harder and more important.

(Flanagan enters. Slocombe leaves.)

DAALDER: Steve Flanagan, thanks for coming.

FLANAGAN: Sorry I couldn't be here earlier.

I agree with Tara's first comment. I was looking at your second bullet, though, about the NSC role, or maybe one could say the president's role, versus what can be delegated to other agencies. I was struck by the experience in our effort to articulate a Balkans policy both working with Jim at State before and then later at the NSC.

It seems to me that in the first term there was an effort to delegate a lot of that to the State Department. In other words, the president really wasn't out there that much. And later on, we seemed to take a hit because the president wasn't making the case well enough himself with members of Congress, with the media. Why should we be engaged in the war in Bosnia? Fair or unfair, I remember having a lot of different debates with people in the media and others about it. You could cite this speech or that speech, but a sustained engagement by the president, particularly when it involves the use of American troops, is vital. It has to be the president himself articulating that case in a very clear way. I'm not sure why there was that perception that the president was not involved, because you could certainly cite a lot of different presidential speeches that I felt made the case. Certainly there were dozens of Christopher speeches and later Albright speeches. But still why is it that that message didn't seem to resonate? Partly it's the contention issue. The fact is that with NATO we had a much harder sell. But anyway, I just throw that out. I don't really have an answer to it.

BEERS: If I could continue on with that. I think that, particularly for major issues, it is absolutely critical for the communications policy to be run out of the White House. If you leave it to the departments, you are doomed to have more dissonance in the articulation of people's views simply because people aren't sharing, cooperating, coordinating with one another. There will still be the ability of the press to find somebody in some agency who will say that they have some kind of a difference on anything of policy consequence. Really I think only the White House, and only the NSC on foreign policy, can really do the coordination. You can't ask the State Department or the Defense Department to coordinate press policy or communications policies across other agencies, because no single department or agency will accept any other department or agency being in charge of something that's an interagency function. So it automatically gravitates to the NSC.

What is interesting here is that people didn't focus on this aspect of policy formulation, articulation, and implementation seriously until this administration. I think that's a significant difference and an important aspect of the role of the NSC that I don't think will change.

DAALDER: Randy, that raises the question of why.

BEERS: I think Jim put his finger on it. A lot of the problems were tough, knotty problems, and people knew from the beginning that unless we had an articulated, focused message, we were going to be in trouble.

BOBBITT: Are they tougher now than they were before?

BEERS: No, I'm not saying that it was different before. I'm just saying that's a basis for why people came to do it.

SONENSHINE: The only reason I disagree is people will hunker down and ignore the communications piece of this until either there's bad news or you're not selling the policy effectively. The point I was making is that the pressures now are so great from the outside that you can't get away with it. You simply cannot. You're deluged not just by U.S. press, but by international press, by Internet coverage. You can't run and hide anymore from it. So some of this was reluctant acceptance of the need to pay attention, not so much because these were hard problems and you wanted to get people on board, but simply because it became impossible to really function in a way that was not commensurate with what was happening around you.

Look at how much time is spent on sitting with the magazine people once a week or the daily people or the overseas. It's both on short-term crisis hits and this whole other long-term run-up to a presidential speech. A lot of the problem at the beginning was that we didn't think of roll-outs. This word "roll-out," which became a kind of term of art after a while. It was that you simply couldn't have the president go out and give a speech and expect that it was going to be covered and remembered and positioned and placed. You had to beat a lot of drums, because of this clutter out there. You had to make a lot more noise about these things than initially you thought you could get away with. And I think that's, again, why the White House and the NSC became a logical place to make an interagency communication strategy and to drive it from there, because the president was essentially the best spokesman for a big international theme or vision, and where he went, the press went. So it's a very complicated area to work in. I don't think you would make it happen, if you weren't sort of forced into it.

DESTLER: There seems to be an anomaly here. In the United States the margin of security is greater than it was during the cold war. The press as a whole – if you look at the TV programs, the newspapers – is probably giving less priority to international issues than it used to. It's certainly not clear that this president gives relatively more attention to international issues than his predecessors, although he seems to give more in his second term than he did in his first term. Yet we are saying that somehow there is a new order of magnitude in terms of the communications problem. We need to deal with the press more. Or this was an enormous problem for everybody else before, but this administration was the first one that was bright enough to pick up on it. I'm puzzled.

What does seem to me to have changed to a significant degree is that Washington has become much more partisan. The partisan divisions in Washington have become much fiercer now, and the comity has become less present.

STEINBERG: I don't know whether that's true.

BOBBITT: I'm going back to Austin in a couple of days. I'm teaching constitutional law and I will tell my students about a quasi-war with France during John Adams' presidency. Adams was president; Jefferson was his vice president. We had the Jay Treaty just approved by the Senate, one of the last acts of the Washington Cabinet, completed by the Republicans who then took over the Congress.[50] I can't imagine when foreign policy was more politicized than then. That is as harsh as it can possibly get. For two years the two major parties represented in the executive branch were split right down the middle – one pro-France, one pro-Britain. We had a war going on in the Caribbean.[51] I just am very skeptical when I hear people say foreign policy has become more politicized and more contentious. It just doesn't get any rougher than those guys played.

LINDSAY: I'm impressed by your reference point.

STEINBERG: I worked on the Hill in the early 1980s. Believe me, it was politicized. It was just war on everybody. I believe we've had more bipartisanship in this period than we had during the Reagan period, because I think the centrist policy that we pursued has been supported by a lot of Republicans. I don't think that it's more partisan. But I do think that the nature of the media has made it so that you cannot succeed in your foreign policy practice now, unless you have good communications strategy. I'll give you two examples of two different directions.

On Iraq, we were having a huge problem because we had been totally unable to convince the international community about why we were pursuing the policy that we were pursuing. The allies would say: "We can't support it because it's opposed by the people in the wider Arab world." Even though we convinced them we had the right policy, we failed because we were ineffective in convincing people that it was Saddam who was causing the suffering of his own people. We didn't have an effective communication strategy and we hadn't developed strong enough support on the Hill.

Conversely, I think, despite all the difficulties on Kosovo, we were able to pull it off. The [NATO] Washington Summit was a critical part of that. We were able to develop a strategy around bringing the allies together, showing our resolve. There are two reasons why we won that war. The first, of course, was the mighty campaign itself. The second was pulling off the Washington summit, showing allied unity, being able to communicate that we had our people together.

I just think that the nature of the international media now makes this so critical. It's not just winning the political battles in the United States, but it's the broader international community. It's not just CNN, but through all the different ways that people are connected to infrastructure. The U.S. ability to succeed depends on an effective communications strategy.

---

[50] The Jay Treaty of 1794 was an agreement between the United States and Great Britain negotiated by Chief Justice John Jay settling some territorial and commercial disputes between the two countries while leaving others open to international arbitration. It was ratified on June 24, 1795, though it was hotly disputed in part because Jay was a Federalist and pro-British.

[51] The reference is to the slave revolt in Haiti in 1799.

BRAINARD: You're using this word politicization so broadly that you've somehow conflated congressional politics with public opinion. I agree with Tara. You cannot write off the effect of technology – and the "smaller world" associated with it – on public opinion. It may be true that in terms of what people care about day-to-day, their preferences haven't changed, but the speed with which information travels and the number of people that are reached has. The world that we are living in, in terms of the number of people that are going to see the message and your ability to control it, is just completely different than Vietnam. The rate at which information feedback can come is such a completely different universe, with these instantaneous pictures on the television and over the Internet.

This leads to the second point. I can't think of a single instance in international economics where a decision was driven by polling. So politicization on the public opinion side is not a key factor.

To the extent we are talking about politicization, we are effectively talking about the Hill. Congressional politics are real constraints in terms of what the president can actually do, and I think the policy process was informed, and properly so, on this dimension. I think that is very important.

Let me also add that recognizing the increased importance of communications does not mean that somehow strategy becomes communications-driven. From a semantic point of view, I thought it was unfortunate when the NSC changed the name of the speechwriting and communications office to strategy. It unintentionally validated the notion that strategy might be driven by communications. The actual reason may have been that the people responsible for communications, like the deputies and the principals, were among the very few who actually dealt with the foreign policy landscape in its entirety. They explain how all the pieces of the puzzle fit together. But I do think that at least for appearances it was unfortunate.

DAALDER: Which is why it's no longer called "Strategic Planning." Steve, one more point before we take a break.

FLANAGAN: I agree with what Lael just said. I remember in policy planning at State, at one time in the first Clinton administration, they took the speechwriters out of the policy planning staff. At first, I thought that was the right move, but now I think they're back in there. It was important to have that fusion because, first of all, the speechwriting, which for State is one of its main communication functions, is the way you can help the policy to reach home or you can push the policy. That's the other thing. The communications strategy can push the policy into dimensions that it might not otherwise go.

BRAINARD: So the number of policy decisions that are driven by a speech increases. That's a reality.

DESTLER: That's a long-term reality. You can read about the Kennedy administration saying the same thing.

DAALDER: At this point, we'll go next door and resume in a little bit over dinner.

(Recess)

DESTLER: Recognizing the cost of interrupting bilateral conversations and the unfairness of trying to return to an organized discussion when the main course has not been served, we're also aware of both the shortage of time and the need to follow-up on some of the issues that we developed in this conversation and to address several other issues.

Jim Lindsay spent time on the NSC staff. He's also one of the best political scientists in the country on Congress and foreign policy. Jim has a couple of questions that he wanted to pose to the group that pick up on the prior conversation, particularly about the communications focus of the conversation. So I thought we could ask Jim to pose these questions, get a little reaction to them, and then move on to some more general issues. Questions like: Is there anything at all you would do differently if you became president? Or if you were the national security adviser to the next president in the next administration?

LINDSAY: I'm particularly interested in the discussion you had just before we went to break about communication strategies. I think the sense of everyone at the table was that it was important to have a communication strategy integral to your policy, as opposed to, as Tara said, having it grafted on. That it was important for it to be located in the White House rather than in the agencies, for reasons that Randy laid out. When we talk about a communication strategy, we don't talk about where it should be located in the White House – whether it makes sense to be in the NSC as opposed to among White House staff.

I remember when Tara came back, I guess in 1997 at the beginning of the second term, to put together a communications package, or to try to figure out where we were going to go and place it in a broader context. I want to just draw you out, Tara, in terms of the relationship between your work in the NSC and how it related to the White House staff. I know with legislative affairs there always seemed to be a tension between those who were doing legislative affairs in the NSC, who were very attentive to and interested in what freedom they were given by White House legislative affairs. I'm just sort of curious how those pieces worked together and if there really is a need for it. Because you talked early on about when you first came in the first years, there was a need to have a communications strategy and a decision to expand it, and why it was decided to put it in the NSC and have a separate NSC staff rather than the White House staff.

It seems to me there's always going to be a competition for presidential time, which is one of the most precious commodities. Everybody in the NSC wants the president to talk about foreign affairs. The domestic people obviously want to talk about domestic policy.

SONENSHINE: I think the way to answer it is to go to the reporter's side of the equation. Because if you're a general member of the press corps, the real action is in the White House Briefing Room. Nobody on the NSC kids himself that the foreign press, or the press covering foreign affairs, is the mainstay of the American diet of news. So the action is still going to be at the gaggle in the morning, where reporters want to know what's happening in the president's day

and within the administration. Foreign policy is still the tail wagging that dog. It is not the prime-time action.

Having said that, there is a segment of the press that obviously follows foreign policy. So you're servicing the niche part of that slice of the press pie. Where the issues get commingled, obviously, is when you're talking about major use-of-force issues. If you're in the middle of a Kosovo action, then you dominate. But if there's not a major crisis going on, it's sort of low-level message management, as opposed to being the hot thing of the day.

So I think you need a part of the apparatus that's watching just the foreign policy, and servicing those members of the press corps that has international issues front and center on their agenda. There are crossover issues such as economic issues. But it obviously makes sense that you maintain the integrity of the foreign policy press corps.

You also have a State Department spokesman that you can't rule out here. It's not as if the White House or NSC is running the whole press operation. If Jamie Rubin were sitting here, I am sure that he would have a very different perspective on this conversation.[52] A lot of it does relate to the relationship between that podium, where there is a daily briefing in a more formalized way than in the NSC. You don't have a daily NSC public podium briefing.

So I guess where I come out is you need a NSC press communications operation that is keeping its eye on those issues that are central to foreign policy. But it has to feed directly and seamlessly and coherently into the White House press operation.

LINDSAY: How do you do that?

SONENSHINE: It's a function of personalities, like in all of these discussions. We've talked about these issues every time we hired press people. How comfortable are they going to be with Mike [McCurry], or with Joe [Lockhart], or with Dee Dee, or whoever was going to be going up there every day and reflecting on foreign policy.[53]

That's the public podium from which the talking points are going to emanate. I think it's as much a function of style and approach. Over the course of seven years, there's been a lot of different iterations as to how much access to have and how fluid those relationships were.

But I still maintain the right system is the system that we have. That is, you have a White House Press Office, and that is where the mainstay diet of news is going to come from. You have a NSC press operation that funnels into that by going down there every day, and telling Mike, "This is what we think you should say." It requires you to be an interagency coordinating body when there's a big issue where you want State and Defense and everybody around the table. I don't know of any better system you could envision.

---

[52] James P. Rubin was assistant secretary of state for public affairs from 1997 to 2000.

[53] Michael D. McCurry was the White House press secretary from 1995 to 1998. Joseph Lockhart succeeded him as press secretary, serving in that position from 1998 to 2000.

STEINBERG: I think there are two different issues. One is this daily press management, and the other is the broader communications strategy. On the daily press, I have some sympathy with those people at the State Department who are concerned about the degree to which the briefing function has migrated from State to the White House. It's either a virtuous or a vicious cycle, depending on where you're sitting. But because of the hierarchy of the press, White House always trumps agency. If you brief something at the White House, that's in the interest of the White House reporters, because they will get the byline, and they will get the story, and not the reporters at State.

My strong proclivity with this when I was there was to push it back to State. Because the reporters there did know more about foreign policy. They got to see it up close.

I don't think there was a particular problem with the integration between the NSC press and the White House press. The reality is that the senior NSC press person was basically seen as one of the deputies to the White House spokesman. They participate in the briefings for the press secretary. Before the gaggle, they were there. I think that was very smooth. While you can argue about the balance between White House and State, I think on daily press briefings, there were no problems between White House press and NSC press. They were fully integrated. Both with Mike, who was uniquely qualified because he had spent several years as the State Department spokesman, and even with Joe. I don't think there was ever a problem.

As you know, we would do our press guidance in the morning. Joe and Mike would often come down if there were nuances they wanted to work on. I think that part was tightly integrated.

On the communications side, it was more complicated, because with the exception of very high-profile issues, there probably wasn't enough of a connection between White House communications and NSC communications.

On the big issues, like Kosovo and PNTR,[54] it was an integrated communications strategy in which the full resources of the White House communications staff were brought to bear, as well as ours. But on anything other than the A+ issues, we more or less ran our own shop. There were definitely times in which, I think, the White House staff felt like they weren't connected enough to what we were doing.

DAALDER: I'm going to broaden this issue. You have press, communication, legislative affairs, and speechwriting. Those four functions, which are integral to the White House, also have subunits within the NSC. We asked Leon Panetta in an interview that we did about why was it that this had occurred.[55] His answer was: "Because nobody in the White House cared enough about foreign policy." Tony and Sandy felt that speechwriting was important and press was important and communication was important and legislative affairs was important. Since

---

[54] Permanent Normal Trade Relations. In 2000, the United States signed an agreement with China for Beijing's accession to the World Trade Organization, implementation of which required Congress to extend PNTR.

[55] Leon Panetta was director of the Office of Management and Budget from 1993 to 1994 before serving as the White House chief of staff from 1994 to 1997.

the White House Legislative Affairs Office didn't care enough about foreign policy, they strengthened their own legislative affairs competence. The same was true with the other three functions. That was Panetta's response. It was a NSC-driven response to what I would call the inadequacies of the White House as such.

But in theory, these two ought to be integrated, just as the NEC does not have any of those four functions. Maybe this is a question of White House management rather than NSC management. That, in fact, what you should have is a chief of staff who understands, and a White House organization that integrates, all of these things in one go. Or do we need to separate them? I think that's the issue.

BRAINARD: I think if you asked John Podesta, he would answer very differently than Leon Panetta.[56]

I was doing similar issues to the NSC but formally housed at the NEC, and the manifest imbalance in resources between the two organizations would strike any outside observer as bizarre. The NSC is either too big, or the rest of us are too small. But there are at least three major areas – foreign policy, economic policy, and domestic policy – whose coordination is arguably important for the presidency and which are similarly complicated in terms of policymaking. It is not obvious on the face of it that foreign policy is so much more important or more specialized than the other two to require a many times larger staff or its own staff to parallel White House functional areas such as legislative affairs or speechwriting.

Moreover, there are important areas of overlap, such as international economics, where more than one policy coordinating council arguably has important equities. And there are some new areas such as climate change and the environment, more generally, that require interagency coordination by the White House but do not fit squarely in any of the three basic baskets. I think the chief of staff is probably the right person to decide the division of labor among the policy coordinating groups, but this is only possible if he or she is the chief executive of the entire White House.

In terms of managing the institution, does it make sense for you to have an institution within an institution? It may make a lot of sense for there to be a foreign policy specialist, for example, in the press office who has a dual report to both the White House press secretary and the national security adviser. It is very helpful to have a senior press spokesman who everybody goes to on foreign policy, who interacts with the national security adviser every day, and who deeply understands foreign policy. But what is odd is if that is true for foreign policy but not for domestic policy, which is also important and complicated.

Achieving more comparability across the policy shops and greater integration of some of the NSC functional areas into the White House structure would be very helpful. And the chief of staff needs to be the overall chief, the ultimate arbiter of how the president's time is used, who gets manifested to travel on Air Force One and who participates in a presidential briefing.

---

[56] John D. Podesta was the White House chief of staff from 1998 to 2001.

For a chief of staff who believes the mandate is largely domestic, perhaps it's not a problem when you have two parallel White Houses and they work well together. But for a chief of staff who believes that the presidency must succeed in foreign policy as well as domestic and economic policy – and I think John Podesta would be in that camp – integrated overall management is critical.

SONENSHINE: Where the tension is the most manifest is in presidential time. I think where the most friction occurs is over whether there is time for a foreign policy speech versus a domestic policy speech or an event in the East Room on chemical weapons versus going out and doing one on gun control or something. Without a strong NSC press and communications office fighting for those public outreach events, you'd be loathe to see that much time spent on that struggle. You know you lobby for your babes. If you're on the NSC side, you lobby for time for public diplomacy on your issues.

LINDSAY: Do you think that's a function of a particular president, or would you expect that to extend beyond Bill Clinton? You had a different president with George Bush Sr., with his personal interest in foreign policy.

SONENSHINE: I don't know. I had the sense that with Roman under Scowcroft, they did their share of foreign policy speeches. But there was less of a big operation.

PONEMAN: I actually would separate them out. I think I'd question the premise. In other words, under Scowcroft the congressional shop was very coordinated and very well integrated with the White House. Ginny Lampley and Jim Dyer were good buds.[57] Ginny had a role beyond the mere legislative portfolio, because she really was a counselor.

BEERS: But also there was no tension with the State Department either, because Baker felt he had a very strong role and Janet Mullins felt that she had access to him.[58] Mike [McCurry] was on the State press staff before going to the White House.

PONEMAN: That's on the legislative side. My recollection of that is we would come up on speechwriting issues with the NSC staff. You'd go to the White House speechwriting shop and come back and say: "My God, we've got to fix this. We've got to fix that."

BEERS: I agree with that completely. That is actually a micro-expression of the function that Tara came to play initially. It has gone beyond that. It's not just speechwriting. Speechwriting is, in some ways, the manifestation of that.

But the point that Tara made about roll-out, which is that it's not just making a speech, it's not just getting time on the president's calendar to make a speech. It's: what's the purpose of the speech? What are you actually trying to accomplish? As opposed to standing up on some

---

[57] Virginia Lampley was the congressional affairs liaison on the National Security Council during the Bush administration. James W. Dyer served as deputy assistant legislative affairs in the White House from 1987 to 1989 and as deputy assistant for legislative affairs for the Senate in the White House from 1991 to 1993.

[58] Janet G. Mullins was the assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs from 1989 to 1992.

podium in Peoria or Burbank to make a speech for whoever happens to be the group that's invited you, the speech really articulates a message that's part of a broader strategy of which that one instance is only one piece.

That did not happen in my memory of the Bush White House. The closest they came is the Gulf War, where they tried to have a more integrated message. But most of you will still remember the briefings that occurred at the Pentagon during that period.

SONENSHINE: The other piece of it is preparing the president for a press conference. Q's and A's. Again, if you didn't have an active, involved foreign policy press operation that was going to prepare and make sure that the president was prepared, regardless of whether your president was more domestic-focused or foreign policy-focused, you would have difficulties.

You suddenly see, again, that these are the influences of globalization, not of Washington bipartisanship, or politicization. This is the fact of the matter that you suddenly have technology that is going to enable you to hear from the Chinese leader or to say things to him. If you don't have a strong foreign policy operation, I would not want to leave that to just anyone, as good as they might be on the other side of the White House.

DAALDER: But just on that point, because that's exactly what Panetta's point was to us, it was an absence of a strong foreign policy component within the White House that led the NSC to build it up.

STEINBERG: I want to come back to those points, because I think it's really important. I think that we in the foreign policy community are better off with a John Podesta as chief of staff, who knows and cares about foreign policy and integrates it.

I know this is on the record and not all my friends will agree. With the chiefs of staff who didn't care about foreign policy, the good news was they left us alone. The bad news was we didn't play a part.

SONENSHINE: But they left us alone.

STEINBERG: They left us alone. I've known John for a long time and I have enormous admiration for him. I think he's been an extraordinary chief of staff, and it's because he understood, knew, cared, had experience in foreign policy.

On the one hand, we did have to deal more with the tradeoffs that Lael was talking about. But we were better off for that, because the benefit of it was that we were more integrated into the overall budgeting and policymaking part of the White House.

For all the jokes about the 8:30 a.m. senior staff meeting, the most successful part of what we did was really getting the different components integrated and, to the extent that people perceived the president as having become more engaged in foreign policy, I think in part it was because there wasn't this kind of compartmentalization during John's tenure. So, yes, we had to deal with the fact that John was more in our face, giving us a harder time, asking the tougher

questions, but he expected White House legislative affairs to be more involved in our issues as well as the other issues.

I think it was all to the benefit of what we did. Though it made our life more complicated in terms of the day-to-day management, it was better for the president, and better for the country, to have a chief of staff who had that kind of interest, that kind of knowledge, and that kind of sense that the foreign policy priorities should be fully integrated into the White House operations.

BEERS: Jim, I agree absolutely with what you're saying. But if you're talking about organizational structure, you can't depend upon individuals to be in a particular job. So then the question is to try to organize structurally to compensate for someone who doesn't have that capacity.

DAALDER: This reminds me of what was reported in the *New York Times* with regard to Gore's convention speech. It apparently was too long and Carter Eskew said they should cut out the foreign policy part.[59] Gore said he had to keep it because it is one of the things that presidents do.

In that sense, as Jim was saying, one of the things that the White House does is foreign policy. It's not that the NSC is a separate body. It ought to be part of the White House staff. It is part of the White House staff. If it is regarded as integrated, then it works better.

BEERS: But it isn't a characteristic that's particularly checked when you select a chief of staff to the president.

DAALDER: That's the real question.

SONENSHINE: They're not parallel. I think Mike McCurry knew. The NSC deputy director of communications worked essentially for McCurry. I think it is important to remember that the White House press secretary is still like that. I don't think it's changed. It's still that you are an appendage to the White House press secretary. You operate with a lot of power, in a sense, because your issues have grown. But unless it's different now, I think it's still assumed that you are feeding into the White House press secretary, right?

BRAINARD: Let me just go back. There are two possible models; I think either works. The notion that you might have a set of press people that are both within the NSC and report to White House press is fine, as long as the economic folks also have their own comparable press people who function similarly. As long as the White House is structured on a comparable basis, it can work.

I think the press NSC/White House relationship has worked very well, but I would say that the same has not been true of speechwriting because the NSC speechwriting operation is

[59] Carter A. Eskew was a senior political adviser to the presidential campaign of Vice President Al Gore. See Melinda Henneberger, "In Reversal of Speech Process, Gore Wrote and His Aides Then Whittled," *New York Times*, August 18, 2000, p. A17.

largely independent of White House speechwriting rather than having a dual-hatted relationship. Often a speech comes from the NSC fully crafted, with signoff at the highest levels of the NSC before it goes into White House circulation. At that late stage, changes are more difficult to accommodate. Speeches in other policy areas are coordinated much more broadly at the development stage. I suppose every policy speech could be developed on the NSC model, fully owned by a policy principal, and then enter broader circulation in final form permitting only marginal edits. Or every speech could go through the same overall speechwriting crucible, where all the different perspectives are forged from the outset. Again, I think you could imagine either method doing well. What is odd is the difference between the NSC, on the one hand, and the other pieces of the White House, on the other hand.

BOBBITT: Randy, you have raised points that have a longer time horizon. Don't imagine John Podesta. Imagine Don Regan.[60] Can you imagine a guy who has what he thinks is a considerable interest in foreign policy, who wants the national security adviser to report to him. He seizes control of communications at first. Then later he holds the policy rope. You might not always draw a John Podesta. You could draw a Don Regan.

STEINBERG: Well, one thing that I feel very strongly about is that I don't think you would get anybody in this town who would work through a chief of staff model that basically says that the chief of staff controls the access to the president.

BOBBITT: He would refuse to take the job?

STEINBERG: I would not be national security adviser if those were the terms, and I can't imagine anybody would.

DAALDER: His name is Richard Allen.[61]

STEINBERG: I think that what you want is respect.

DAALDER: Carlucci insisted on having access to the president.[62] But he was willing to accept Howard Baker coming along.[63]

STEINBERG: But what you want is to respect the fact that the chief of staff has a legitimate input into the president's time, the priorities. I think it is fair. I think that the chief of staff is entitled to sit as sort of the chairman of the committee of the president's principal advisers, but not as the person to whom people report. I just can't imagine that anybody would take any of these jobs, whatever policy council, if the chief of staff could say that you can or can't see the president on "X" issue.

---

[60] Donald T. Regan served as White House chief of staff from 1985 to 1987.

[61] Richard V. Allen was national security adviser from 1981 to 1982.

[62] Frank C. Carlucci served as national security adviser from 1986 to 1987.

[63] Howard H. Baker, Jr. was the White House chief of staff from 1987 to 1988.

But the thing about John is that you wanted John in meetings. That I think has been the real strength of the Podesta era. John doesn't say, "I'm going to prevent you from seeing the president." But he says, "I'm going to be there, because I have a perspective to add to this." He's proven the value-added. I think that's the function of a chief of staff. It is not to be the filter, but to be the person who has some perspective.

BEERS: Who brings another perspective to the table. I couldn't agree with you more. That is exactly the kind of system that works the best. What you want is to have a system of checks and balances that doesn't allow a model to form that has a chief of staff who can prevent access to the president by key advisers. It isn't even just on national security issues.

STEINBERG: By the way, I would say this for the benefit of those who agree that the role of the chief of staff is to say, "Fine, you can be there, but I also think 'X' other person needs to be there." I think that is perfectly legitimate. I think it's a very important function of the chief of staff today to say, "I need the economic adviser. I need the science adviser."

DAALDER: Mac, maybe this is a good time to switch topics. In thinking about how to structure these kinds of organizations in the future, it comes as a bit of a surprise to me – I don't know about Mac – but the chief of staff function is about as important as thinking about the NSC issue because of all these White House/NSC relationships that exist.

Probably the number one recommendation you can make to the future president is that when you appoint your policy council heads and your chief of staff, think about how they will work together, if they will. It's not surprising that the three longest-surviving people at the NSC now are people from the very beginning, who also happen to be turning off the lights when they leave.[64]

STEINBERG: Well, there's actually a two-pronged element to that. One is to think about the people. But, two, to also think about the structure of the institutions.

DAALDER: Right.

STEINBERG: How those institutions will work with each other.

DAALDER: Exactly, on that second point. We don't know who's going to be president, and, even if we think we know, we don't know who he's going to appoint as his key people.

But what kind of advice would we want to give? For you who have thought about this and lived it most closely, what would you do differently? Why would you insist on particular existences and structural proposals or the structural ideas that now exist? What are the kind of top recommendations you would make to a new president? Or if you were in a position to make your own decisions, what is it that you would decide to do with regard to the NSC, in relationship to the NEC, which I think remains an important issue to discuss.

---

[64] The three Clinton administration officials are Bruce Reed, Gene B. Sperling, and Sandy Berger, respectively the director of the domestic policy council, the national economic adviser, and the national security adviser.

As one example, Mac and I have the idea – and Jim and Lael are better placed to comment on it than anybody else – of having a second deputy who is dual-hatted both to the NSC and the NEC, a deputy assistant to the president for national security and international economic affairs.

DESTLER: Push the double-hat higher.

DAALDER: Push it up one level higher than the current staff structure, and make that person the sherpa which already exists. In many ways, if you could unite the two into one position, that would do it.

BRAINARD: I think that is essentially how my position evolved with the sole distinction that I have a formal reporting relationship to the national economic adviser and an informal report to the national security adviser.

DAALDER: Yes, you need two deputies.

STEINBERG: I'll advance my lead on the article that I'm writing.[65]

DAALDER: Which is coming out when?

STEINBERG: You can steal it or not. I think that the single greatest challenge is to institutionalize the new linkages that exist between fundamental policy areas. But I think there are four interlinked policy communities around which you need to structure the way the White House works on the international front. They are international economics, conventional security, science and technology, and what I would call the domestic component of national security: crime, terrorism, drugs, etc.

I think that what we need to do is develop a structure that reflects the fact that those are the four core policy issues that we have to deal with. What we need to do is develop a structure at the level of advisers to the president who recognize that there are distinct expertises that must be brought to the table and that the president needs advisers who can bring that to a bureaucratic structure that doesn't stovepipe the analysis into four, mutually distinctive processes. So I think it is right to have a national economic adviser who has responsibility for the international economic field; a national security adviser who has responsibility for security issues; a science adviser who brings the science and technology expertise, and something which doesn't exist now – somebody who is not the attorney general or the director of the FBI but who can help the president deal with the international dimensions of the law enforcement issues. I think one of the greatest flaws that our government now faces is that we have law enforcement decisions made through a process that is totally disconnected from the president or the White House.

In addition to the four advisers, I think we need to develop a more integrated structure that cuts across those four areas. That's where I think your idea about double-hatting applies –

---

[65] See James Steinberg, "Foreign Policy: Time to Regroup," *Washington Post*, January 2, 2001, p. A15.

and not only in this area. I would absolutely have a deputy who is double-hatted on international economic affairs, who both reports to the two advisers, but who also commands the bureaucratic structure underneath it. A deputy who deals with regional and the classic security issues – arms control, nonproliferation, etc. A deputy who deals with science and technology issues, who is again double-hatted for that. And a deputy who deals with the domestic dimensions of national security: crime, terrorism, drugs, and the like.

We just need to break down the walls of the EOP [Executive Office of the President] staff and not see this as the NEC staff and NSC staff and OSTP [Office of Science and Technology Policy] staff. Rather we should have an EOP staff that is built around these issues and is able to convene across very diverse and interesting communities of agencies but has broken down the barriers of staff level work that reports up to the advisers. The advisers provide these unique perspectives, but the staffs are not owned by any one of them. I think that if we're going to deal with these cross-cutting challenges, that's the only way to break through the kinds of things that we're doing.

I think we've done a lot of that. But if you look at what Dick Clarke has done, in terms of some of the institutions that he's developed on initial infrastructure and counterterrorism, you can begin to see the models that could evolve there. We need to have the kind of flexibility in the staffing arrangements that reflect the fact that most of the issues now inherently involve teams of people. To the extent that they are owned by one or another of the stovepipes, you create tension. But to the extent that there are resources that all can draw on, they have the ability to bring together and convene the right resources throughout government.

DESTLER: What about somebody who might push that idea further and say that you shouldn't have a separate NSC staff or NEC staff or science staff. What you ought to have by this logic is a White House policy staff.

STEINBERG: That's what I'm saying. I'm saying ultimately the goal is to have a staff that is organized around functional problems, that is not owned by one discipline or the other. There is so much tension that's created by stovepiping these staffs. There's no reason why there should be. There's no reason why the Asian affairs directorate ought not to be as responsive to the national economic adviser as it is to the national security adviser. Why is the one perspective any more or less important than the other? I think that if you look at almost every model of business organization, that kind of flexibility is where companies are going and the kind of structures that they've developed mirror that approach.

DESTLER: Do you extend this to domestic policy, too?

STEINBERG: I don't know enough about domestic policy.

BRAINARD: I think the analogy would be that there should be a lot of jointness between domestic economic and international economic policy.

DESTLER: One of the concerns that Ivo and I have had, as we have held these sessions and talked to people, is that as an organization like the NSC gets larger and gets more subdivisions,

this tends to make individual's perspectives narrower. It seems to make it harder, not easier, for them to develop a really integrated perspective and to be able to connect even to other parts of the White House, let alone have the foggiest notion of where the president is or what the president is thinking.

This is what is worrisome about the way that, for very logical and persuasive reasons, the Clinton administration has moved to develop the different components of the NSC. It seems to me you are moving toward, if not competing, parallel and potentially not very well-connected, large bureaucracies within the White House. In the end that probably does neither the president nor foreign policy a favor. What might counter that?

BEERS: Can I respond to that from the perspective of ten years in the NSC staff?

DESTLER: Yes, please.

BEERS: I think that in many ways, one, if not the most, significant White House organizational issue, communications aside, that this presidency has brought to this process is the NEC. In recognizing the role of economic issues as a significant priority that requires a significant focus within the White House staff. I would have loved to see a domestic policy council that had acquired the same level of prominence and strength. Others may disagree.

I think that the merit of the concept, as I understand it, that Jim has put on the table is that there are clusters of issues that have to be brought together. It isn't stovepiping. It's to try to get beyond the stovepiping, to merge issues in a fashion. I would go to the stuff that I dealt with on the law enforcement side as one of the principal reasons why I think this has value. What needs to happen in the White House is the ability to bring law enforcement issues that have a foreign policy overlap together in a way so that it isn't just the Justice Department or the FBI bringing an issue to the president and saying, "This is so important that you have to take this particular action or the Republic is going to be in dire straits."

DESTLER: Nobody in the foreign policy area would ever make that assertion!

BEERS: No, no. But that's just the example that I can speak to from very, very personal experience. But the notion that accretion of power to the White House is necessarily a diminution of power to the agencies is an argument that's not worth having. The issue here is what's the way to the best policy. How can we prevent stovepiping? The departmental system is a stovepipe system. So how do we move beyond that? Jim has put on the table a pretty good idea for trying to break down those barriers.

BOBBITT: I think Jim's right. The way to get teams is not by eliminating the job descriptions of the people who do the work. You've got to eliminate middle management.

This report I think is a great idea. But it has got to go beyond simply team-forming and melding all these staffs in the NSC relative to other White House staffs. If you go to the next level up, you have the chairman of the NEC and the NSC adviser. I'm not sure you're going to succeed.

STEINBERG: The only reason I continue to believe that you have to have the individual advisers (NSC, NEC, OSTP, international law enforcement) is because at the end of the day somebody has to report to the president. There are some perspectives that the president needs to have. I think there is a difference. What I'm advocating is that we break up the role of the person who is the principal adviser of the president and the ownership of the bureaucracy. I absolutely believe that it's necessary. Sandy knows a lot about economics, but he doesn't know enough about economics to be the only person who can bring economics to the table when we talk about these things. He knows a lot about science and technology, but he doesn't know enough about them to be the only one.

I think there's a difference between the titles that we hold as assistants to the president and advisers to the president in a personal capacity and the ownership of the bureaucratic structures. What we've done is we've melded the two. My argument is that we ought to break those two apart. That's the way of dealing with the stovepipe problems but also making sure that when you are having the meeting in the Oval Office that these perspectives are represented. Because otherwise, if you don't have each of those things, I'm just not sure who gets to make the case to the president from the perspective of someone who really has expertise.

BOBBITT: I don't think I like the way this is going. In a way, that argues for a very powerful chief of staff.

BRAINARD: You're absolutely right. I would agree.

DAALDER: Can I throw one thing in the mix? We've now talked about White House staffing and who gets into the Oval Office with the president, but we've lost the departments in that picture. If we do have four assistants to the president for science and technology, domestic law enforcement, national security, and national economic affairs, where does that leave the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the director of central intelligence, the joint chiefs of staff, the secretary of the treasury, United States trade representative, and others? We're still talking about a staffing function that would ultimately require a larger government.

BRAINARD: I'm not sure changing the way the White House works would necessarily affect the relationship with the agencies. The reality is the president already has these advisers, and over time there's been an accretion of staff and power to the White House, for some good reasons and possibly for some reasons which are not so good.

There are two separate questions: What's the best way of getting both coordination and effective use of the agencies? And how do you run the White House most effectively?

Related to the first, I don't think by having a more effective structure at the White House you're necessarily diminishing the role or the power of State or Treasury. In fact, the reverse may well be true.

On the second, in the international economic area, I think Jim's absolutely right. There are serious foreign policy considerations and there are serious economic policy considerations, and they need to be brought together.

And in fact there is a dedicated group of deputies who do international economic issues. There is some overlap between the economic deputies and the foreign policy deputies, but it is a distinct group. At the principals level, I would say a good seventy-five percent of Sandy's time is the traditional bread and butter of relationships and security. But there's a growing chunk of his portfolio which has more constituencies and more complexity to it than the traditional foreign policy issues.

I think the difficulty with Jim's recommendations, to some degree, is the classic dilemma in management theory. It is how you best bring people together in teams around certain issues without losing the accountability, efficiency, and control associated with a simple single report hierarchy. I also think what happens over time with the creation of more specialized deputies, such as on international economics or health care policy on the domestic side, is that the deputy essentially becomes the White House point person on those more specialized issues. And you're right that the chief of staff then becomes more central and more relevant.

BEERS: But just like we were saying before, the chief of staff can't prevent access by the advisers. The advisers can't prevent access for the Cabinet secretaries. They have to have access to the president on issues of concern to them. I agree with Lael. I think that having that function preserved in the principals committee, or whatever it becomes, is part of that access.

PONEMAN: I think you have a real dilemma. I don't think there's an easy way out in terms of this trade-off between accountability through one's agency chain-of-command and having somebody doing the job as an integral part of a team. There is no end of mischief when those get all tangled up.

That having been said, Jim quite properly identifies a stovepiping problem. I guess I don't have an answer. But I'd suggest for the purposes of your study, these may be some useful things to look at.

You did have integration of at least a portion of the economic portfolio in the NSC under the Bush NSC, right? We had the international economics shop, which was broken up. Part of it became export controls and the nonproliferation part of it went into the NEC.

So it would be useful to see how that operated, if that was the microcosm of a kind of anti-stovepiping.

BEERS: Yes, but that was filtered by the national security adviser, who didn't care about those issues. That's an important access issue that the NEC brought to the fore.

PONEMAN: Yes. I don't have brief for the NEC. I'm just saying let's look at the point in context.

What Jim described sounds to me a little bit like what the Brits have with a Cabinet officer and a very small staff attached to the prime minister. So, for example, John Sawers has two or three guys who work with him.[66] He has to deal with the Cabinet officers, who then, in turn, deal with the departments.

I think there are some stresses and strains in doing that, but there are benefits in terms of coherence. I think that and other things should be looked at. When we were talking about the balkanization, or departmentalization, of the NSC, I do think you lose coherence. One thing that the NSC, or the White House, really needs to be able to do is to knit these different pieces together. And the more senior directors we get, the harder that becomes.

DAALDER: More special assistants to the president.

PONEMAN: That, too. There used to be a lot of empty chairs at senior staff meetings in the Bush NSC. You had eight or nine people around there, and they all knew each other really well. And they had big enough portfolios that that integrative function was essentially impossible to avoid.

DAALDER: Let me go a little further on that, because Colin Powell – and, Dan, you were there – had staff meetings with the entire NSC staff.[67]

PONEMAN: Yes, he did.

BOBBITT: So did Brzezinski.

DAALDER: And they fit into Room 208.[68]

PONEMAN AND BEERS: That's correct.

LINDSAY: That's hard to believe.

DAALDER: More importantly, he knew everybody there and he knew what they were doing.

PONEMAN: Those meetings were not so useful. The ones that I went to during Scowcroft were. At the 208 meetings everyone felt constrained to say something, and so it was a long, not very productive, and certainly not a decision-oriented meeting.

DAALDER: But they fit into 208 as opposed to Room 450.[69]

---

[66] John Sawers is private secretary to British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

[67] General Colin L. Powell was deputy national security adviser from 1986 to 1987 and national security adviser from 1987 to 1989.

[68] Room 208 is the largest, secure conference room in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building (previously known as the Old Executive Office Building or OEOB) where the National Security Council has its offices.

[69] Room 450 is the auditorium in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

PONEMAN: Well, the key to this was the big idea before you sort of jumped into it. Maybe this is what your study is doing. Whatever it may be, I'd want to see how you get the jointness without losing the accountability. That is incredibly important for good management, so you don't have people running around, not necessarily stovepiped, but also not doing things that they ought not to be doing.

BRAINARD: And feeling that the principals are taken care of.

STEINBERG: I think there's a real trade-off. I would argue that if you had to lean one way or the other way, that leaning toward that kind of modularity is so much more important than: "I know who my boss is, and when I wake up in the morning, I don't have to worry about who I have to report to."

I'll argue that though there are some benefits to accountability, it actually creates tensions and loyalty issues which are counterproductive. They're not pernicious, but it's a feeling of: "I work for the NSC. I don't work for the NEC."

BRAINARD: I think that's exactly right.

STEINBERG: Yes, but I think it's hard.

BRAINARD: It's also true that in some of the most multidimensional issues, like international climate change policy and international HIV/AIDS policy, Jim and I both know the person that we would go to in the White House on those issues.

STEINBERG: Absolutely.

BRAINARD: It's the same person in each case. I don't think those people report to either of us, but those are our point people.

STEINBERG: That's really important, because I believe that that's the way it should be. If I want my Asian expert to be somebody who not only worries about Japan and national security strategy but also understands other things like economics, we ought to have the people and the structures so that they don't see themselves in such a procrustean way that they have difficulty relating. They can integrate. They ought to be the ones who integrate.

BOBBITT: The problem is not going to be with those people. They would love that. The esprit would go up, and they really would love that.

DESTLER: If they're doing that, and there are fewer of them, then they can't do a lot of other things.

DAALDER: It suggests two things that are really critical. One is the notion that anybody who works on the White House staff should think that they're working on the White House staff, as opposed to working for the NSC or NEC, which is what they think currently. If you're on the third floor of the OEOB on the west side, you are NSC staff. "Oh, you mean I'm part of the

Executive Office of the President?" It also means that they need to know that they're working for the president, which is the difference.

Secondly, it means you need to have the kinds of people who can go beyond their particular competence. That they are broad enough. For example, you have an Asia person. You don't hire a Japan security person; you hire somebody who knows about Asia in a broad sense.

DESTLER: Whose specialty might be Japanese security.

DAALDER: Who might have a specialty, yes. Exactly. But who is able to do more than that.

STEINBERG: I think that's the direction we want to push people, because being multidisciplinary is absolutely the reality of what we do. To the extent that any of us are any good at what we do, it's because we can do that. If we can't see across those boundaries, we are not going to succeed in conducting America's broader global policy.

DAALDER: Here's the proposition, though. The proposition is that if you keep numbers small, you force people to become broader. Therefore, all other things being equal, smaller staffs are better than larger staffs, because then they become specialists.

BRAINARD: I think the other thing is that it forces people to do more, and I know because the international economics staff has been so tiny. But unfortunately – or fortunately, depending on your perspective – you're forced to depend much more heavily on the resources of the agencies. That can be good, and it can be bad. But that's a reality of the incredible number of issues.

FLANAGAN: I think there might be a conflict. I agree with Jim's general direction with the integration function. But particularly thinking of my experience in working with the law enforcement communities, just getting some of the balkanized agencies to work together. I was always for a straight NSC. Sometimes you had to remind the State Department people that you work for the president of the United States as well as the secretary of state.

DAALDER: Cables coming over stating, "The Department thinks this. The Department thinks that." Who cares what "the Department" – as opposed to the U.S. government – thinks.

FLANAGAN: Right. It's a cultural shift. And on your point, Ivo, when you said people said they worked for the NSC, it was almost like the NSC was another agency that also had a view. These views would be taken into a principals meeting or a deputies meeting, and it would get sorted out.

But I was thinking, too, that to me it's no accident that there's a direct correlation between the number of troops that Dick Clarke has on his staff and his ability to browbeat and pummel the agencies into performing and achieving the kind of integration he has on some of the transnational issues.

Phil [Bobbitt], I should say, was part of that, too.

DAALDER: Randy and I are the only people here who escaped Dick Clarke's wrath in eight years.

BEERS: Well, I never saw Phil at an interagency meeting.

BOBBITT: I'm loyal.

FLANAGAN: But to achieve that kind of integration is difficult unless you have a completely new administration that comes in and it's clear that all the Cabinet secretaries tell their people that these new, highly-empowered White House staffers, a cadre of 15 or 25 people, are like mini-presidents, and if they tell you to jump, you say "How high?" To me that's a cultural, bureaucratic shift.

But the economic component of national security and the domestic component are the ones most in need of something, because there is really no structure there. To the credit of the Clinton administration, I think they're trying to create that.

PONEMAN: If you want to go down that line, when I first got to the NSC, there were still some hangovers, like Randy from the old days. Randy, you'd probably know better than I do because I don't know anything about him, but I'm told Judge Clark apparently would call balls and strikes.[70] Right?

BEERS: I never served under him.

PONEMAN: I was told that even if an agency disagreed with the NSC, he'd check a box approving the NSC recommendations. Boom, it was over. You get two or three of those and the agencies get the message. You pay the price in terms of the obvious lack of goodwill that was generated. But if you're willing to pay that price, you can manage the system.

STEINBERG: Let me defend the agencies. Lael made an important point, which is that none of this has to be in derogation of the role of the agencies. This is still a coordination and a bringing-to-the-table function. Everything that I'm advocating is not to say that we're going to cut the agencies out of it. You asked the questions about whether the NSC should be operational. The White House shouldn't be operational. I absolutely believe that. So the agencies are critical to this and are very much part of the structure.

The question here is more about how you organize the White House to facilitate what the agencies do and vice versa.

DESTLER: Isn't part of what the White House wants to do is to empower good people in the agencies to do things that the president wants?

STEINBERG: Exactly.

---

[70] Judge William P. Clark was national security adviser from 1982 to 1983.

DESTLER: To actually do them with maximum cooperation. And the more you can do that, the better.

BRAINARD: In principle, the Cabinet secretaries should be proponents of a really good process, because their views are going to be taken seriously. They're going to have representation that's going to be fair. They're going to have an opportunity to get broad support at the highest level around their priorities. So, in principle, this could all work well.

BEERS: The point I was going to make about both Jim's proposal and the trend of this discussion is while you want to bring as many people into the room as possible in order to get the best deliberation possible at the beginning of the process, at some point someone has to be prepared to designate somebody in the White House as the principal organizer to bring the interagency process together. Because Jim is absolutely right. Ultimately it's the agencies that do the implementation of the operations. The White House doesn't do that. They spend the money, hire the people, put people in the field. All of those things are agency functions. So the White House is still ultimately a coordinator, not a general. This is a staff function; this is not a line function in the traditional military sense of a chain of command. It shouldn't be different than that, because the White House can't run divisions in the field or the implementation of an EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] policy in Oregon, or whatever the different kinds of issues are that have relevance here.

BOBBITT: I want to just ask a question. You've been studying this on a more historical basis. Isn't it really true that when we had a much smaller staff you had more of this ad hoc team making?

Bundy said that he would assign a project to three people and then bring in a couple of outside people and tell them to work together on it to resolve it.[71] And then he'd start a new group between the three and another from an agency or a university. Is that right?

DESTLER: Yes, that's exactly what he did.

DAALDER: But remember it was a very different time. The president would call the deputy assistant secretary for Far Eastern affairs in order to get the latest information on what was going on in Vietnam, and he was in fact a political appointee whom he knew, as opposed to being one of 6,000 political appointees.

BEERS: It was this group that brought us the Vietnam policy.

DAALDER: Yes, well, there is that, too.

PONEMAN: But I think it's important, too, what Philip has just described. It was a substantial evolution. My source on this is Mort Halperin.

---

[71] McGeorge Bundy was national security adviser from 1961 to 1966.

DAALDER: This is the first oral history roundtable to which Mort was invited that he has not attended.

BOBBITT: He's certainly qualified to be a member of this discussion.

PONEMAN: I hope this is accurate, but I recall this story about one of the first NSCs. A staff person actually had an idea for a policy he wanted to see adopted. He put this idea on a piece of paper, and he took it to President Eisenhower. And Ike said, "Why did you show me that for? Take it to the State Department." So Mac Bundy was a tremendous evolution from that.

DESTLER: Andy Goodpaster has a wonderful story about Eisenhower.[72] Eisenhower says, "Andy, we've got to get these troops out of Europe. They're not supposed to be there forever. We've made that clear. We've got to start pulling them out." Goodpaster says, "Well, Mr. President, that's not quite the policy. The policy is we want to pull them out as soon as we can get a reciprocal reduction of troops in the Soviet Union." So Eisenhower pounds the desk and says, "Dammit, Andy, that's wrong. Get Foster over here. We'll straighten this out." So he calls over Dulles, and Dulles comes over.[73] And Eisenhower says, "Foster, straighten Andy out. The policy here is that we're supposed to be taking our troops out of Europe. Right?" Dulles says, "Well, Mr. President, it's not quite that way. Yes, that's a very high-priority objective to move our troops out. But we need to move them out in parallel and by agreement with the Soviet Union, so that we will maintain the military balance and the psychological balance, etc." Eisenhower looks at Dulles, and he says, "Foster, I've just lost my last friend."

But, of course, the troops stayed and probably they should have stayed. But nevertheless, those were the pluses and the minuses of the respect for the system, and the president's sense of his role and constraint on his role. He can blow up about it and he can say what he wants, but he doesn't try to change it.

DAALDER: Well, we've kept you all long enough. We really appreciate you coming out and helping us in this project. As we said at the beginning, we will transcribe the proceedings, and send the transcript out to you for your review and editing. We will not do that before January 20th. The object here is to have as full and complete a record as we can.

---

[72] General Andrew Goodpaster served during the Eisenhower administration as staff secretary, responsible for the president's day-to-day engagement in national security issues.

[73] John Foster Dulles was secretary of state from 1953 to 1959.

APPENDIX A: AGENDA

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

1. To those who joined the staff in early 1993: what were your basic "marching orders"?
   - How were you told to play your role (vis-à-vis the president, State Department, other agencies, Congress, the press, etc.)?
   - What, if anything, were you supposed to do differently from the Bush/Scowcroft NSC?
   - Were there particular historical precedents you were urged to follow or avoid?
   - Were you encouraged to initiate PRDs within your sphere? To take policy initiatives through other vehicles? To defer to State or another operating agency in an important policy area?

2. What, if any, are the differences between the NSC in the first and second terms of the Clinton administration? What accounts for these differences:
   - Changes in style, leadership under Lake and Berger?
   - Changes in issues and agenda?
   - Changes in political requirements of the president (re-election vs. lame duck)?

3. It has been said that President Clinton prefers to be presented with consensus recommendations on foreign policy by his principal advisers. Is this a correct observation? If so, what accounts for the need to forge consensus? What impact does this have on policy formulation, *e.g.*:
   - In the operation of the interagency process at the IWG, DC, and PC levels?
   - In the preparations of PRDs and PDDs?
   - In crisis management?

4. The growing politicization of foreign policy has placed a premium on communicating policy effectively—to the public, the Congress, and foreign governments.
   - What role does the NSC have in this process? How much of the process can/should be handled by departments or other parts of the White House?
   - What is the relative balance between policy formulation and policy communication? Has this balance changed over time?
   - What other impact did this politicization have on your day-to-day work?

5. Any NSC staff will try to strike the right balance between effective oversight of policy implementation and eschewing an operational role. How has the Clinton NSC struck this balance?

- Are there clear demarcation lines between the two—*e.g.*, regarding foreign travel, communication with foreign governments, participation in interagency delegations, detailed briefing of the press, relations with Congress, etc.?
- Has the balance changed over time?

6. What has been the impact of changes in staff sizes, including the impact of:
   - The 25 percent cut in staff size imposed on the NSC in 1993?
   - The growth in staffing since then—especially during the 2nd term—which has now reached almost 100 policy professionals?
   - The make-up of the NSC staff, particular in terms of:
     - The balance between detailees and outsiders/political appointments?
     - The use of "free" labor—CFR fellows, IPA staffers, etc.?

7. How has the changing issue agenda affected the structure and size of the NSC?