

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY ROUNDTABLES

The Bush Administration
National Security Council

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INTRODUCTION

The Bush administration was home to a particularly collegial team of senior national security policymakers. They had worked together in the Ford and Reagan administrations and held compatible views on both the substance of policy and how it should be made. And during the Bush administration they faced “a world transformed” (the apt title of the unique memoir co-authored by the president and his national security adviser).

This roundtable examines the National Security Council process during the Bush administration, as seen through the eyes of officials a level or two below the principals. They were responding to substantial changes throughout the world: Tiananmen Square, the fall of the Berlin wall, the unification of Germany, the Gulf War, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the disintegration of Yugoslavia. As they address specific questions about the policy process (reprinted as Appendix A), the participants in the roundtable recorded in this transcript tell the story of a National Security Council whose collegiality and substantive effectiveness extended to a number of key NSC and State Department officials (although not to some at the assistant secretary level).

This is the third in a series of roundtables held by the National Security Council Project, 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 two previous roundtables – on the Nixon NSC and the role of the NSC in international economic policymaking – have been published. Three additional transcripts – on the role of the national security adviser, the NSC and U.S. policy toward China, and on the NSC and arms control policy – will be published in the near future. Other roundtables are planned for the fall of 2000. These have been conducted for their own independent value. They also will provide useful input to a report on the NSC we plan to publish in the fall of 2000 and a book to be published in 2001.

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

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DAVID GOMPERT, various positions, Department of State, 1973-83; corporate executive, 1983-1990; special assistant to the president and senior director for European and Soviet affairs, National Security Council, 1990-93; president, RAND Corporation Europe, present.

RICHARD N. HAASS, special assistant to the president and senior director for Near East and South Asian affairs, National Security Council, 1989-93; and vice president and director of foreign policy studies, The Brookings Institution, 1996-present.

ARNOLD KANTER, special assistant to the president and senior director for defense policy and arms control, National Security Council, 1989-91; under secretary for political affairs, Department of State, 1991-93; and senior fellow, Forum for International Policy, 1993-present.

ROBERT KIMMITT, deputy assistant to the president for national security affairs and executive secretary to the National Security Council, 1983-85; general counsel, Department of the Treasury, 1985-87; under secretary for political affairs, Department of State, 1989-91; ambassador to Germany, 1991-93; managing director, Lehman Brothers, 1993-97; partner, Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering, 1997-2000; and vice chairman of the board and chief operating officer, Commerce One, 2000-present.

ROGER PORTER, special assistant to the president and executive secretary, President's Economic Policy Board, 1974-77; deputy assistant to the president and director, White House Office of Policy Development, 1981-85; assistant to the president for economic and domestic policy, National Security Council, 1989-93; and professor of business and government, Harvard University, 1985-89, 1993-present.

PETER RODMAN, special assistant to the national security adviser and member, National Security Council, 1969-77; fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1977-83; director of policy planning, Department of State, 1984-86; deputy assistant to the president for national security affairs, National Security Council, 1986-87; special assistant to the president and counselor, National Security Council, 1987-90; fellow, Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute, 1990-93; director of Middle East and Eurasian studies, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994-95; and director of national security programs, The Nixon Center, 1995-present.

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE ROUNDTABLE

DAALDER: Thanks, everybody, for coming on a nice day, to be sitting inside discussing something that you don't necessarily discuss every day. This is the third of hopefully eight workshops that we're doing as part of a larger project on the past, present, and future of the National Security Council staff and the role it plays in American foreign policy. Mac Destler and I are the co-authors of this study, and the Brookings Institution and the University of Maryland are its co-sponsors.

The previous workshops have included one on the Nixon/Kissinger NSC, and one on international economic policymaking across administrations and the role of the NSC therein. We have this one on the Bush administration and one scheduled on the role of the national security adviser. And then we'll do some other workshops, including one on arms control and one on China.

We plan to publish the transcripts of these meetings. That means that you're being taped. We are conducting this for the record. But you will have an opportunity to go through the transcript in order to make sure that anything you did say and you didn't really want to say, either because it was too positive or too negative about certain things, can be taken out.

DESTLER: Also, if it's really interesting, you may add to it.

DAALDER: If it's pertinent to the subject.

The idea here is to spend about two hours going through most, if not all, of the questions that are in front of us, and then we'll break for some drinks, have dinner, and hopefully continue the discussion.¹

Perhaps one way to start the discussion is to address the first question that we sent around: How did the Bush NSC process compare with others in which you have participated or which you have observed? What were its special characteristics? In what respects was it structured to emulate practices of past administrations or to eschew the practices of those administrations?

I should say, and I should have mentioned this before, of all the National Security Councils that have existed, this is the one that Mac and I know least about. The ones before this have been written about. I served in the one after this, so we have a better understanding of the Clinton NSC. This is the one, in fact, we know least about, and the least has been written about, even in the Scowcroft/Bush volume.² There is a paucity of information.

DESTLER: It's also one that, at the senior level, is often put forward as a model for appointing appropriate people to senior positions and the relationships among those people.

¹ See Appendix A.

² George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (Random House, 1998).

HAASS: Given mainly as a model of excellence at this level.³

DESTLER: That is, of course, more controversial.

KIMMITT: We think we would have been the more appropriate people at the senior level.

GOMPERT: And we certainly behaved that way.

KIMMITT: I would start off just with one observation. At the start of the administration, we were asked to reorient the policy direction by commissioning policy studies, trying to ask “jolting questions.” The person who was tasked to do that study was the assistant secretary that served in that position. At least in the early policy formulation process, for a good six or eight months, we had a real complement of Reagan assistant secretaries leading the interagency process. And in terms of what was being worked on, it was difficult to get new ideas from this level. Any new idea would have led some to ask the assistant secretary why he or she had not turned it up in the previous administration. Thus, when the president said our review process only produced “status quo plus,” I was actually pleased were able to generate any “plus.”

KANTER: I have a couple of things to add to what Bob said. First, there was a notable anomaly with the Defense Department. When John Tower was not confirmed, the team that Tower had identified was in a funny kind of limbo until Dick Cheney came on, who I think for the most part, perhaps entirely, adopted that team.⁴ But there was even greater unevenness than ordinarily occurs. Perhaps to say the same thing Bob did in different words, I think it's fair to say that given a choice between the two stark alternatives of treating the Bush administration as a continuation of the Reagan administration (or a Reagan third term) or as the first Bush term, the people at the top thought of it as the first Bush term, and they did all the things a new president and a new team would do. So that while it's absolutely right, and Bob is absolutely right that this was the first time in the history of the NSC in which you had this kind of succession, the incoming people behaved as though they were closer to being a new group than a continuation of the old group. And that was sort of their operating premise.

HAASS: Legally, as you know, the files when we came on were empty in our offices at the White House.

KANTER: By law.

HAASS: By law. So this very much was, in that sense, a fairly sharp beginning.

³ Haass is referring to the rank of the roundtable participants, who were about two levels down in the hierarchy, e.g. NSC senior directors, undersecretaries of state.

⁴ President Bush nominated Senator John Tower to be secretary of defense in 1989 but the Senate voted to reject him. Richard B. Cheney was then chosen as the president's nominee. He served as secretary of defense from 1989 to 1993.

CARD: The other anomaly was that you had Colin Powell, who had been at NSC.⁵ You had President Bush who had been basically in the NSC trust.⁶ There were a lot of biases that they brought to the NSC process in the early stages. This was the first NSC created entirely under the Tower Commission expectations.⁷

DAALDER: Which was the result of Brent Scowcroft's effort.

GOMPERT: I served briefly in the Kissinger NSC, and the difference is striking. To talk about the Kissinger NSC as a process is a little bit odd. It was not a process; it was a concentration of power. It was meant to be a concentration of power basically to effect change. So routine things were left to the routine parts of the government, but change in policy was left to Kissinger.

Interestingly enough, this may have affected the Bush administration NSC. When Kissinger went to the State Department, for a while he wore both hats, but that didn't work out.⁸ Then Brent Scowcroft became his national security adviser, as you know, and Brent, of course, in his first go-round as national security adviser had to play pretty much the opposite of the role that Kissinger had played in what was then the Ford White House. He had to be the mediator, the soother, the occasional medic to deal with all the breakage that Henry caused in the State Department.

So the NSC made a very sharp shift under Brent, and was reflected by Brent's later participation in the Tower Commission.

RODMAN: I want to make a comparative point, because I saw four Republican presidents in action at the NSC. I do want to make a plug --

GOMPERT: For Coolidge?

RODMAN: Coolidge? I don't know; the memory goes. But I would make a plug for the Bush administration as the one administration which is a model – if collegiality is the criterion. I'm not talking about staffing – I'm talking about cabinet-level people who get

⁵ General Colin L. Powell served on the National Security Council as deputy national security adviser from 1986 to 1987 and national security adviser from 1987-1989. During the Bush administration and early Clinton administration, he was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

⁶ The statutory membership of the National Security Council, which was established by the National Security Act of 1947, includes the president, vice president, and the secretaries of state and defense. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the director of central intelligence are statutory advisers. George Bush therefore had been an adviser to the NSC as the director of central intelligence during the Ford administration from 1976 to 1977 and a member as the vice president from 1981 to 1989.

⁷ The Tower Commission was set up in 1987 to investigate the Iran-Contra Affair as well as the activities and structure of the National Security Council. It consisted of Senator John Tower, Senator Edmund Muskie and Lt. General Brent Scowcroft. See *Report of the President's Special Review Board* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1987).

⁸ Henry A. Kissinger was the national security adviser from 1969 to 1975 and secretary of state from 1973 to 1977.

together and talk and deal with each other as adults, with a president who is presiding. This is the one time in the four that I observed that it worked.

In the Reagan administration, you had great deadlocks between Shultz and Weinberger, particularly over the issue of the use of military power.⁹ And particularly on issues of the use of military power, we had a president who was very uncomfortable ordering his military to do things they didn't want. So you had stalemates that Reagan didn't resolve. He would split the difference or he would temporize. You had Lebanon. You had Panama, which the Bush team inherited. That's a process that wasn't working properly.

In the Nixon and Ford administrations when Henry moved to State, it actually normalized the procedures. You had a strong secretary of state. But you also had conflicts with a strong secretary of defense, which Ford couldn't resolve until he fired somebody, and even that didn't resolve it.¹⁰ So you had, again, stalemates among strong cabinet officers that a president, for different reasons, couldn't resolve.

The first term of Nixon was a highly centralized system which worked by bypassing the whole government, which is not a model to be followed by ordinary mortals. But the Bush administration, what I saw of it, consisted of grown-ups working together in a civilized way, and a president who made sure of it.

PORTER: I've often wondered what difference it would have made had John Tower been confirmed as secretary of defense. When he was not confirmed, Dick Cheney's nomination was announced four or five days later, and he was quickly confirmed, so there wasn't an enormous amount of slippage. With Cheney, you had a senior team that not only knew one another, but had worked with one another within the executive branch. And I had the opportunity of seeing Baker and Scowcroft and Bush and Cheney during the Ford administration working with one another.¹¹ And I think the fact of their experience, which tended to be a happy one, made them able to start in a way that many teams are unable to.

HAASS: I think one of the interesting things about the Bush years is that a lot of us knew each other from beforehand. Dennis [Ross] is a good example. Almost all of us, not just at the top level, but at a level or two down also knew each other from in and out of government. So you did not have a lot of the same "getting-to-know-you" process, and to a large extent we got along fairly well. And I think there was something about the tone that the president and others set, that you didn't get the feeling that this was an administration where food fights would be tolerated for long. But also there just wasn't a lot of it. The work-to-bullshit ratio was better in this administration than any other I've ever seen, and less of your calories went into the bureaucratic game in this administration. There was also less concern about leaks than in any other administration. I'm not saying that a lot of the negatives that we associate

⁹ George P. Shultz was secretary of state from 1982 to 1989. Caspar W. Weinberger served as secretary of defense from 1981 to 1987.

¹⁰ The person was James Schlesinger. He served as secretary of defense in both the Nixon and Ford administrations, from 1973 to 1975.

¹¹ James A. Baker, III served as secretary of state during the Bush administration from 1989 to 1992. During the Ford administration he served as the undersecretary of commerce.

with government were totally absent, but there was clearly less of that in this crowd for four years than in any other administration I've either been in or observed.

KIMMITT: Since many of us had worked together in the Ford and Reagan administrations, we had long since figured out what we thought of each other and if we liked each other or not. We didn't have to work out a lot of those ego issues. We really just got down to work. And that existed very much in the senior levels.

ZELIKOW: We've been focusing in the discussion so far on the NSC as an interagency process. The NSC staff is also a support staff and policy development team for the White House. Those are really two quite different roles, and judgments about them shouldn't be confused too much. And in those roles, in the interagency processes we've been talking about, I want to just single out two things.

I view Tower/Cheney as very important, but most important to all was the triangle – president/secretary of state/national security adviser. And the triangle here is a remarkable one – the Bush/Baker/Scowcroft triangle. Of course, Baker was not insecure about his relationship with the president for reasons everyone here knows. But what people may not have understood, until time proved it, was how secure Scowcroft was in his relationship with the president, which in another way was, if anything, even closer than Baker's to the point that there were times at which I thought Bush and Scowcroft were almost like two dimensions of one person. He was almost like a kind of doppelgänger for Bush. It's not a coincidence that the two of them co-authored a presidential memoir, something which has never happened before. And if you understand that triangle, a lot of other stuff falls out of that that makes things understandable.

The second thing, which is easy to overlook if you look at this historically, because I think this was a very successful NSC staff, is that most administrations are powerfully shaped by their strong initial experience. Either that initial experience reinforces what they think is the right way to do things or not. Eisenhower, for instance, in the Operation Solarium, NSC-162-2.¹² Or negative experiences, like the Bay of Pigs. The entire Kennedy administration is a reaction to the Bay of Pigs, from a procedural perspective. A lot of the Nixon administration, and a lot of the pathology for which Kissinger was later criticized, are, I think, substantially driven in reaction to an initial, not hugely well known episode (the EC-121 shutdown).¹³ But, if you read Kissinger's memoirs and study that, Kissinger saw it as a pathology of how not to do crisis management and really decided very strongly, "We're going to make sure we never do crisis management that way again." And, you know, they never did crisis management *that* way again. They did it in other ways that created new phenomena.

¹² NSC-162-2 laid out the basic national security policy of the Eisenhower administration. The efforts of three task forces, whose work became known as Project Solarium, studied the various policy options available to the United States during the cold war. See, for example, Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 123-138.

¹³ See discussion in Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Little, Brown and Company, 1979), pp. 312-321.

And for the Bush administration the initial experience that I think was very strong, at least that I could see and which scholars may not understand, was the May 1989 NATO summit. You can judge rightly or wrongly, but I'm sure that Bush and Scowcroft both thought that the May 1989 summit experience, the conventional arms control initiative, was an unequivocal success. Here they had developed a large multinational initiative, totally in secret, successfully sprung a surprise that had been overwhelmingly adopted, and it received unanimous acclaim. They pulled it off. It was a very complicated bureaucratic thing to do, and they pulled it off. They had done wonderfully and Bush had gotten rave reviews in his first big trip on the international scene. And if you think about the process they used to develop that initiative, I thought that it then became their template for "here is how you do this stuff right." A lot of the stuff about it was basically four people and their deputies and the folks that radiated out of that hub. A lot of their patterns by which they seemed to do decision-making after that I thought really shaped the administration from what little I saw.

HAASS: I thought you were going to give a completely different example. I thought you were going to give a negative impetus – Panama – and note the reaction from that, both formal and informal.

ZELIKOW: In their approach on the use of force, the Panama crisis of 1989 played the same role – first as a negative caution (the abortive coup) and then the success of Just Cause.¹⁴

CARD: I think we ought to get to some of the other structural introductions that came during the early Bush administration. Marlin Fitzwater specifically demanded and was given the right to be part of the NSC process.¹⁵ He wished for that role not because he wanted to know everything, but he didn't want to lie. Also he was a kind of a wallflower in the process rather than an adviser, a formal place that the president let him be at the meetings, if you will.

Also, there was a structure inside NSC that I don't believe really existed before, maybe it did, and that was a legal counsel. It was kind of part of the process. It also had a kind of staff secretariat that had a little more umph than certainly the domestic side of the White House thought they should have. So there was tension between the secretariat and the NSC and Jim Cicconi.¹⁶ And that did create wedge problems, because Jim Cicconi (who had a secretary role) had a separate track role with Jim Baker, or at least somebody thought he did. So there was a little tension that would find itself manifesting in the staff secretary's office. But they were structural changes. I don't know that they were part of the Tower Commission type recommendations, but the Fitzwater thing was something that Marlin asked for before he agreed to be press secretary.

KANTER: Yeah. One of the things that didn't change was that there was no speech writing staff on the NSC.

¹⁴ Operation Just Cause was the nickname for the invasion of Panama in December 1989.

¹⁵ Marlin Fitzwater was the White House press secretary from 1982 to 1992.

¹⁶ James W. Cicconi was assistant to the president and deputy to the White House chief of staff from 1989 to 1990.

CARD: Except for Richard.

KANTER: Speeches were written by the NSC staff all the time, but there was no speech writing staff per se on the NSC.

CARD: No, I agree with that. I think there is on the current NSC. Is that right?

DAALDER: It's most of the NSC.

KANTER: I don't remember any more whether that was a battle fought and lost or a battle never engaged. But it was always a battle between the NSC staff and the White House speech writers whenever the president was going to give a foreign policy speech. There's always a fight over the speeches, and that made a big difference.

DAALDER: Was there actually a press office in the NSC?

HAASS: No, but you had Roman Popadiuk.¹⁷

DAALDER: Right. But he worked for Marlin?

KANTER: He was on loan from the State Department. He was one person who had multiple roles.

RODMAN: A liaison, and that had some precedents, too. They used one person who performed a liaison function among different agencies.

HAASS: But he worked more for Brent.

CARD: He was dual-hatted.

KANTER: Roman was a real diplomat.

KIMMITT: Going back to Phil's point on the broader structure, taken from the top down, the meetings of the National Security Council started, as they do in most administrations, with some regularity, to oversee the administration's policy reviews. Although policy reviews tend to be less frequent over the course of an administration, the NSC, or an equivalent involving the president, remains very important. We created a principals committee – all the senior people minus the president – but it met only once on a non-arms control issue. When the president learned his senior advisers were meeting just down the hall without him, he made clear to Brent Scowcroft that he wanted to be involved in such discussions.

CARD: So he would actually go to the meetings?

KIMMITT: That was the end of the principals committee on policy issues.

¹⁷ Roman Popadiuk served as both deputy press secretary and senior director for public relations on the NSC from 1989 to 1992.

KANTER: I think that's historically inaccurate.

KIMMITT: There were, of course, various forms and sub-forms of meetings with the president, from the Big Eight in the Gulf War, and so forth.¹⁸ They tended to meet more in the president's office. And, of course, you had the three of them meeting, that is Baker, Cheney, Scowcroft, but that is something that goes back to the Carter administration. Right now, as I understand it, well over ninety percent of the meetings that involve cabinet level officials in the national security community do not include the president. Our meetings that involved the top people almost always included the president. And I think that's a very big difference, because also I think the NSC system works wholly on the basis of accountability. And that is what we want – accountable persons.

KANTER: I don't disagree with your structural point. It does not, however, fit with how we dealt with arms control issues. On arms control, there would be meetings of Scowcroft, Baker, Cheney, and Powell in Brent's office regularly without the president, and then typically Brent would report to the president on the results of the meeting in Brent's office.

ZELIKOW: And there would be one deputy with each of those four.

ROSS: It varied. As I recall, that was really unique to arms control, because the president really didn't have an interest in knowing the details of the arms control agreement.

HAASS: Showing good judgment yet again.

ROSS: On almost every other issue, it worked the way we described.

I just want to reinforce one point that Richard made. One of the things that made the process work very well was that there was a kind of familiarity. Everybody knew each other. It was a kind of familiarity developed over a period of years. But added to that, at least in Baker's view, was what Baker said to us, "I want you to work with them." There was never a sense that there was a competition. Our challenge was to ensure there wasn't a problem. It isn't to say that problems didn't crop up, but if they did, then Baker was prepared to go the president.

That was also a fact that was well known by Brent. Brent was not keen on having Baker go to the president. So if there was a way to avoid having that take place, he would find this out. But we were never charged with creating problems. We were charged with avoiding problems. And, you know, there are always so many people sitting around the table. We would sit and we would truly work things out, not in a formal way. We would frequently have very informal meetings, either you coming over to us or us going over to you. We would sit in each other's offices. And whatever it was, we would sort it out, or, better than that, we would develop an approach. It wasn't just problem avoidance.

¹⁸ The informal group known as the Big Eight consisted of President Bush, Vice President Dan Quayle, Director of Central Intelligence William H. Webster, John Sununu, Brent Scowcroft, Dick Cheney, Jim Baker, and Colin Powell.

Frequently it was concept development. And I think that worked especially well, because everybody did know each other so well.

GOMPERT: Another factor in the collegiality was the absence of ideological polarization, which I saw divide and debilitate a couple of administrations. Hawks versus doves in the latter half of the Carter administration, and unilateralists and multilateralists in the early Reagan administration. Perhaps the people who had been brought in were recruited because of their professionalism and their experience – brought in on merit and not political or ideological grounds. It was pretty much absent, or, if not absent, it was present but muted. Ideology rarely entered into debates over questions that in the past, in my experience, were always fraught with ideology. Arms control first and foremost. The only time I saw ideology creep up to the outskirts of an issue was the collapse of the Soviet Union and how rapidly we wanted to push that. Some people had been waiting for the day and others were a little bit more reserved. But I think that was mainly an idea-driven debate.

ROSS: There was one area where we had disagreements, in the arms control area --

GOMPERT: Let me make my other point connected to that. I think it's important also to comment on international economic policymaking, because of my responsibilities and because of the fact that the NSC had to cover it, as Roger will recall, too. I spent a lot of my time doing that, and I do think there are some differences between our management of international economic issues and our management of international security questions. We ought to come to that at some point.

KIMMITT: You strike that balance by having a good undersecretaries level. During the Bush administration those people had to be alter egos. That really wouldn't work now.

DESTLER: At what level did the deputies meet? Not at the actual deputy level?

DAALDER: Undersecretaries.

KIMMITT: Bob Gates chaired it, and then you'd have undersecretaries.¹⁹

ZELIKOW: There are a couple of things about that. First of all, let me just be the first to say it. Gates is crucial to this story, personally.

KANTER: Exactly.

PORTER: It was very different when he was not chairing.

ZELIKOW: Not only because he was the chair of this absolutely vital committee; also because of the whole way the system worked. One of the reasons the system ran so well was

¹⁹ Robert M. Gates served as deputy national security adviser from 1989 to 1991. He remained a statutory adviser to the National Security Council, serving as director of central intelligence from late 1991 to 1993.

the system actually didn't do policy analysis at the table, at the level of principals. People actually wrote down analysis, and analysis got vetted up. The key place at which it got commissioned and vetted was this deputies committee. Gates was actually central to that. People would comment on what happened after he left.

And it was all because that was so central, and because the quality of the work which was being done going into it. It's true that Gates' counterparts would typically be someone like Bob [Kimmitt] at State. But, in fact, it plugged people at the next level down in very well, because I did not notice that Dennis Ross or Bob Zoellick had the slightest difficulty getting their ideas into a deputies committee meeting when they wanted to get those in.²⁰

There was one kind of ad hoc deputy committee we formed on European security. It was chaired by Gates. We actually made Bob [Kimmitt] and Dennis [Ross] formal members of the committee just to be sure that they were at the table to help solve some bureaucratic problems with the State Department. Richard, I noticed, had no difficulty getting his ideas in the deputies committee, at least from what little I could see, and so on, because that committee really worked and didn't just do it at the table, and stuff was funneling into it. And Gates actually mentions this in his memoirs.²¹ The system worked very well at plugging in entrepreneurial people who could, indeed, funnel in those ideas and do that work. As Bob said, people who waited to be asked, or who were relatively passive, could get the air sucked away from them.

KIMMITT: You didn't mention at all that there were other people working. We didn't bring out their strength, and you're right.

DESTLER: You're the people though that everybody mentions as the inner group.

KANTER: I mean, again, this is maybe sort of arms control parochialism, but Steve Hadley, the assistant secretary of defense, was a key player who played a much larger role than either his bureaucratic brief or his bureaucratic status would have led you to conclude.²²

ROSS: That's actually the point. The people who were seen as having the key, substantive responsibilities were the ones who were involved, either in the formal process or the informal process. Steve was seen that way over at Defense. So if one wanted to get things done, you worked with Steve. And it was the same way in our building. It wasn't so much the formal structure. We knew what the division of labor was in terms of who had what responsibilities.

DAALDER: On arms control, who was the person at State? Was it [Richard] Clarke?²³ Or was it [Reginald] Bartholomew?²⁴

²⁰ Robert B. Zoellick was undersecretary of state from 1989 to 1992 and deputy chief of staff from 1992 to 1993.

²¹ See Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (Simon & Schuster, 1996).

²² Steven Hadley served as assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs from 1989 to 1993.

KANTER: Bartholomew.

ZELIKOW: That's a function of personality not just this issue.

KANTER: I think that viewing the deputies committee in structural terms may be misleading. What strikes me about the way in which the interagency process ran in the Bush administration was its informality. That is, the real work, the most work, the good work, when people got serious work, got it done informally. I'd say the deputies committee is an anomaly, because if you had subtracted Bob Gates from the deputies committee, my hunch is that it would have been as sterile an exercise as the PCCs, the assistant secretary level meetings, became. What made the deputies committee work were the personalities on the deputies committee, not the structure of the deputies committee. In a way what caused the assistant secretary level work to become sterile, or maybe start out and stay sterile, did, I think, actually have a structural source.

It was because it was a formal entity, with all of the formal baggage, in an administration in which the real work got done informally.

CARD: Maybe ad hoc would be a better word.

KANTER: No, it wasn't ad hoc, because it actually became highly routinized.

CARD: It wasn't really all informal.

KANTER: No, it wasn't sort of you call up your buddies and do something. There was a quite regular process, but it just turned out to run in parallel with the one laid out in NSD-1.²⁵

CARD: And without any complaints.

KANTER: Yes. The PCCs sort of didn't work, in part because they were formal, and I think in part because they were headed in large measure by assistant secretaries, which meant they were headed by a department.

KIMMITT: If you had not had an intra-party transfer, but an inter-party one, a lot of the people would not have been there or had the experience. If we look at the people who actually got a lot of the stuff done, they had been there before Arnie, for example, was there almost right from the outset. Now whether it's arms control or arms sales, I'm not sure having someone there six months earlier would have made that much of a difference but I can tell you coming in six months later did.

²³ Richard A. Clarke was assistant secretary of state for politico-military affairs from 1989 to 1991 and was director for international programs at the National Security Council from 1991 to 1993.

²⁴ Reginald Bartholomew was undersecretary of state for arms control and international security affairs from 1989 to 1992.

²⁵ NSD-1 was the first directive issued by President Bush establishing the structure and organization of his administration's National Security Council.

HAASS: But let me say two things that reinforce a lot of what Arnie said. The first is to note one of the fundamental differences between the deputies committee, which is the mid-level, and the PCC level, which is the third level, is that the former was chaired at the center and the other was chaired at the periphery. And one of the real weaknesses of the PCC level is that it was periphery-chaired. It's very hard to have any player be both a player and the referee. The assistant secretary of state comes to the meeting to chair it and to represent the State Department. This puts him in an extremely difficult position, particularly when other agencies have equal or greater equities. It puts him in an impossible situation.

I think this problem was compounded in the Baker State Department, because for the most part assistant secretaries were somewhere north of Siberia. And quite honestly, they weren't the players. So it was almost like why bother. And it's not a sign of criticism, but with very few exceptions, you knew that if you wanted to get work done – to put it bluntly – if I wanted to get something done on the Middle East, I called Dennis, because that's where the action was.

On other issues, Bob [Kimmitt] and I would sit down, or Blackwill, Condi, and Phil [Zelikow] would be over with Zoellick, and so forth.²⁶ That was the way power was distributed in the Baker State Department. It put assistant secretaries in an untenable position, but it also meant that that layer of government became pretty irrelevant. The only time it actually became more relevant, I thought, was in two ways. One was in the first couple of years on secondary or tertiary issues, on the things that never really got attention. There were only so many issues the guy in the middle could handle. And secondly, after Gates left the deputies committee, that became a less popular forum and one began to often move around it. You ended up doing forum shopping. And the feeling was that if you could no longer get your shopping done there, you'd go elsewhere. Sometimes I'd just go to Brent, and I'd say, "Why don't you just take this up?" I despaired often of getting things decided at that level. And I realize that's not necessarily good government or textbook government, but it was the only way to get things done.

KIMMITT: I'll just give an example executed at the assistant secretary level. The only significant UN Security Council resolution during the Gulf sequence that did not deal with the Gulf was the Cambodia peace resolution.²⁷ But it was seen as a secondary issue. Basically once the Vietnamese troops were out, we had achieved our strategic goal. The Vietnamese were gone. But then there was a question of trying to make things happen. So an assistant secretary could pick his points to manage or initiate, but they were usually non-strategic.

GOMPERT: I think it was possible for the NSC to play this strong role at the center, both formally and informally, in large part because of Scowcroft's view of what the NSC and what the NSC staff should be and should not be. I mean, I also saw a highly concentrated NSC

²⁶ Robert Blackwill was special assistant to the president for European and Soviet affairs from 1989 to 1990. Condoleezza Rice served as director for Soviet and East European affairs and senior director for Soviet affairs from 1989 to 1991.

²⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 668 of September 20, 1990.

under Kissinger. But as I said earlier, it was a completely different concept. It was power at the center. Whereas Brent was really so diffident not only about operations but also about pushing policy. He had views and he had subtle ways of introducing his views, but he did not view the NSC, and certainly made it understood that we should not view our positions, as sort of a platform from which to push a particular policy.

We would have opportunities to nudge policy and to introduce concepts, but that's it. And precisely because of that – which would have been a sign of weakness in Kissinger's day – it was really an attribute of considerable strength in our day because the NSC was not threatening to anybody. So you not only had the principals around the periphery who were not threatening to each other, but there was no threat from the inside. And I think that was evident in the behavior of Scowcroft, Gates, and the entire staff.

ZELIKOW: But, ironically, it meant that the NSC was, I thought, much more powerful in the Bush administration than it had been in the Reagan years, despite the fact that it wasn't threatening, as David said, at the top. Scowcroft and Baker were people who themselves were secure about their position and their influence in government, and that sense of security filtered down below them. It was a highly functional system. Well, not at my level. But it was generally highly functional. When Arnie talks about or when Richard talks about we did what we had to do to get things done, things actually did get done.

Now one of the trade-offs of such a system would be that if you're doing this in a highly functional way, you're not formally tapping the formally designated reservoirs of analytical talent. But though I think that argument sounds good, it's just very difficult actually to find much hard evidence that supports it.

KANTER: There are a lot of formals in your statement, which helps make it true.

ZELIKOW: But you did arms control policy quite systematically.

KANTER: It was done for very specific problems to answer specific questions and was brought to the table by people who actually were trying to figure out what the right thing was to do rather than simply marshal evidence and arguments on behalf of a position they had adopted a priori.

ZELIKOW: The analysis is often done in the course of writing talkers for your principals. It's the way a lot of analysis actually gets done on the desks in a bureaucracy. It's analysis in the form of talking points instead of real analysis. Bob Zoellick, for instance. Bob Zoellick wasn't doing all this analysis by himself. Bob would reach down in the bureaucracy and he'd find people. Sometimes he admits in private, in his darker moments, that he actually did task other people for help. He would reach down and find people, and he would begin to appraise people; and he would find people he felt were talented in the economics bureau, on some of the economics issues, in the legal bureau, and so on. And he would build his own networks of relationships where he could draw on talent. Some of the assistant secretaries fit very well into this. Bob may disagree, but I thought Ray Seitz actually ended up working very well

with this.²⁸ I thought that Bernie Aronson did.²⁹ I thought John Bolton did.³⁰ I can't really judge how well the NEA [Near Eastern Affairs] Bureau played into it.

KIMMITT: The part about reaching down to people and having them respond is right.

ROSS: It was the opposite for us, because one of the things that we faced with the EUR, for example, was that in the first year when we were trying to come up with new ideas on INF, and the EUR was against most of the ideas we raised.³¹ When we tried to deal with the issue of German unification, they were against all these ideas. And what happened, unfortunately from their standpoint, is we had a secretary of state who wanted us to come up with new approaches. We had a president who was interested in new approaches. We had a national security adviser who wanted to see what might be developed. There were a few times he should have shooed us out of his office, I recall. But the point is, when we would try to involve them, certainly in the first year, what we found was a great deal of resistance to what we were doing. The "two-plus-four" concept was anathema to our building.³²

And the problem from their standpoint was that when they started to resist the new ideas, they got cut out. Not because we necessarily chose to cut them out, but because there was a real impulse to keep things very quiet and closely held. And if these people weren't going to be participants in terms of helping, then they ended up getting excluded. Over time, if they wanted to play a role, they realized they had to be a part of it. And they began to change. Then it wasn't just individuals you could pull out. They began to look for opportunities to be helpful, but they still were not initiating ideas. Most of the ideas were coming from the top. And if we could get help, we'd get it, but if not, it was done without them. And then it was done with our colleagues over in the NSC. How often would we sit together and sort of hammer something out? That's why I said, it wasn't a problem of avoidance so much. It was concept development.

ZELIKOW: If I could follow up on the "two-plus-four" for a moment. This "two-plus-four" episode was a period in which there was a lot of hostility. There wasn't just hostility in Dennis' building; there was hostility in the White House and a lot of suspicion. I remember this very well. Brent was suspicious. He was suspicious of Baker personally. And at the level below Brent, that suspicion was acute and spilled over in consultations with people in Bonn, and so on. One of the interesting things about this episode, as I reflected about it

²⁸ Raymond G. H. Seitz served as assistant secretary of state for European and Canadian affairs from 1989 to 1991.

²⁹ Bernard W. Aronson was assistant secretary of state for Inter-American affairs from 1989 to 1993.

³⁰ John Bolton was assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs from 1989 to 1993.

³¹ The INF Treaty is the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles. It was signed on December 8, 1987.

³² "Two-Plus-Four" refers to the negotiations between the two Germanies – the Federal Republic of Germany and German Democratic Republic – and the four countries that had maintained certain rights of occupation in Germany since the end of World War II, i.e. the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. Negotiations ended with the signing of the Treaty on the Final Settlement With Respect to Germany on September 12, 1990.

much later, years later, and listened to people and recounted both sides, was that there was some real acrimony there, both personal and substantive, with folks saying that you didn't clear this or that. But not a whisper of it, as far as I can tell, ever got in the press. And because not a whisper of it got into the press, it didn't fester.

And the hostility held for about a few weeks. Then there were some informal meetings, in both buildings, where we kind of got together and worked out how we were actually going to make this thing work. Both sides ended up being very happy that we had a common strategy for how we were going to make it work, and the hostility just dissipated. Actually I thought that ended up being a turning point in which from then on the relationship was really one of genuine mutual respect. I can't recall any further serious acrimony, at least in that whole basket of issues, for at least the next year.

ROSS: First, we had worked very well, generally, up until that point on Soviet issues. There was a very natural linkage between us. We had real tension conceptually on the "two-plus-four." But you're right. Once it became clear that there was a mechanism to work out all the differences, then all of the acrimony did disappear.

Second, on your point on the fact that it never leaked, when people saw that things didn't leak that would put them in a disadvantageous light, then it built a level of confidence so that you really could totally unburden yourself with others and you didn't have to worry that somehow it would be used against you. There's nothing like building that kind of trust that allows you to air everything. And we really were quite good. You could have really intense debates, and we did have some really intense debates, but they were among friends in the end because there was that level of trust.

PORTER: That seems to me to be two fairly crucial points in comparing the Bush NSC and the Reagan NSC. One was the beginning, and two was the level of continuity. In the eight years of the Reagan NSC, you had six national security advisers. And at least from the vantage point of people viewing it from the outside, much of the time it seemed to be in turmoil. Whereas you never had that impression from the outside in the Bush period. The informal system, which many have remarked on, seemed to work quite well. There was a sense in the building that this was a group that had their act together.

GOMPERT: As a consequence of this, there was a very high degree of transparency and very little of the sort of the rigidity that comes from, "This is the State Department's position; this is the Defense Department's position." There was some of that, and there was the formality of that, but, in fact, I never got the sense that we were really dealing with positions held by different buildings. We were really developing policy, as Dennis has tried to describe. So that as it pushed up, the principals got something that was a common policy, and an effective policy. And you never got a sense that you were sort of unwelcome.

I've worked it both from a State Department and also from a NSC staff position. From the department's point of view, I never got the feeling that I, an NSC staffer, was unwelcome or that it wasn't our business or because the secretary hadn't decided that the wagon train had been circled and until the State Department arrived at its position, there

would be no discussion. And from the NSC point of view, I never got the sense that we were dealing in rigid, formal positions by different departments. It happened sometimes, but most of the time, it was quite possible to work out effective policies.

KIMMITT: Going back to Roger's point, I was just thinking, that, in a way, as the administration went on, the process became almost less formal and that was to some degree allowed by all these factors we've discussed. In the Reagan administration, I was at the White House. There was a high degree of formality in the structure. Very regular NSC, NSPG [National Security Council Planning Group] meetings and these people had to get in the room and thrash things out. I think where you run into a problem is when you have an informal system that is lacking in structure and people don't get along or are willing to talk out of school about each other.

I think we're seeing some of that now. I don't know how much but it seems to me that there is an awful lot of finger pointing in the middle of this crisis in Kosovo. Not all of our crises went wonderfully well but at least we had enough respect for each other.

RODMAN: I just wanted to comment on what Roger said and Bob's gloss on it. First, it comes from the top. In the Reagan administration, President Reagan imposed his will on issues that he cared about. That was transmitted to the government on issues that he would step up to. But sometimes he would avoid a decision. Then the bureaucratic situation would reflect that, too. Either the stalemates would continue and decisions would not get made, or else they would get made and he imposed his will. The second point, as Bob pointed out, is the behavior of the personnel. In the Reagan administration, there was an ideological diversity which reinforced some of the bureaucratic tensions.

But the Bush administration was different on both counts. You had a president who was more engaged, more consistently and systematically, and wanted a collegial style. And secondly, the personnel were more homogeneous, as has been discussed. I think it very much reflects what the president wants in terms of the style – the manner, the acrimony, the degree of collegiality.

KANTER: Let me just underscore a couple of points, so that they're not lost sight of. I'm afraid that all of the talk about informality makes it sound like the gang got together over a cup of coffee to make national policy and solve crises. It was an informal process in the sense that it didn't follow some of the strictures of the NSD-1. However, very soon in the administration, one could write down what the process was. That is, the process was regular; it was predictable; it was structured; participants were known. This kind of an issue gets handled in this kind of a process with these people in this way.

KIMMITT: Even though the processes may be different.

KANTER: It wasn't the one in NSD-1 but there was a regular, structured, predictable process. It was interagency. It was analytical. It had all of the attributes of what you would want an interagency process to be. It just turned out not to have been the one described in NSD-1.

GOMPERT: I think it's worth coming back to the issue I mentioned earlier, which was in the international economic policymaking area. There it did not work so well. And you really had the same dependence on informal processes, but for a variety of reasons the informal processes did not produce the same results that they did in the hard security area.

DESTLER: Is this at least ninety percent due to the different cast of senior people?

GOMPERT: Well, I don't know. I have to think out loud a little bit on this. We had enormous difficulty trying to arrive at U.S. government positions, with regard to the world trade negotiations, even though we knew in our hearts that it would be good for the president politically, good for the country economically, and good for what we were trying to do in the world to move this along. There were no unreasonable people involved in this, no one who was out to obstruct progress.

CARD: I can think of one or two that might have been.

KIMMITT: They just weren't up to the job.

CARD: Well, maybe they weren't up to the job. So then they would go talk outside --

GOMPERT: So the informal process was not up to it in this case. The one that worked so well on the other side simply could not function, did not function. And the formal process was pretty much nonexistent. We didn't really have a formal process. On the other side, we hadn't needed one. So we had no way of resolving problems. And even though the problems weren't deeply rooted, they were enough to prevent the United States from rethinking its negotiating position. And as a consequence of that, the credit for concluding the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] negotiation that we took to the two yard line has largely fallen to our successors.

So I think it's interesting that you had many of the same personalities involved – certainly Baker as well as Scowcroft. The president was rather heavily involved in that. But they couldn't make it work. I do note that to emphasize again the importance of the second tier, not the second team, but the second echelon. There was no such thing, really, on the international economic policy area. There were folks, and we tried to get together. Bob Zoellick, of course, was very instrumental, but it was not the same tone, it was not the same sense of: “Boy, we've got a job to do. Effectiveness is all that matters. The goal is a successful conclusion of these negotiations. Let's get together and figure out how to do it. Let's not worry about staking out agency positions.” That did not exist at either the second or first echelon on the international economic policy side. Why in one area and not the other, I don't know.

KIMMITT: You should make the secretary of the treasury a full member of the NSC. He should be included in that international economics group. Treasury wants to jealously guard its preference not to bring U.S. monetary policy to the circle, but they'd love to get in and talk about other people's trade policy and all the rest. Even if Bob Rubin sends a memo

today to the president on WTO matters, it goes to the cabinet secretary, not to the NSC.³³ It is processed through that side of the White House, which will jealously guard that prerogative. Whether you've got the National Economic Council now to fill the gap, I think that is a big issue to grapple with procedurally.

GOMPERT: Well, it seems to work better now than it did in the Bush administration.

CARD: I think there were more leaks in the economics process than there were in the true foreign policy process, which were indicative of the turf battles that were taking place or the weaknesses of some of the players.

KANTER: But it also recognized that the international economic issues were a small fraction of the issues which the process engaged. So the relationships, the habits of work, the participation, the informal system was one that had a circle of players which did not routinely embrace Treasury and USTR [United States Trade Representative] --

CARD: And Commerce.

KANTER: And Commerce.

ZELIKOW: I think that's a little exaggerated. Baker didn't take an infinite number of issues. He was aware of things that he had to manage. There were a small set of issues – the same for Scowcroft and for Bush – that got priority attention and where he would basically draw in people like Bob Kimmitt, and Bob Zoellick, and Dennis Ross, and say work on these. These are in the foreground. And it was almost a limited set, and they always knew pretty much what that set consisted of. It changed. One of those was NAFTA [North Atlantic Free Trade Association].

Well, that's international economics, but as far as I can tell, there's a lot of foreign politics in it, too. And they got NAFTA done. That was because they pulled it into the foreground. They mustered the horsepower to solve it. Now I know that they wanted to do the same thing with the Uruguay Round by 1992, and by 1992 the wheels were beginning to come off the machine in a couple of ways. That's a larger story. Maybe the Uruguay Round didn't muster the effort that it should have in 1992.

But when they wanted to do something on the international economic front, they actually could get that done. It's just that usually it wasn't in the top six issues that were in the foreground.

ROSS: That's right, but I would just make one point. I think this really reflects that you had much more of an experience doing this, but I watched this in more than one place. The relationship that we had with you, and even with the Defense Department, was totally different than the relationship we had with Treasury. And with Treasury we had a kind of non-stop combat. It wasn't competition; it was combat.

³³ Robert E. Rubin was assistant to the president for economic policy from 1993 to 1995 and secretary of the treasury from 1995 to 1999.

So it was very hard to get things done because the whole sociology that existed in what was the more traditional part of the national security apparatus of the administration did not exist when it came to those issues. It didn't mean you couldn't get things done. If there was enough priority given to the issue, you could overcome it, but it was one hell of a different kind of effort than it was in everything else we did.

ZELIKOW: You had to spend a lot to get there.

PORTER: I think we also need to recognize that it is inherently more difficult when you greatly multiply the number of players who feel they may have a legitimate stake in an issue. And it's worth reminding ourselves that the secretary of the treasury had a long-standing personal relationship with the president, which he used extensively.³⁴ He did not have the same kind of relationship with many of the leaders in the cabinet that Baker did. The U.S. trade representative felt obliged to surround herself with people whose basic experience was on the Hill because of the very sensitive relationships that had developed in passage of the Trade Act of 1988 and how closely the Hill was watching what was going on.³⁵ The secretary of commerce was an old friend of the president's and had, as most secretaries of commerce do, a vision of a larger role on trade policy than ever ultimately proved to be the case.³⁶ The secretary of agriculture who had been a U.S. trade representative, as well as the director of the Office of Management and Budget and chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and some others, felt like they would like to play in this arena from time to time.³⁷

Despite the large number of people, we actually came very close in December of 1990 in Brussels to wrapping up essentially the agreement that the Clinton administration signed in 1994.³⁸ I was there along with five senior administration officials. I remember a huge debate that went on almost all night over whether, if we brought this deal back, you could get it through the Congress. There was, I think, an appropriate degree of caution on the part of Ambassador Hills not to risk something that she did not have great confidence could get through, or I think we would have had both an Uruguay Round agreement and a NAFTA agreement during the course of the Bush administration. If you look at the agreement that the Clinton administration ultimately signed, it's hard to see the differences between the final outcome and what was essentially negotiated by December 1990.

³⁴ Nicholas F. Brady was appointed secretary of the treasury by President Reagan in 1988 and remained in that position throughout the Bush administration.

³⁵ Carla A. Hills was the United States Trade Representative from 1989 to 1993. The Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 gave the USTR (rather than the president) the authority to decide if a foreign country's trade practices were unfair and should be further investigated and effectively made the USTR accountable to both the president and Congress.

³⁶ Robert A. Mosbacher served as secretary of commerce from 1989 to 1992. He was replaced by Barbara H. Franklin, who served in the position until 1993.

³⁷ Clayton K. Yeutter served as secretary of agriculture from 1989 to 1991. His successor was Edward R. Madigan, who finished out the Bush administration in that position.

³⁸ Reference is to the North American Free Trade Agreement.

GOMPERT: Roger makes a very important point. On the international economic side, we had to have domestic politics in mind. Whereas on the national security side, interestingly enough, domestic politics did not come into our calculations every day in trying to shape policy.

DESTLER: Wasn't that because on a lot of issues, things were breaking pretty damned well for the United States?

RODMAN: This is a perennial bureaucratic problem, which has nothing to do with a particular date. The economic agencies have powerful domestic constituencies and powerful congressional constituencies, and they have always resisted having their issues subordinated to the NSC process, which is dominated by us foreign policy types who are giving away our interests to foreigners all the time. You see it in the Clinton administration; you saw it 30 years before; and that's always the problem of harnessing these economic departments in some integrated procedure.

DESTLER: I'm not disagreeing with that at all.

RODMAN: Traditionally, there's some structure at the White House level attempting to integrate economic and national security policy.

DESTLER: No, I'm not disagreeing with that at all, Peter. I'm just saying that on the core national security issues, at least in the first two to three years of this period, with the Soviet Union weakening, with the developments in eastern Europe and everything, you have a situation in which the politics of the national security issues are breaking well. There was a problem, obviously, in the fall of 1990 with the Gulf War and division on that. But then, of course, the Gulf War ended up a great triumph.

HAASS: The Middle East – a powerful exception.

KIMMITT: Well, let me back up even further, because I agree. That was the overarching one. But in the transition in December and January, we identified a number of priorities, one of which was reorienting policy on Nicaragua. I remember that I had to go to Honduras on March 2, the day I was confirmed, to give the bad news to that government. In addition, on war powers we had several meetings here with legislators. George Mitchell was a big proponent on war powers. The leadership was down there talking about how do we stop a debate on theology on war powers. War powers was never an issue in the Congress in the Bush administration. There were issues, but we didn't get into some of the theological debates that we had on Lebanon and others in the Reagan years. That was a war powers debate yesterday [April 28, 1999] in the Congress. What we tried to say is, war powers isn't the issue, it's fundamentally the executive-legislative relationship. And the idea was to get those types of issues off the table, because you're going to waste enormous energy. Then you get to the Middle East; then you get to what was going on in Europe.

ROSS: I remember Baker during the transition saying, "Look, we'll never have a central American [policy] unless we can come to some understanding. We need to deal with that particular reality." That's why he made that a number one priority.

KIMMITT: But I think you're right, Mac, in terms of the world that we faced. Things were probably breaking better than we realized at the time. As you look back at what was going on in that spring of 1989, we were trying just to stay one step ahead.

HAASS: The first NSC meeting, if my memory serves me right, was on Afghanistan. I remember having this bizarre situation where the Soviet troops were leaving Afghanistan by February 15, 1989, and the biggest problem for us was we weren't going to have our policy ready.

RODMAN: But there is the historical point that after fifty years of the National Security Act, the national security community knows how to work together – State, Defense, CIA. At least procedures are there, one variant or another. But the economic departments and agencies have never been tamed in this framework. And, in fact, the new problem is you have the Justice Department and a whole new set of bureaucracies that have domestic constituencies that will not accept the jurisdiction of the national security community. Somehow they have to be brought in. But they simply don't accept an NSC framework that is dominated by foreign policy types.

CARD: The Hill was poised to be destructive early on. They weren't giving us the benefit of the doubt. And I think we really had to work hard to make sure the Hill trusted us, and Virginia Lampley gets credit for a lot of that.³⁹ Ginny really gets credit for a lot of that. I mean, working a relationship with key people on the Hill. And we had to work real hard with David Boren to get him to trust us, which he was not predisposed to do.⁴⁰

KIMMITT: Bush was the only president to go through his presidency with a Congress held by the other party during his entire term.

RODMAN: Nixon and Ford did, but Bush faced larger Democratic majorities opposing him than any elected president in U.S. history.

HAASS: There's one thing Roger said that I want to follow up on. The Gulf War crisis is interesting, because there you did have a lot of the domestic agencies with their fishing rods in the water. And yet things got along pretty well. Perhaps during crises the government shows a little more discipline than usual. You have presidential involvement on a regular basis. Having Andy [Card] in the deputies committee helped, because Andy and others could deal with the people on the domestic side of the House.

CARD: You didn't have people asking dumb questions before --

³⁹ Virginia Lampley was the congressional affairs liaison on the National Security Council during the Bush administration.

⁴⁰ Senator David L. Boren (D-OK) was a member of the United States Senate from 1979 to 1994. During the Bush administration, he was the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

HAASS: Oh, no, that's not true. But that was an example where for about eight or nine months, the interagency committee worked well. People on the domestic side did, in some ways, follow Brent, the national security leadership, but I think there was a sense that the stakes were so enormous that people were slightly cowed by it. And there was a degree of discipline that was wildly uncharacteristic.

KANTER: To give you a counter-example. Haiti didn't work well. There was lots of domestic agency involvement, but that was not our finest hour in terms of interagency cooperation.

KIMMITT: When I served as ambassador, there was tremendous support in the authorizing committees and appropriating subcommittees and the domestic agencies to create positions in the international world to include at embassies overseas. I had five people from domestic agencies who were working with the rank equivalent of a major general. They had been given the rank by their operating committee of minister/counselor for environmental affairs, agricultural affairs, etc.

KANTER: It would be good if what's happening in the embassies were reflected back in Washington, because right now they're simply the ambassadors from their departments rather than part of their country's integrated policy.

KIMMITT: The interagency process worked.

CARD: Something we haven't talked about was the role of the chief of staff in this process. And he was kind of an unwelcome guest to a lot of parties. John Sununu's personality was such that he would want to be participatory in almost every single policy debate.⁴¹ And he would throw his two cents' worth in frequently, and he'd report back on having thrown his two cents' worth in and then tell me to go find the change. As a result, I was not a welcomed guest at a lot of parties.

DESTLER: Were there issues that he particularly was engaged in?

KIMMITT: Global warming.

CARD: Seriously.

HAASS: Lebanon.

CARD: Right, Lebanon, and certainly a lot of the Gulf War stuff, Panama.

PORTER: Right. But it seems to me it's also worth remembering. Presidents calibrate the people around them with respect to where they think they're going to make their greatest contribution. The chief of staff was in a very different role on domestic issues, where he had a lot of experience before coming to Washington, than on foreign policy issues.

⁴¹ John Sununu was chief of staff from 1989 to 1992.

CARD: Brent deserves a lot of credit for really working hard to be inclusive with Sununu.

ZELIKOW: On at least one occasion, Baker thought Sununu had crossed the line, and Baker --

CARD: Baker had been a chief of staff himself.⁴² He basically just cursed Sununu out about being White House chief of staff and what his proper role would be, and he did this in front of other people sitting around. It was not a problem that occurred often thereafter. Now, that may have been a rare moment where Baker said some things, but he rarely said things he didn't mean to say.

PORTER: By the way, this is the only administration that had a secretary of state and a secretary of defense, both of whom had been White House chiefs of staff, and both of whom felt that they, and I think people generally agreed, had been very successful White House chiefs of staff.⁴³ And for that reason I think Sununu was in a difficult position. The advice would have been taken differently if it had come from some other quarter.

ZELIKOW: Amid the jocular good humor that always characterized these discussions.

GOMPERT: I could offer a comment – and Arnie probably is in the best position to comment as well – about what went wrong with regard to Yugoslavia and about the process. It was largely the same people. It was the same process, certainly. We used every informal and every formal mechanism at our disposal. There were more meetings on that subject than on any that I remember. And it wasn't as if the trust and collegiality broke down, because, after all, these were the same people and they'd been hardened by, and successful through, other things. Everybody was conflicted about Yugoslavia. I don't think anybody knew, one hundred percent, what was right.

So you start with individuals being conflicted. There were conflicts within departments and conflicts within the NSC. And the president's reaction to all this was, "Please make it go away."

DESTLER: "The problem from Hell," somebody called it.⁴⁴

GOMPERT: And the problem was it couldn't go away, it wouldn't go away. There were difficulties that would arise from action and difficulties that would arise from inaction.

But the one aspect of the process that I think broke down – that may be too strong a word but it was ragged – had to do with the military. There certainly was a feeling in other

⁴² Baker was President Reagan's chief of staff from 1981 to 1985.

⁴³ Cheney was President Ford's chief of staff from 1975 to 1977.

⁴⁴ The statement has been made by Warren Christopher who served as secretary of state from 1993 to 1997. See, for example, "Statement of Warren Christopher, Secretary of State," *Foreign Assistance Legislation for Fiscal Year 1994 (Parts 1 and 8)*, Hearings and Markup before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, 103 Cong. 1 sess., (Government Printing Office, 1993), p. 94.

parts of the system, I think in the State Department and even in the NSC, that the military had made up its mind about this; that the civilian leadership in the Pentagon either was not of the same mind or was not about to overrule the military. As a consequence, we didn't have the same transparency. We weren't able to discuss things with each other, civilian and military. We didn't have access to the same kind of information. It was the only occasion on which I felt that I could ask for something, and somebody would say, "No, you're not getting that information until the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff signs off on it."

And, therefore, trust began to fray. When the system that depended so much on trust and transparency on the part of all the key actors failed, it certainly didn't help in dealing with this crisis. That's my best diagnosis of it.

ROSS: I agree with everything you've said. Steve Hadley was the only one over in Defense who was actually willing to be somewhat more activist, but he would explain what all the limitations were. But I would take a step back. I wonder about the impact of the whole Gulf War experience on this. Had we not just gone through all that, I wonder whether the response within the system might have been different.

I say it first in terms of the military, which had just won one war and didn't want to get into something that they thought was not winnable. But I say it also in terms of what I still believe is worth a serious kind of study. You had a very small circle of people, both at the top and then in the immediate second tier in the Gulf War, who, from August until the end of the war, went through an unbelievably intense, emotional, physical, exhausting experience. There was tremendous anxiety, especially when the Pentagon was making some of the predictions about what the casualties would be. I saw how it weighed on the president. But it wasn't just the president. It was all those who were working on this.

It was an experience that was incredibly intense. And at the end of it, having been exhausting, but then also having experienced euphoria, there was a kind of let-down afterwards. The ability to sustain a high level of intensity on something else after the kind of experience that went on as long as it did was very difficult. And, in my judgment, it affected not only Yugoslavia. It affected us on what we were trying to do on Soviet policy at the time, especially, I would say from my perspective, when I was trying to get us interested in the idea of what eventually became Nunn-Lugar.⁴⁵ We could not generate the interest at the top because, in a sense, they were spent.

And I just wonder if you hadn't had that experience that was so intense for so long, I wonder whether or not you would have seen the system operate the same way. Maybe it would have, but I think you have to evaluate this in terms of the impact of that.

KIMMITT: Let me pick up just from that point because I think sequentially it is always termed as victory fatigue.

⁴⁵ The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program is also known as the Nunn-Lugar program for former Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) and Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN).

ROSS: I still think that one of the reasons for the impulse was precisely what we had just gone through and the level of fatigue.

KANTER: I think there was fatigue, but, frankly, I think all administrations get fatigued. That is, the Gulf War experience accelerated and exacerbated a fatigue process in the administration. Administrations get tired. I'm talking about a whole series of issues, not just on Yugoslavia.

It seems to me that there were a couple of things. One thing was specific to the Yugoslav case, because this isn't just a story about fatigue, although others have alluded to it. This isn't simply a case of the Pentagon didn't want to lose a war after having just won one, or didn't want to play with its toys. Starting with the president himself, there was no support at the top of any agency for using force in Yugoslavia. This wasn't a fight between the Pentagon, which was dragging its feet and saying no, and everyone else who was desperate to go in. Yugoslavia was not an issue that we thought was either ripe for resolution, susceptible to the use of force, or warranted what it would require in order for us to have a hope in hell of making a difference. This was a shared view at the top, which may have frustrated some of us on the second echelon, or second tier, but it was widespread, not focused in any one agency.

It's also my impression, and you guys would know much more, was the military, in the beginning, wasn't chomping at the bit to go to war in the Gulf.

ROSS: To say the least.

KANTER: And so when the military said in the case of the Gulf War, it's going to really require a lot of force, it's going to require a lot of stuff, the president said, "Whatever it takes." When you start talking about Yugoslavia, about if we can open a humanitarian corridor from the port of Split to Sarajevo in order to just supply humanitarian assistance to Sarajevo, and the Pentagon says that we have to take four divisions. Well, the mood at the top was: "We're not doing four divisions."

So I'm not sure that the difference between the Gulf and Yugoslavia was what we would call the military mind-set. One important difference was the view of the senior leadership of the administration between the Gulf and Yugoslavia.

KIMMITT: I would agree with that assessment of the people at the top. But to go back to the point you made, Philip, about the European Security Group. Did that group stay together after German unification?

ZELIKOW: Yes.

KIMMITT: Did they look at the Yugoslavia question?

ZELIKOW: No.

KIMMITT: Because there were a lot of people in there who may have been hired for other reasons, not Gulf-related. And it seems to me that to some degree, a lot of this was handled at a level that hadn't done an awful lot of creative thinking and had moved principals in directions they had not planned to go, whether it be on German unification and so forth.

KANTER: But, remember, by this time Gates was gone.

KIMMITT: No, I'm talking about the really critical period, and that is for me from April through August of 1991.

ZELIKOW: That was still a time of incredible activity. You know, Arnie is actually right about administrations getting tired, but not all administrations are equally busy for the same period of time. This was an administration that was dealing with really first order crises in practically every regional bureau on every continent. You've got the Soviet Union. You have Europe. In 1990 there's Cambodia; there's the war in Panama; there's NAFTA; there's Iraq. You just go across the board. One of the reasons, for instance, that Iraq doesn't get the attention it should have gotten in the spring of 1990 is because Gates was traveling to India and Pakistan.

There was a huge amount of stuff going on in the summer of 1991. The Soviet Union was breaking apart. Rather than being fatigued with the Middle East, Baker and Bush have decided to take, I thought, a very high risk – politically – decision to actually reengage the Middle East peace process and throw a lot of political capital into the Middle East peace process.

And then all the points about the Balkans were right after that. But in the summer of 1991, they don't really shift gears and use this group or pull these issues into the foreground for all the reasons folks have mentioned. But they're tired. It wasn't just the normal cycle.

DESTLER: One thing nobody has mentioned is the political attack on Bush, beginning at the end of 1991. That is, take the George Bush tour anywhere but the USA. What followed was a striking reduction in his visibility, assertiveness, at least as seen from the outside on a whole set of foreign policy issues in 1992.

HAASS: One thing that would be good for you to think about, in writing the history of the administration, are what are the great accomplishments and what were some of the problems in the national security area. And you'd look at the procedures, and you'd ask what was similar, what was different? And clearly some of the great accomplishments were German unification, the end of the cold war, most of the Gulf War handling, the Middle East peace process, and some other ones. What were some of the problems? Clearly Panama was a problem. We didn't handle that terribly well. I don't think, in retrospect, we handled the end game of Afghanistan well. I think we were very slow to move from a "get-the-Soviets-out" phase to beginning to think about what happens next in Afghanistan. I think we had problems with that. The end of the Gulf War. That period was a bit ragged, shall we say. Yugoslavia clearly didn't work out well. And you'd have to ask yourself, to what extent were some of the problems process problems. Regarding Yugoslavia, I'm not persuaded it was

really that much of a process problem. To paraphrase Leslie Gelb, the irony of Yugoslavia is that the system worked.⁴⁶

KANTER: It worked. I think that's right. One might quarrel with their judgments, but the problem is not with the process.

HAASS: You've got to really think hard about where you think the outcomes were less than optimal. To what extent were they process as opposed to simply that the judgments people brought to the table may or may not have been optimal.

GOMPERT: I want to make a quick comment on fatigue before our own fatigue sets in. I really don't buy that argument. The president slowed down, clearly, in his personal diplomacy. But the system right up until the very end, the system we tried to establish, did work, particularly with regard to the break-up of the Soviet Union. We were going through a period during which we thought the world might blow up, and I thought the interagency process was managed extremely well. It was in a reactive mode, to be sure, but sometimes reactive mode is the mode to be in. That was right up to the very end. So I didn't really see the same fatigue that others have described.

ZELIKOW: Arnie's group really caught some attention on that, because what they did in September of 1991 on the arms control front, the speed at which it was done on both, the unilateral moves and the START II moves. It was done so fast that people didn't really realize the magnitude of what had been done. If you think about what's the time line to do arms control work of this magnitude with all these different agencies --

PORTER: Indeed, if you ask George Bush what among his accomplishments in foreign policy he got the least amount of credit for that he deserved, arms control would probably be very high on his list.

HAASS: It was also late in 1991 that we had the Middle East peace process.

ROSS: Having been the one who put the fatigue on the table, I'm not giving it up. No, it became much harder for us to get Baker's attention on certain things. And we'd never had a period like that either before or somewhat later.

DAALDER: Can you date it more or less? You're talking April....

ROSS: Yes. The only thing he was really prepared to do at that time was the Middle East peace process, where we were out there almost all the time.

Now you can say that was hardly a manifestation of fatigue, but I'm measuring fatigue in terms of being able to manage attention on other issues. Because when I'd be out with him, not only was I was doing the Arab-Israeli stuff but I was doing all the other things, too. I couldn't get his attention. There was simply no way I could get it, which was not

⁴⁶ Leslie H. Gelb with Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Brookings Institution Press, 1979).

typical for him because he was a very high energy guy. And in many ways he was spent. He sort of marshaled the energy to focus on this.

It isn't to say that he didn't recoup later on. He did recoup later on, but there was a period of time where it took a while for him to come back. And on an issue like Yugoslavia, I can tell you, there was no way to get his attention. Maybe the reason was because he knew where Bush was coming from. And Larry [Eagleburger] had a very strong opinion.⁴⁷ That could have influenced him, but I also think it was just hard for him to get energized to deal with it.

KANTER: Just to reinforce what Dennis said. In a way, the critical time on Yugoslavia was the first half of 1991, and that was the time when the fatigue problem set in.

CARD: And Europe was not speaking with one voice.

KIMMITT: The bottom line is that we needed to articulate our vital interests in Europe in a way that the military knew how to go through its standard force planning procedures. That should have been well before 1991. To ask if German unification goes right, and if the Soviet Union transitions go the right way, what are the truly vital interests in the new Europe, ones for which we are going to fight. None of us really were prepared to task-organize, force-organize. And I don't think we had done a lot of that analysis. I don't even really see it today.

HAASS: It is hard for governments. The end of the cold war really is an overused example, but it was a paradigm change. It was a structural change. It's very hard for governments on the fly to deal with things like that. You're so busy still dealing with your in-box. That really is a period where outsiders and maybe policy planning staffs have a chance to adapt. But the policy planning staff was, shall we say, operational on lots of issues. But even had it not been, that's an awfully tough moment for insiders to digest all that and think about what it means. Maybe we should have gone to a more formal process on what do we have to rethink now that the cold war's ended. But it would have been tough.

KIMMITT: But the Carter administration did so in 1979 in the Persian Gulf. One of the pillars of our policy commitments, that is the Shah, had tumbled; people were being held hostage; and things began to go to hell in a hand basket. Really from lower levels, the Carter administration pushed through a policy approach that turned out to be right, even though it took a long time to see that result in the Gulf War. In short, by denominating the Persian Gulf as an area of vital security interests, a process was set in motion that came to fruition in the Gulf crisis and war.

HAASS: They pushed it, too, but they also weren't challenged there for a long time. And it took a long time until we had the PDs [policy directives] in 1979 and 1980, and actually even 1981. But it was a long time before anyone was challenged on it and had to think about it. What happened in the early 1990s? Things got awfully telescoped. And some of the

⁴⁷ Lawrence S. Eagleburger was deputy secretary of state from 1989 to 1992 and secretary of state from 1992 to 1993.

challenges in places like Yugoslavia and the rest came very early on, and it was just a lot to ask.

CARD: But there were some other issues that took an awful lot of time in the NSC deputies committee. We spent a lot of time on Liberia. We spent a lot of time on the security clearance process in the State Department and the FBI.

KIMMITT: Obviously not DOE (the Department of Energy).

CARD: No, but this was a question of why do we have redundant security clearance. We spent quite a bit of time with that.

ZELIKOW: I don't know. I want to disagree with Bob a little bit, because I had left the government by the second quarter of 1991. There was not much confusion in the government about whether we had a vital interest to defend the Balkans. There was a consensus at the top of the government, as has already been stated, that we did not. Richard's right. There was a lot of stuff that was on the fly in Europe. What was not on the fly in Europe is how did we foresee NATO's purposes over the next three to five years? What did we see as its relationships with the emerging democracies of eastern Europe? How did we evaluate the importance of that process? And basically with respect to U.S. vital interests, the Balkans wasn't in the foreground.

Now, maybe there should have been a major reevaluation of that once we saw that the Balkans was going to unravel. And maybe David can comment on whether there was a lost opportunity to reevaluate our vital interest in the Balkans. But I don't think, at least in the first quarter of 1991 – that was the crucial time – or maybe even in the second quarter of 1991, that it should have been clear to the government that our vital interests were engaged there in any sensible way, especially if the Europeans were saying we're going to handle this.

It's not like Iran, in other words. In 1979 anybody knew we had to evaluate our vital interests in the Persian Gulf.

GOMPERT: I submit that the administration, compared to others in which I served, had spent very little time, unless it happened before I got there, going through the formality of debate on the fundamental concepts and principles of our policies.

DESTLER: What about the “new world order?”

GOMPERT: I think that by the time I got there, it was understood, and we were basically acting upon it. Some administrations would take the first six months or a year to do big studies on everything. In fact, I recall on a couple of occasions suggestions were made, why don't we get the principals together to talk to thrash around some concepts about what our interests and priorities should be. This just was not an administration, not a group at any level, that dealt with concepts in the abstract.

KANTER: But, David, in the first half of 1989, there were, in fact, a series of policy reviews: policy toward western Europe, policy toward eastern Europe, policy toward the Soviet Union, all that stuff. And most of them were reviewed at NSC meetings. They generated NSDs on policy guidance.

RODMAN: And a series of speeches.

KANTER: Yes, exactly right. The president gave four foreign policy speeches in the first half of 1989. Whatever you think of the quality of the product, that process was undertaken in a fairly familiar, traditional way, and quite systematically.

CARD: With a lot of outside experts weighing in.

RODMAN: "Status quo plus."

CARD: There's also this myth that the president didn't convene experts on the Middle East from outside. I think you did quite a bit of that, too.

ROSS: Those were highly successful. Didn't we do handstands when that happened?

There was the [Christine] Helms one that said that if you go to war in the Gulf, I guarantee that for 20 years no Americans would be able to step foot in that part of the world.⁴⁸ It will be so radicalized. The use of force will be an absolute disaster for American interests.

ZELIKOW: Well, you learned your lesson.

KANTER: I didn't mean to contradict. We had those meetings.

KIMMITT: Phil, going back to what you said. My point was not that we should have determined that it was in our vital interest, only that that issue should have been debated. We basically decided the Balkans.

ZELIKOW: David could comment on this really better than I can.

GOMPERT: I think that the question of vital interest is not so binary. The problem is really that we had created a concept and an architecture for the American role in Europe and for the future of NATO that depended on the proposition that there was a need for the alliance and for us within the alliance to try to bring about stability through all of Europe. That's the best argument we had for retaining the U.S. role in Europe. NATO was going to be the manager of European security. And an awful lot depended upon that, like getting congressional agreement to keep the troops there, keeping the alliance together, keeping allies from chasing off behind the French piper, who proposed an alternative.

⁴⁸ Christine M. Helms is an independent consultant who wrote extensively on the Middle East, including Iraq during the Gulf War.

So we constructed that. And it still fundamentally exists today. It was the contradiction with that concept, more than vital interest and the humanitarian thing, that I think tore people up. And I don't agree that the top leadership was of one mind and a clear mind. I know that Larry [Eagleburger] and Brent were quite conflicted about this. One day it was we should just let Milosevic have it, and the next day it was, no way.⁴⁹

I think that the secretary blew hot and cold on this. The president did not. The president was quite clear all the way through. He'd rather be in Philadelphia, and that pretty much settled it. So we never debated. Nobody ever asserted that it was a vital interest. What people asserted was, "Wait a minute, everything is sort of constructed here on a particular rationale for the alliance and for our presence in Europe. It's not entirely compatible with inaction in this particular case."

CARD: But we also couldn't get an answer from Europe on what they wanted to do.

KANTER: That was as much an excuse, I believe.

DESTLER: It was typically true on security issues.

HAASS: We could have told them what the answer was if we wanted to.

KANTER: Yes.

HAASS: That's what we used to call consultation.

DAALDER: Leadership.

DESTLER: I think what we would like for people to deal with now is the question of whether there are process regularities that explain successes and failures. We've had a lot of issues where people think that the system worked pretty damn well. There are some issues where people think it didn't work so well. Some of the differences seem to relate to whether an issue was one of the top five or six things on the plates of the principal people. Maybe the things that were further down on the priority list suffered from what Bob described earlier as the relatively weak role of the assistant secretaries. What we'd be interested in is dealing more with such generalizations. Number one, is this distinction I have just drawn in fact true? And, number two, to the degree that there were great strengths and some problems that came out of this process, were they – are they – inevitable? Or were they a product of particular personalities? Would a different James Baker, for all his strengths, have had policy relationships with more people in the State Department? And would that have made any difference? Would that have energized the assistant secretary level? Or concerning this inner group of four or five key senior national security people, were these people relatively open or relatively closed to input from below compared to similarly-placed groups in other administrations? Further discussion of these sorts of issues would be interesting.

⁴⁹ During this time period, Slobodan Milosevic was the president of Serbia.

ZELIKOW: Everybody will have different experiences to recount. That they were receptive to input from below doesn't even capture it. They demanded input from below. One of the most singular characteristics of this group was that they were committed to analysis and they were disciplined about getting it. And that has all kinds of implications all the way down. If you have a deputies committee that says we're not going to discuss this issue until somebody's written a decent quality paper on this that's more than just a few bullet points, then that means the paper has to be tasked and drafted. And if the paper isn't ready, you don't have a paper. It could be we got the paper 30 minutes ago so let's do it. Or we don't have the paper, let's spend two hours talking about press guidance for today. Gates just never let that group operate that way.

People weren't making it up. But when you're not making it up and when you insist on having that kind of analysis going in you get better policy. There're exceptions to this, and sometimes it's done in the vehicle of speeches, and so on. One of the things you'll notice is – and when people get these files declassified, they'll see it even in the internal workings inside Baker's office – Baker is getting fairly formal templates laid out for him as to how he can articulate the elements of the policy, and they're scrubbed, even inside. That reverberates downward. It means that the deputies committee has to get that, somebody else has to get that, and somebody else has to get that. And if you discipline the process to provide that kind of analysis, it has all kinds of beneficial effects. We can all find exceptions to that, but I thought that's a striking characteristic of the administration.

CARD: It almost facilitated more meetings.

DAALDER: Was that a good thing though?

CARD: I think it generally was pretty good.

DAALDER: On the one hand, they're good for quick meetings, but a meeting in a situation room was always different in kind to a meeting in the regular places.

KIMMITT: But sometimes in the middle of a fast moving crisis --

DAALDER: Then it's great.

KIMMITT: You can't or may not want to assemble people over at the White House. During the Gulf crisis, there would be a PCC meeting at 9 a.m. Then at 11 a.m., the deputies committee would get on the video conference and talk. That would go until about 12:00 p.m. You can get about seventy-five percent of your work done there. And then we'd get together in a small group, in the situation room, just seven or eight of us. Gates would then attend the meeting of the Big Eight. Importantly, very importantly, we would also meet on the way back down, and have another small group meeting, back to a video conference with deputies, and then we would meet inside the department, because, frankly, policy implementation is much tougher than policy formulation. Making sure what people say should be done gets done is crucial to the policy process. And the video conference system was absolutely critical to that.

HAASS: It was massive. I mean you had so many things going on. I had a list to my list. We were going through fifty, seventy-five things that had to be checked off every day. I had to have a very structured process otherwise you would just lose control, and it worked. Having Gates and several other people at multiple levels was useful. So Bob would chair the small group, but then he'd also be in the gang of eight. But we knew that someone like Bob Kimmitt coming out of the meeting could get to Baker right away and work something out with him. So everyone had the access they needed pretty much to make it work. So you avoided situations where suddenly there were big surprises at the end of the day, when something happened.

CARD: Also, you didn't have limousines driving into the West Wing of the White House so the media would say, "Oh, there's some big meeting going on." You could meet on the video conference.

DAALDER: That's true, but part of the ease – which goes back to Phil's point – with which you could call a meeting also meant that there was the temptation to call meetings when you have problems.

HAASS: Quite literally, before every meeting Gates and I would sit down. I had been talking to people. Then here is the list of issues. I know this from talking to people around the government. Here are my three additions to that list of issues. Where do we want this meeting to come out? We would talk about that beforehand, and then we'd have an hour for the actual meeting. And everyone was too busy to screw around. It was fairly straightforward.

CARD: Really anybody could call a meeting.

ZELIKOW: If you go back, this point that Bob made about the tension of the policy implementation is a crucial point. Arnie ran an arms control arrangement process that by this time had become so highly routinized that it worked very well backwards and forwards and followed things up very, very efficiently. The Gulf War process worked that way. If you think historically, Eisenhower tried to do this very formally through the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB).⁵⁰ Eisenhower's people, and one of the people hardly anyone has ever heard of, but was a crucial figure is Robert Cutler, who really made that work.⁵¹ And all the Eisenhower people kept telling Kennedy you need to do this and you need to have an operations coordinator; and all the Kennedy people knew better. They were smart, although Mac Bundy later on came to rue that and had some reflections about it.⁵²

⁵⁰ The Operations Coordinating Board was established in 1953 by President Eisenhower and abolished in 1961 by President Kennedy. Its function was to coordinate to the execution of the president's decisions. See W. W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (Macmillan Company, 1972), pp. 165-167.

⁵¹ Robert Cutler was national security adviser from 1953 to 1955 and 1957 to 1958. The position of the adviser was created in response to a report that Cutler prepared for President Eisenhower on the organization of the National Security Council.

⁵² McGeorge Bundy was national security adviser from 1961 to 1966.

The whole idea of picking up the Operations Coordinating Board concept kind of withered away. And the people didn't really understand. Of course, all the military people back then had understood why you do that. Different administrations have done better at following through on the policy implementation. What is being described is a highly functional, and, the same thing Arnie pointed out, sort of a parallel informal, but nevertheless routinized and predictable process that not only does formulation but also does implementation. It had been by that point fairly well developed. And it achieved a lot of the benefits that Eisenhower got from the operation of the coordinating board, without the cumbersome formalities that people have criticized about the Eisenhower style.

KIMMITT: And the other thing about the OCB, as I recall, is that for the OCB people, that was their job. One of the things I thought made our system work well is we didn't have a separate crisis management structure. So there wasn't any big fight there, as there had been in the early Reagan years between Secretary Haig and then Vice President Bush.⁵³ But it was a big fight, because Haig, of course, went back to the WSAG, the Washington Special Actions Group.

My basic point is I think that formulation and implementation have to be closely linked. But I think for crisis management, it is difficult to coordinate. They can augment. You can set up special groups, and you had some at the White House.

RODMAN: The groups tend to merge. They all tend to blend into the same.

KIMMITT: Yes, because the bottom line is, if people are not working together well on a day-to-day basis, a crisis isn't going to make them work better together.

HAASS: That's a good point, because you don't want to separate your long-term planners from your normal doers from your crisis doers. Ideally, you really want those to be the same people because that's the only way you're going to get decent policy. And I think that was shown time and again.

ZELIKOW: Academics often talk about we ought to have long-term policy planners. Richard's point is, so this is not "Chester Cooper should have" or "if Chester Cooper had really been running American foreign policy."⁵⁴ Well, that's Richard's point, combining these roles in the same person.

HAASS: The other thing that really comes through at the NSC is the balance between the center and the periphery. And my own thinking is --

⁵³ General Alexander M. Haig, Jr. was senior military adviser to Henry Kissinger at the National Security Council from 1969 to 1970 and deputy national security adviser from 1970 to 1973. He served as secretary of state from 1981 to 1982.

⁵⁴ Chester L. Cooper was assistant for Asian affairs on the National Security Council during the Johnson administration. See Chester L. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam* (Dodd, Mead & Company, 1970).

KIMMITT: The center being the NSC and NSC staff?

HAASS: The NSC staff. I meant actually at every level. I actually think that the bias ought to be towards something that's very centrally controlled, which is not the Kissinger idea, because then it wasn't just managed from the center, it was done at the center, which is different.

RODMAN: In which case, you've got crisis management.

HAASS: But what you really want to have is something that, at all levels, whether it's the president at the top level – and I'm not a great believer in principals without the president – the deputies committee, and even lower levels, is chaired essentially by NSC people. And it actually becomes more important for two reasons as you think of the future.

One is, in times in crisis, it's going to be that way anyhow so you might as well get used to it. And the other is something we talked about before. To the extent you're bringing in more and more of these agencies, it makes it even harder for any agency on the periphery to do that task. The State Department has trouble chairing it when it's just three or four players, and they're all players in the national security game. The idea that the State Department is going to effectively be able to chair it when you've got ten players at the table, and some of them are DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency], and FBI, seems to me to be a non-starter. It's got to be people close to the president, who can at least in one way or another claim that authority.

ZELIKOW: It's less threatening if, as like Brent, no one believes, just because I'm chairing the meetings, I'm actually going to do the policy here in the White House.

DESTLER: Does that mean you have to have more and more people at the NSC?

PORTER: No. In fact, you need fewer, because the more you have the bigger the threat they are.

GOMPERT: It comes back to Brent Scowcroft. A system like this will only work if you've got strength at the center. But it's not the kind of strength that threatens anyone, that crowds anyone, that has an agenda other than the agenda of the whole. And Brent believed so strongly in those principles that it was possible to be effective with a strong center, to be able to hold meetings and make things happen without any one of the principals, or their bureaucracies, or their immediate staffs feeling in the least bit threatened by it.

HAASS: May I just say two things before we eat. Because Bob is going to disagree with me, and he can raise the issue of the relationship between the center and the periphery. The one area I think that both Philip and I would probably amending what David just said is the national security adviser has to have two hats. And, you're right, the first has to be the

management hat, and everyone has to feel the process is legitimate. Roger has written the best stuff about it, on the honest broker and all that.⁵⁵

But the one amendment I would make to his stuff, and I would make here, is that, and Brent did this very well, he's also got to be willing to put forward his own agenda if he thinks the consensus from the whole is wrong, or that no one is saying the right thing. Now, he's got to do it in a way that he says, "This is what's coming out; this is where the consensus is. This is what State thinks, Defense thinks, and, by the way, this is what I think, which is different from the rest."

ZELIKOW: That is to force the action.

DAALDER: Like Bundy did in the ExCom.⁵⁶

HAASS: His first responsibility has got to be to the whole. But he can still have his own voice so long as everyone around there has confidence that he doesn't get so persuaded by his own voice that he's no longer a legitimate broker.

KANTER: The term "national security adviser" is not just a shorthand, it's part of the description of the job.

PORTER: And it really involves, it seems to me, these two crucial elements of what I've described as dispensing due process and exercising quality control. And Scowcroft embodied that in a truly unusual and remarkable way.

I had the occasion in late 1991 or early 1992 of being asked to present an award to Brent at a large banquet.

HAASS: Not the Scowcroft award.

PORTER: Not the Scowcroft award. He slept through the Scowcroft award. In putting together my remarks, I ended up calling and getting quotes from Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, George Bush, Jim Baker, Colin Powell, Dick Cheney, Henry Kissinger, and maybe one or two others. I was impressed by the willingness to participate in this little effort and the remarkable respect and affection and regard that all of those players had for Brent. They kept emphasizing in slightly different ways his capacity to play both of those roles. They did not view him as just a dispenser of due process. They viewed him as someone who had ideas, who actively exercised what I like to call quality control, who added to the discussion when it seemed appropriate. He is a model that others could usefully emulate.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Roger B. Porter, *Presidential Decision Making: The Economic Policy Board* (Cambridge University Press, 1980); "Organizing Economic Advice to the President: A Modest Proposal," *American Economic Review*, vol. 72 (May 1982), pp. 356-360; and *Foreign Economic Policymaking in the United States* (Center for Business and Government, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1989).

⁵⁶ The Executive Committee was the name for President Kennedy's crisis management group during the Cuban missile crisis.

KANTER: I think you'll find that there is no Brent Scowcroft memo to the president which has a paragraph which begins like. . . . And he changed from the Ford administration where I worked.

CARD: No.

KANTER: You'll not find such a memo.

CARD: And I think Brent's style was complemented more by Bob Gates than Bob Gates's successor.

ZELIKOW: I think Gates is just inseparable from this, because Gates makes the system work and because Gates has strengths that complement some of Brent's weaknesses. And the strengths are crucial. And Gates, actually, played the quality control role. It was actually played more on a day-to-day basis by Gates. And Gates had this fantastic capacity to process paper at a fairly high level of quality control. This complemented Brent in a lot of ways, because Brent really is getting up to the point where Brent was very much almost at the level of the president in terms of the breadth of vision he had to have and the things that were reaching him. And Brent also really felt the burden of decision.

It often frustrated me, because my hair was always on fire about we have to do this wonderful thing right away or else the world will stop turning on its axis. And we'd send up this brilliant memo, and Brent would sit on it for three days.

HAASS: Or months.

ZELIKOW: Then by the fourth day I wanted to take the memo back. And Gates knew which memos really needed to be acted on and which memos could wait for Brent's deliberation.

KIMMITT: And remember that Gates had been on the NSC staff in the Ford administration. Before we break, I want to make a comment about regional assistant secretaries. Every other center-run part of it has other people sitting around the table who are of equal rank and responsibility. Those regional assistant secretaries, who outrank their counterparts in the other departments and agencies, really have a broad set of responsibilities. I think it's very important to empower them more to deal with the ninety-five percent of the countries in those regions you're not going to have time to deal with.

HAASS: The State Department is going to have to build them up also. Your sixth floor just can't do it anymore.

RODMAN: Clinton has codified what you guys did informally. This undersecretary-driven system, which was informal in the Bush administration is now codified.

(Dinner break)

KIMMITT: I think it is fair to say that the basic staff procedure today is based on the one that was established in 1969 by then Colonel, and later General, Haig. I think at least through the end of the Bush administration – I don't know now – if you look at an NSC memo and its format and the way it was written, they were the same. Pre-1969, they were very different. From about March or April or June of 1969, they look all the same for about the next 30 years in terms of the general form, and so forth. I bring that up only because if you look at the papers from the Johnson years and the Kennedy years, they are the most fascinating papers. You have Bob Komer's papers.⁵⁷ And the thing that was interesting to me was the informality and direct relationship he had with the president. And to say that he was descriptive would be diplomatic. But it was the kind of stuff that literally that must have been just typed out. I imagine that Bundy or Rostow, or someone had to check it off.⁵⁸ But, boy, then it just shot straight into what later not surprisingly turned into a much more structured process.

RODMAN: Nixon liked the formality. Nixon wasn't an oral person, and he didn't want to have people around him talking to him. He wanted it in writing, and, as a lawyer, he could handle long memos of some technical nature. He much preferred to have something on paper he could read.

DESTLER: But Bundy pushed Bob Komer and Kennedy together. Bundy didn't want to deal with Yemen. He didn't want to handle Yemen for Kennedy. He wasn't very interested in it. So he worked to make that Komer's responsibility.

ZELIKOW: It was a whole different deal, though. We think of the NSC staff and the way it operates, it didn't feel that way --

DESTLER: And it was not. They didn't even have a Latin America person formally on the NSC staff, because they had Arthur Schlesinger and Ralph Dungan on the White House staff dealing with that part of the world.⁵⁹

ZELIKOW: You've got Carl Kaysen and Michael Forrestal and Komer and a few others, and they're working with Bundy, and then Francis Bator comes in there.⁶⁰ And more or less, Kennedy reaches out to any or all of them. They sense his needs at the moment. Mac Bundy

⁵⁷ Robert W. Komer was a senior NSC staff member from 1961 to 1966 and served as special assistant to the president in charge of pacification and other U.S. non-military programs in Vietnam from March 1966 to May 1967.

⁵⁸ Walt W. Rostow was national security adviser from 1966 to 1968. During the Kennedy administration he served as deputy to McGeorge Bundy until late 1961 and thereafter as chairman of the Policy Planning Council at the State Department.

⁵⁹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and Ralph Dungan were senior White House staff members during the Kennedy administration.

⁶⁰ Carl Kaysen was deputy assistant to the president for national security affairs (economic and national security policy) from 1961 to 1963. Michael Forrestal was a member of the National Security Council during the Kennedy administration. Francis Bator was a senior staff member of the National Security Council from 1964 to 1965 and served as deputy assistant to the president for national security affairs (international economic policy and European relations) from 1965 to 1967.

is sitting in the OEOB [Old Executive Office Building] for the first period of time where he can't even get face time with Kennedy. Then he manages to get into the West Wing. The Nixon administration really defines the modern White House in some important ways, especially on the domestic side. The reinvention of the White House chief of staff in the way we understand it today is H. R. Haldeman.⁶¹

DESTLER: I think the Kennedy people defined it in the sense that they brought in new foreign policy professionals, not just the usual foreign policy people who are carry-overs from previous administrations. The loyalty of the new people was to the president.

RODMAN: I never really understood why Haldeman changed the titles.

DESTLER: From special assistant to assistant at the top level.

RODMAN: Special assistant. Instead of being the top rank, he made the special assistant a lower rank. I have no idea why he did it except maybe just to do it differently from the Democrats.

PORTER: I am told that the conversation occurred at the Hotel Pierre. They were discussing the matter of titles. Someone said, "What's so special about these people." And they said, "Well, nothing really." And the reply was, "Well, why don't we just call them Assistants to the President." And that is how the title was born.

RODMAN: And you know how the NSC got special assistant rank.

PORTER: Subsequently they started developing these incredible hierarchies, with deputy assistants and then special assistant. I think the Nixon administration is the only one with deputy special assistants.

KIMMITT: But you know, on the NSC staff there were no special assistants from at least 1969 through 1983. With Kissinger, some people forget that he really didn't have a long pre-existing relationship with Nixon. It was obviously with Rockefeller.⁶²

RODMAN: And they had a battle over mess privileges on the first day.

KIMMITT: Well, that's later. But it'd probably also be early on.

CARD: What was that, Peter?

RODMAN: The NSC staff bitched. Kissinger had his first NSC staff meeting. And he talks about this in his book.⁶³ You know, the excitement. He expected to have a philosophical discussion about the challenges facing the world. It turned out that all these staffers were

⁶¹ H. R. Haldeman was chief of staff to President Nixon.

⁶² Henry Kissinger first met Nelson A. Rockefeller in 1955 when Rockefeller was special assistant to President Eisenhower.

⁶³ See Kissinger, *White House Years*.

pissed. They didn't have parking places or mess privileges as under Johnson. The Kennedy people had had it.

KIMMITT: And that continues. Because that was going to be the end of my story. In the Reagan administration, I was just about to go up to work for John Tower on the Hill, and they asked if I would stay and take over as executive secretary. I knew the staff process well since I had been there for sixty months on that side. And I said, "Look, I'll do it, but on a couple of conditions." And one of the conditions was that we get an allocation of ten special assistants to the president.

DESTLER: So you're the one responsible for that!

KIMMITT: We also came up with the title of senior director, director and all the rest of that.

RODMAN: You're responsible for that?!

KIMMITT: We did it and I'll tell you why we did it.

DESTLER: We want this on the record.

KIMMITT: The reason we did it was quite simple. In the Reagan White House, as Andy recalls and Roger recalls, the only people who got parking places and were invited to the Christmas party, the Easter egg roll, and all the rest of that, had to have the title. Bill Clark said to me,⁶⁴ "What are you talking about?" I said, "The biggest thing you can do for our staff morale is to do this." I didn't know about the Henry Kissinger analogy then. And fundamentally, we did it.

Brzezinski was much more egalitarian. The NSC staff got ten mess slots for people, and they rotated it through the staff every three months. We had 30 staff people. And we had proposed that, but I guess John Rogers⁶⁵ or some other perkmeister said, "Absolutely not. You've got no special assistants." And here we were, you know, working harder than any other staff, with no privileges whatever.

And without mess privileges, you literally didn't have that interaction with the White House staff that happened at the big table in the mess. And that was ultimately how I sold this thing.

CARD: That's how I got to know Ollie North.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ William P. Clark was national security adviser from 1982 to 1983.

⁶⁵ John F. W. Rogers was the assistant to the president for management and administration from 1981 to 1985.

⁶⁶ Lt. Colonel Oliver L. North was a director for political-military affairs on the National Security Council from 1981 to 1986.

DAALDER: This is how it worked in the first Clinton administration. The people who were invited to the Christmas party were political appointees, but detailees were not, even if they were senior directors.

KIMMITT: Is that right?

DAALDER: Yes. Actually, if they were special assistants, they were invited. But if you were a director and you were a detailee from another agency, you didn't get to go to the Christmas party. But if you were a political appointee and a director, you got to go to the Christmas party. And there was a revolt.

KIMMITT: The thing that the Clinton administration has done, which I applaud, is to get access to the White House dinner lists for regional assistant secretaries and NSC staff officers. Brent started breaking it in a bit.

CARD: Because the president actually wanted to have that.

KIMMITT: But now you'll see the regional assistant secretary is always invited. And the NSC special assistant or senior director.

HAASS: There's a funny article in the current issue of the *National Journal*. William Powers writes a nice story about White House state dinners.⁶⁷

KIMMITT: It goes back to this point. When you give these guys those kind of perquisites, you're empowering them in their areas of responsibility.

HAASS: Those are important arguments. If you were at those dinners, it gave you a certain clout. The first two or three dinners of the Bush administration were the Middle East guys. If you remember, Shamir, King Hussein and Mubarak were among the first visitors in February or March of 1989.⁶⁸ And I remember because we spent days trying to figure out what to do with them. With each one we were going to do something different. We took Mubarak to a ball game. We took him to a [Baltimore] Orioles game, pretty hilarious. And then King Hussein. And we couldn't think of what to do with Shamir. We asked the Israelis, and they said he has no hobbies.

ZELIKOW: The NSC is an interagency process. The NSC is also a White House support staff for policy development. Most of the stuff we're talking about now is the NSC staff as a support staff. And the point Bob was making, we really haven't discussed that much at all. But these are all good points. That's really where a lot of people end up spending a lot of their time.

RODMAN: There's a Ph.D. thesis to be written on this subject. I wonder if one of your students could do it.

⁶⁷ William Powers, "Conspicuous Consumption," *National Journal*, April 24, 1999, pp. 1090-1097.

⁶⁸ Yitzhak Shamir was prime minister of Israel from 1988 to 1992. King Hussein ruled Jordan from 1952 to 1999. Hosni Mubarak has served as president of Egypt since 1981.

HAASS: [Chris] Buckley wrote it.⁶⁹

ZELIKOW: A successor to Bromley Smith.⁷⁰ Bromley Smith wrote those wonderful little official histories of how the NSC staff evolved.

KIMMITT: I commissioned those.

ZELIKOW: Well, you should be his successor, because no one's writing them any more.

KIMMITT: But Bromley Smith is a very interesting guy. And in fact, Bromley Smith was removed from his job at the personal instructions of Henry Kissinger.

ZELIKOW: That's unfortunate.

KIMMITT: I know this from both sides, both from Henry Kissinger and from Bromley. When the NSC was created in 1947, there was no special assistant to the president or assistant to the president. But there was the PA [presidential appointment], not Senate confirmed [PAS], of the executive secretary of the NSC.

DESTLER: Right. And that's what's in the statute.

KIMMITT: Right. And it still is. And that was to me....

HAASS: Bill Sittmann.⁷¹

KIMMITT: But in point of fact, the view on this was that this person would be, and still is, actually, head of the NSC. This person actually has a commission and all the other legal authorities. And when Henry found out about this --

CARD: He didn't want to fill it. He never filled it.

KIMMITT: Oh, no. And Dick Moose thought he had been hired as executive secretary, and Bromley Smith was basically sent packing.⁷² But Henry, in actuality, didn't want to fill that slot. For some reason, he felt that that person, because of his position as a presidential appointee, could somehow be a threat to him. So he created the position of staff secretary.

⁶⁹ Christopher Buckley, *The White House Mess* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1986).

⁷⁰ Bromley K. Smith was the executive secretary of the National Security Council during the Johnson and Kennedy administrations. See Smith, *Organizational History of the National Security Council During the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations* (Washington, D.C.: National Security Council, 1988).

⁷¹ William F. Sittmann was the executive secretary for the National Security Council during the Bush administration and the first part of the Clinton administration (1989-1995).

⁷² Richard Moose was staff secretary for the National Security Council from January to August 1969.

DESTLER: Jeanne Davis. Bill Watts had it for a year. Then Jeanne Davis had it after Bill resigned.⁷³

ZELIKOW: The whole evolution of the NSC staff executive secretary is actually kind of a revealing story about the ways in which the NSC organized itself to support the president. And Bob's the best person in the world to trace that. The history of this is the history that probably almost no one knows, and certainly no one in that community knows anything about it.

KIMMITT: When I took that job....

ZELIKOW: You knew Bill Sittmann.

DESTLER: When you took it, it had been empty.

KIMMITT: Oh, it had been empty since January 1969. They asked if I'd take over as staff secretary. I said no. But if you want to talk about executive secretary, I'd be interested. And let me tell you what you can do. Essentially, if that job works correctly, that person should be the chief of staff of the NSC and interrelate with the executive secretaries or counterparts in the departments and agencies and also with the staff secretary at the White House. Now, in point of fact, as with everything, there are different levels. My day-to-day contact at the Defense Department during my two-plus years as executive secretary was Colin Powell. Although Powell was military assistant to Weinberger, in fact, he was the "go-to" guy there. At the State Department, it is the executive secretary. I can't remember if it was Charlie Hill or someone else.⁷⁴ But that's the person.

ZELIKOW: It was a powerful job when he had it.

KIMMITT: But you need to make it work. And later it was basically downgraded a bit.

HAASS: Yeah, it split. It became a narrowly administrative job. And then in the Bush administration, you didn't have anyone who had the job substantively. Bill's job was administrative, and everything went through easily. In this administration, the way I understand it – and tell me if I'm wrong – really Nancy Soderberg's⁷⁵ job early on --

DAALDER: Her title was staff director.

HAASS: Right. She came in initially as the number three person. And the idea was that anything going up to the numbers one or two guys went through her.

DAALDER: And that was a huge bottleneck, which is why they removed it.

⁷³ Jeanne Davis was staff secretary for the National Security Council from 1971 to 1974. William Watts held the same position from 1970 to 1971.

⁷⁴ M. Charles Hill was executive secretary at the Department of State from 1983 to 1985.

⁷⁵ Nancy E. Soderberg served as staff director on the National Security Council from 1993 to 1995; subsequently she served as deputy national security adviser from 1995 to 1997.

HAASS: It became the designated bottleneck.

KIMMITT: She also had an executive secretary under her.⁷⁶

HAASS: Right, who was the administrator.

KIMMITT: She called me when I was in Germany and said she'd been approached about this position. And I said I think it's one of the best positions in government. She didn't like the title, however. I said forget the title. The fact is you basically should be the chief of staff, the interlink between the staff and the national security adviser. You should relate to people elsewhere in government. I said it's a great opportunity to keep the trains running on time. But also going back to Richard's model, I was able to put my views on memos going forward.

ZELIKOW: This job in the State Department was also not a well understood job, though Arnie worked on the 7th floor. The SS [staff secretary] job in the State Department is the central nervous system by which the brain transmits signals to the limbs and feeds signals from the limbs back to the brain.

KANTER: In some administrations.

ZELIKOW: In some administrations. And this job in the State Department was critical in many administrations. The job was actually created personally by George Marshall in, I think, 1947.⁷⁷ And it was a very powerful job under Marshall.

KIMMITT: At State.

ZELIKOW: At State. I actually wrote a history of this job for you, Bob, when you were on the State Department transition team. And it was a very important job under Shultz. Ray Seitz had it. It was at times a very big job. I don't know how important it ultimately remained under Baker.

KIMMITT: Well, I'll tell you. Stapleton Roy was the foreign service officer in the inner circle.⁷⁸

ZELIKOW: Well, [Mel] Levitsky under Shultz. [Ray] Seitz before Levitsky.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ M. Brooke Darby was special assistant to the staff director.

⁷⁷ George C. Marshall was secretary of state from January 1947 to January 1949 (later serving as secretary of defense from 1950 to 1951). The executive secretariat was established in March 1947.

⁷⁸ J. Stapleton Roy is a career foreign service officer who served as executive secretary at the Department of State from 1989 to 1991.

⁷⁹ Melvyn Levitsky was executive secretary at the Department of State from 1987 to 1989 and assistant secretary of state for international narcotics matters from 1989 to 1993.

KIMMITT: Well, Levitsky started out, and actually did a good job. But he was heading out to a post. Drugs and thugs....

RODMAN: Pickering has had that job.⁸⁰ Jerry Bremer.⁸¹ A lot of people.

ZELIKOW: Jobs like this, like ExecSec [executive secretary] at State, like the White House staff secretary, which also varied in its importance from Andy Goodpaster. These are jobs that are very poorly understood in the government, but can at times be extremely important jobs inside if they're done right.

KIMMITT: And they can be fun, because essentially, as you say, you're sure to become a key factor in the central nervous system. And you sort of see everything that goes through and comes out.

PORTER: One of the reasons that I think it's a key job, whether it's in a department or the White House staff secretary, is that you see so much that it puts you in a position to do a lot of integrating across issues.

KIMMITT: And a statutory responsibility for protecting the president's papers.

DESTLER: That was your first White House job, right?

PORTER: Right.⁸²

DESTLER: In the Ford administration.

PORTER: Right. And one of the big problems in government is that there is so much going on in so many different arenas that the challenge of integrating policy is inevitably a huge one, and there're very few people who are strategically positioned to have the full information coming across their desk so that they can assist in the integration of policy.

CARD: Dick Darman was probably the master of policy direction when he was the staff secretary.⁸³

ZELIKOW: Worked for Baker in the first Reagan administration.

CARD: Yes.

ZELIKOW: But he also headed up the LSG (Legislative Strategy Group).

⁸⁰ Thomas R. Pickering served as executive secretary at the Department of State from 1973 to 1974.

⁸¹ L. Paul (Jerry) Bremer, III held the position of executive secretary at the Department of State from 1981 to 1983.

⁸² Porter served as executive secretary of the Economic Policy Board during the Ford administration.

⁸³ Richard Darman was assistant to the president from 1981 to 1985, deputy secretary of the treasury from 1985 to 1987, and director of the Office of Management and Budget from 1989 to 1993.

KIMMITT: And that was the key, because, again, it's always that mix of formal and informal. But it's doing your formal job well that also empowers you to perform a key role. That's where I got to know Baker. I'd never met Baker before in my life before the start of the Reagan administration. But I worked on the AWACS issue in late 1981. Essentially, when I took over as executive secretary of the NSC, I traveled with Reagan as much as did any other staffer and attended morning staff meetings. I'd go up to the meetings with the president. And, as Roger said, the key thing was just to have an awareness of what was going on so as issues came up you knew how to deal with them. And also, the fact is this was also the first person that the situation room would call. I was probably the first person at least on the White House team that heard about the Marine Corps bombing in October of 1983, and I called McFarlane and he went in to Reagan.⁸⁴ And because the staff in the situation room shouldn't sit there and wonder whom should we call, you got to have one person that you need to trust --

ZELIKOW: Like the State Department's SS/O, the Op Center calls up SS.

KIMMITT: Right, they call the SS. My favorite story involves the Grenada invasion. And a lot of people don't realize that Thatcher was really opposed to this action, and, of course, Reagan and Thatcher had this wonderful relationship.⁸⁵ And there had been these messages going back and forth. I took the last one over to Reagan in the residence about 8:00 p.m. that night. And he said, "Okay. You know the decision. That's it." But I went back about 2:00 a.m. in the morning. The senior watchman reported, "Mrs. Thatcher would like to speak to the President." And I basically made the decision that she was welcome to talk to me, but she's not going to get through to the president. And when she comes on and says, "I need to talk to the President urgently." I said, "Madame Prime Minister, we have forces underway. I'll tell him you called, and he'll be glad to call you, but it will have to be in the morning." And she hangs up.

SEVERAL PANELISTS: Whoa. Whoa. You're on somebody's list.

KIMMITT: As executive secretary of the NSC, you only get into a position like that when you take those things and field them and you've been involved in that process. I tried to explain that to Nancy Soderberg because fundamentally you had a lot of process involved, but it also led to very interesting substantive involvement.

ZELIKOW: You didn't actually tell her the story.

KIMMITT: No. But I think at the end of the day, those kinds of jobs, as Roger said, wherever they show up are just very important. You've got to get people with enough experience, but they're not too senior. It's like in a cabinet department. You've always got one guy who you're really counting on to make sure that things run on time. The triage thing.

⁸⁴ Robert C. McFarlane served as the national security adviser from 1983 to 1985.

⁸⁵ Margaret Thatcher was prime minister of Great Britain from 1979 to 1990.

I tried and probably stopped seventy –five percent of the paper going forward to the national security adviser, in many cases making decisions as best as I knew based on what was going on. You never make policy decisions.

HAASS: We didn't really have that level. It was either from us, Brent, or Gates. There was nothing in between.

KANTER: Or you did it.

HAASS: Or just did it, yes. You basically did it until you got a rocket telling you to stop doing it.

[To Daalder and Destler] Have you made any decisions? Do you have instincts about the NEC [National Economic Council], whether you think that's working and whether you would recommend to continue it, or would you want to recombine things?

DESTLER: I don't know. I think we're either going to have an NEC or something like it, some presidential interagency process and staff charged with economic issues.

HAASS: Would you like the idea of a NEC that sort of separates out international economic issues?

DESTLER: I favored it at the time. It's one of these dilemmas: it is hard, organizationally, to integrate both economic and foreign policy. I think the NEC started out very well and it's gotten progressively less effective. But a lot of that is very idiosyncratic with Clinton and his people.

RODMAN: I think it was the Rubin function.

DESTLER: It was very good because of Rubin, but, on the other hand, at the beginning, for whatever set of reasons, Rubin was the guy who was picked for it.

RODMAN: No, I think he did a good job.

DESTLER: He did a very good job. But it wasn't a total accident that Rubin was named to that job.

My problem is that if you look at international economic issues, and Roger knows a lot more about this than I do, there are three ways to go. You can have a separate international economic policy staffing channel. You can link it to the national security staff. Or you can link it to what exists, *e.g.* the NEC focused on the economic policy side.

Now my general view is that it has been increasingly difficult to link it to the national security side because of its connection with both domestic politics and domestic economic policy, and this reflects a paradox: As the U.S. economy internationalizes, it becomes much harder to make international economic policy primarily foreign policy.

CARD: It's always awkward. I thought it was very frustrating at the White House that no one could talk about monetary policy except for the secretary of the treasury.

DESTLER: Within this, monetary policy is a particularly peculiar thing. But even trade is an example.

HAASS: Look at trade and the whole USTR problem. Look at Japan policy and the question of how you structure that. How do you basically deal with that as a structural problem so USTR doesn't go off bashing Japan when maybe you're more worried about Korea. What's your sense of how you deal with that if you were going to design it now for the next administration?

DESTLER: Well, it may be easier to handle Japan now than six or seven years ago, because the economic people are a lot less anxious about Japan. In fact, it's easier probably to get a stronger foreign policy component into the Japan policy.

I would say that at a time when Japan is the front-burner economic, competitive issue, it's very hard not to have the staff coordinating lead with people in the economic policy side. Now that doesn't mean it has to be the people who are basically Japan bashers and who don't have a broader view. There are people on the economic side of the government who have a broad view, and who can find a way to bring in the national security people.

I think the Clinton problem for a while on Japan was that they had a group of people who were very congenial and who were all – to some degree or other – Japan bashers, or at least they felt that way.

DAALDER: The Clinton problem was that they didn't have any Japan foreign policy people. All their Asianists were China hands, including in the NSC, and it was particularly true in the State Department. So when they did have a Japan policy, it was an economic policy, and therefore Japan bashers.

RODMAN: Yeah, but it was also Treasury --

DAALDER: Until 1995.

RODMAN: -- and the State Department.

DAALDER: Right, in 1994, 1995. The first two years you had nobody. You had Stanley Roth.⁸⁶

RODMAN: I think [Winston] Lord was on the side of, say the Nye side, but he didn't have the clout.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Stanley O. Roth was deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia and Pacific affairs from 1993 to 1994 and senior director for Asian affairs on National Security Council from 1994 to 1996.

DESTLER: But Joe was eventually able to do that.

DAALDER: Not only didn't he have the clout, but, more importantly, he was busy with China and he didn't worry about Japan. And there was nobody taking care of Japan.

KIMMITT: Christopher in April or May basically said, "Europe is our past; Asia is our future."⁸⁸ and then he went off to the Middle East.

ZELIKOW: Well, that sort of covers all bases.

DESTLER: And he also went to Tokyo and endorsed the economic priorities.

PORTER: It seems to me that Richard raises a very important and crucial issue for which there's not a perfect solution. But I would simply observe a couple of things that, it seems to me, are useful to consider.

One is that there is always going to be some tension between the people in the national security policy community and the economic policymaking community over issues that cut across their bows. Most of them want to play. In general, it is easier for national security community people to penetrate the economic policymaking processes than the reverse.

KANTER: Why do you say that?

PORTER: Because the national security policymaking processes tend to be smaller and operate with a need for confidentiality and use classified documents.

ZELIKOW: Unlike monetary policy?

PORTER: Monetary policy is peculiar because of the role of the Federal Reserve and the role of the Treasury. And it's unlike any other economic issues, because Treasury and the Fed want to keep everybody else out. They want to keep the other economic players out. So that's almost in a realm of its own.

But there is a model, a rather interesting model, of how this was done during the Ford administration as a result of frictions between Kissinger at State and the economic policy community.

RODMAN: Bill Simon --

⁸⁷ Winston Lord was assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs from 1993 to 1997. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. served as chairman of the National Intelligence Council from 1993 to 1994 and as assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs from 1994 to 1995.

⁸⁸ While Warren Christopher was secretary of state from 1993 to 1997, he stated, "Western Europe is no longer the dominant area of the world." Quoted in Ann Devroy and R. Jeffrey Smith, "Clinton Reexamines a Foreign Policy Under Siege," *Washington Post*, October 17, 1993, p. A1.

PORTER: Simon was chairman of the Economic Policy Board, and Kissinger, through Tom Enders, went off and made policy in a speech and produced a huge flare-up within the economic policy board.⁸⁹

RODMAN: Several times.

PORTER: And the Board en masse – with [Bill] Simon, [Alan] Greenspan, [Arthur] Burns, [James] Lynn and [Bill] Seidman – went to the president and said this has to stop.⁹⁰ A Saturday meeting was held resulting in the State Department being made a member of the Executive Committee, which met every day. State was the only department which was allowed to send someone other than the secretary. They sent the undersecretary of state for economic affairs. Kissinger, in his capacity as secretary, would come to the meetings with the president, which occurred about once a week. At the same time the national security adviser, or his deputy, was invited to attend the morning meetings. When there was a really crucial issue, we would form a NSC-EPB working group where both the NSC and the economic types felt essentially like they were on even ground, etc. Now it's not a perfect solution. But it's as good as I am aware of in bringing those two communities together.

DAALDER: How do you avoid the danger that Mort Halperin likes to point out, which is that when the NEC has meetings and when the internal economic affairs senior director from NSC comes into these meetings, they're just another bunch of economists.⁹¹ They're not really thinking about the national security interests that a "P" would bring in if he were to come, or a deputy or national security adviser would bring in.

ZELIKOW: I know an answer to this. You were a sherpa; you were a "P."

KIMMITT: The political director. That is the key thing, this sherpa position. I would attend, but not as the sherpa. I happen to think that the sherpa should be resident at the White House. I actually thought it worked best when on the Carter NSC staff, you had a small staff. You had a three-person international economics office headed by Hormats.⁹² And then you

⁸⁹ William E. Simon was secretary of the treasury from 1974 to 1977 and was appointed chairman of the Economic Policy Board by President Ford in 1975. Thomas O. Enders was a career foreign service officer, who served as assistant secretary of state for economic and business affairs from 1974 to 1975.

⁹⁰ Alan Greenspan served as the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers from 1974 to 1977. Arthur F. Burns was the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board from 1970 to 1978. James T. Lynn was undersecretary of commerce from 1971 to 1973, the secretary of housing and urban development from 1973 to 1975, and director of the Office of Management and Budget from 1975 to 1977. L. William Seidman held the positions of assistant to the president for economic affairs and executive director of the Economic Policy Board from 1974 to 1977.

⁹¹ Morton H. Halperin became the director of policy planning at the Department of State in 1998.

⁹² Robert D. Hormats was the deputy assistant secretary of state from 1977 to 1979 and ambassador and deputy United States Trade Representative from 1979 to 1981.

had Henry Owen as the president's personal representative.⁹³ He was the link between the NSC staff and the rest of government.

My own view, Richard, is you have to have on the NSC staff the best three-person office you can come up with. Someone with some expertise, which is going to Mort's point. You'd like them to have breadth as well as depth. And I think on the NSC staff they have to represent the traditional national security communities' interests. I would have the president's special representative, their sherpa, be based at the White House. And I think actually the free agency that Henry Owen had worked for everyone, to his advantage and to everyone else's. And then to be honest, what's done on the economic and domestic side is done. You just make sure there's a good link between the two.

KANTER: I'd go farther, Bob. The problem is not how you graft economic consideration on the NSC. The problem is how do you change the NSC to adapt to a new world in which international economics is, in fact, an integral part of security. I think going back to the Ford administration model, the Carter administration model, is the wrong way to think about the problem. That was a world in which international economics played a fundamentally different role in our security than it does today. The idea of getting a Henry Kissinger or a Brent Scowcroft as national security adviser and getting this high-powered three-person international economic office to try and educate them on the economic dimensions of national security policy is, well, a throwback. The task is not to find a new way to graft international economics on to traditional national security policy. The task is to redefine national security policy and the national security staff.

RODMAN: It sounds good. But do you mean the national security adviser should not be somebody who knows national security issues, but should be an economist. Perhaps the day will come.

ZELIKOW: No, not an economist. Someone who knows his stuff.

KANTER: Someone who is literate. All he has to be is literate.

RODMAN: Maybe Sandy Berger is the perfect national security adviser for this modern age.⁹⁴

KIMMITT: What I said was the national security adviser. National security has to be a summation of foreign, defense, and international economic policy resting on a strong intelligence base.

DESTLER: What about the domestic?

KIMMITT: I'm not grafting the international economic function on that. I'd say that this office is as important to the NSC as is defense policy, the intelligence office, and whatever

⁹³ Henry Owen was ambassador-at-large and special representative of the president for international economic summits during the Carter administration.

⁹⁴ Samuel R. Berger has served as the national security adviser since 1997.

regional and functional split you can have. But I think that person should be a special assistant to the president, a senior director, and all the rest. The fact is we're not going to truly blend until future administrations the economic, domestic, and traditional national security functions.

What we're talking about here is how the NSC should operate. And what I'm saying is you get the right group of people not just grafted on, but as an integral part of that. In answer to your question, you get a national security adviser or deputy – it could be either one – who has some familiarity, preferably experience, both in the private sector and in the governmental sector, with either trade, finance, or some of the rest of these issues. It'll happen. Actually, Roger's story shows that Enders or a junior guy was doing a quite effective job on the NSC staff, at least being on the authoritative side, and they got themselves to the table. But ultimately, I think that it takes somebody like Brent, who I think is the archetypical national security adviser. He'd say, I need to sit down and talk with you about some macroeconomic issues or the Munich summit.

KANTER: Brent now would have a very interesting conversation with you.

PORTER: Well, interestingly enough, Henry Kissinger when he was selected in November of 1968 had Dick Cooper tutor him in economics.⁹⁵

KANTER: Fred Bergsten and Bob Hormats on the NSC staff.⁹⁶

PORTER: They were on the NSC staff.

ZELIKOW: It does not surprise me that Cooper does not list this on his resume. Some don't look at the outcome of this and say, "Ah, Cooper. You deserve a lot of credit."

CARD: The early friction on monetary policy is usually a response to a domestic concern. It's the auto industry, the steel industry, Boeing, somebody else, saying, "Hey, that currency is too weak; I can't sell anything over there." Or, "That currency is too strong." Whatever. I think it is a domestic economic concern before it becomes a national security problem.

DESTLER: Well, there are an awful lot of domestic sources of international economic policy problems. The relationship of the budget balance to the trade balance, for example.

KIMMITT: The chief of staff at the White House can be the economic adviser, the domestic policy adviser. It might be a counselor to the president, director of OMB [Office of Management and Budget], as Roger said earlier, a key player. They all sit down and the argument that I would make is the national security adviser should be prepared to hold his weight at that meeting.

⁹⁵ During the Nixon administration, Richard N. Cooper was a professor of economics at Yale University. He later served as undersecretary of state for economic, business, and agricultural affairs in the Carter administration.

⁹⁶ C. Fred Bergsten served as the chief staff member for international economic policy on the National Security Council from 1969 to 1971.

HAASS: If you look at the process by which the Clinton administration reached the decision it reached on the WTO, it would be interesting to look at closely in terms of how it got staffed out. How was it done? What were the meetings like, and all that. Because that's a perfect example of the weighting of domestic political, domestic economic, international economic.

RODMAN: Arnie makes a good proposal. Arnie is suggesting we broaden the nature of the job. But my question is: Would that satisfy the economic departments and agencies? Would they be more willing to allow their issues to be handled in this framework?

CARD: No.

KANTER: It's not up to them to decide.

DAALDER: It's the relationship between the chief of staff and the national security adviser. And whoever does domestic or economic policy has to be much more integrated and much better than in the past.

CARD: Actually, one of the weaker cabinet slots is Commerce.

DESTLER: Commerce doesn't do that much though. USTR does a lot more.

HAASS: Why couldn't you have something like the old Bush administration State/Defense/NSC advisor lunch or breakfast. Why wouldn't you have a weekly one? If you have one that deals with political-military issues, why wouldn't you also have a weekly one where the three of them are joined by, say, Treasury and the USTR?

DESTLER: Of course what you used to have --

PORTER: Well, but you can't have that, because then you also have to have the OMB director and the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

HAASS: Why?

ZELIKOW: Just drop Defense and do Treasury. To keep it three-person.

DESTLER: You guys aren't reading what the issue agenda is. You're thinking of economic issues as part of our broad national security relationships with other countries. But a lot of the issues just come from a different place. They're drawn from the relationship of the U.S. economy to the global economy.

PORTER: I would remind you that there have been Treasury secretaries in the past who have sought to build an informal network similar to the informal networks that we were discussing earlier today in which they would have a weekly breakfast that would include the

secretary of state and the secretary of the treasury, the director of OMB, the chairman of the CEA, and occasionally --

KIMMITT: The Fed? The USTR?

PORTER: No, the Fed would not come to that meeting. That's a separate breakfast with just the Secretary of the Treasury.

It would depend on the issue -- USTR was not a standing member -- and the White House assistant for economic policy. And that's where a lot of issues would get hammered out, and the secretary of state would be a key player there. And, of course, when Shultz was secretary of state, he had already been OMB director. He had already been the secretary of the treasury.⁹⁷

HAASS: I think that in this book you've got to deal with this issue. You've really got to deal with this whole domestic-international divide, which is really a blurred line. You've got the Dick Clarke position.⁹⁸ One of the areas you can make a difference in is in both of these, because the divisions clearly aren't working. You need better integration. And you've got a couple of different models potentially to choose from. And I just think that that's one area where this book could actually be helpful.

DAALDER AND DESTLER: We agree.

ZELIKOW: There's one other area you ought to deal with, and Arnie should comment on this. Arnie ran the defense policy directorate of the NSC before he had a really big job at the State Department. But --

KANTER: I was just following in Bob [Kimmitt]'s shoes. Didn't fill them. Just followed.

ZELIKOW: It seems to me that Arnie's job was extremely influential but became more difficult when we actually got into military operations. If it was arms control, no problem. When it came to defense budget planning and defense force planning, harder, but not impossible. When you start moving from force planning, which is now hard for Arnie to really get his hooks into, into military operations like the military operations we've experienced, now very hard to get a purchase on this. Now he may contradict me and say, no, not so hard. But it occurred to me that at the level of the NSC staff, the NSC staff doesn't interact with the Defense Department on military operational matters. So as a crisis escalates to a point, the Defense Department just wants to interact with Scowcroft and Gates. And if you get a committee at that level or the president. Then if you get into the nitty-gritty below

⁹⁷ Shultz was the director of the Office of Management and Budget from 1970 to 1972 and subsequently served as the secretary of the treasury from 1972 to 1974.

⁹⁸ Clarke has been senior director for global issues and multilateral affairs on the National Security Council since 1993, where his responsibilities included interagency coordination of counterterrorism. In 1998, Clarke also became the national coordinator for infrastructure protection and counter-terrorism on the National Security Council.

that level, the NSC staff can't engage, therefore can't provide the analytical support to its principals that the principals need when they interact with the Pentagon.

HAASS: We did better than that during the Gulf War.

KIMMITT: I think it would be very difficult for a person in that office to do it. I think that we would do things ranging from regional security affairs to arms sales to political/military interaction. So at the State Department, Dick Clarke and his people did get involved in that sort of thing. Because, for example, if they needed an overflight, they had to come to someone at State to get that clearance, and so forth. I actually think it would be very difficult for the --

ZELIKOW: But overflights need strategy.

KIMMITT: Strategy is a different question.

ZELIKOW: Yeah. But in the Gulf War, in the fall of 1990, Scowcroft was trying to engage on strategy because he was very worried about that.

KANTER: People came to my office with defense policy and arms control. Not military operations and arms control.

CARD: Actually, I thought the deputies committees handled that pretty well, because of Dave Jeremiah.⁹⁹

KANTER: The point is that I never had the charter to do military operations. But in some ways more to the point, you're right. But I'm going to disagree with you, Philip. But in the opposite direction, which is Brent never wanted to take on Dick Cheney on defense.

DAALDER: Which is normal. No national security adviser does.

KANTER: We were able to participate in the PRB, Policy Resources Board, which is the way program issues came to the secretary of defense for a decision and we were able to sit -- not participate but sit -- in those meetings. Trying to engage Brent and the president on issues that they ought to pay attention to, which was, shall we say, *real* hard.

KIMMITT: Arnie, if I could expand on this, it is an important point. The Defense Department believes that they have an important role at the table discussing diplomatic options and activities, but they also believe only they and the NCA [National Command Authority] have a place at the table to discuss military operations.

ZELIKOW: Roger that.

DAALDER: And that's wrong.

⁹⁹ Admiral David E. Jeremiah was vice chairman of the joint chiefs of staff from 1990 to 1994.

HAASS: That's one hundred percent. What do you want?

KIMMITT: Powell and I were stuck on this for years because you don't realize it, but in that defense communication channel – JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] and other channels – there's a lot of policy that is made.

HAASS: We tried in the Carter administration. Then it was Komer when he was undersecretary for policy. We read something called the PGCP, Policy Guidance for Contingency Planning. And the idea was to set the political parameters for all the operational plans of JCS. Like, for example, what kind of overflight? Who would be your allies? How much warning? What are all these political assumptions built into your plans?

KIMMITT: The process should be very open, including State and other people in the war games. It can be very hard to get State and other people involved in it, and also people from other countries, which I think is really the next phase.

DAALDER: The Chinese and nuclear warheads.

KIMMITT: That's just DOE. But at the same time you'll find that, for example, at the State Department and other places, they're really not interested in many cases to do some of the kinds of contingency planning, war gaming, and activities like that. I think more of that needs to be done on an interagency basis. But right now I think State has no idea of how little they see of what Defense does. You have to have been an ambassador to realize it.

DESTLER: Or in the NSC.

DAALDER: Let me give a current example. I saw Bob Bell three days ago. And I said, "You must be busy." He said, "No, actually it's pretty quiet." I said, "Well, you know, there's a war going on the last time I checked, and you're the senior director for defense policy and arms control." He said, "I have two things to do with it. One is the reserve call-up, and the other one is the supplement."

KANTER: That's what I did on the Gulf War.

DAALDER: Exactly. And that tells you a lot about the NSC staff involvement. That gets you into a different issue, which is the relationship among directorates in the NSC, which is an interesting, very exclusive, stove-pipe relationship.

CARD: I'm very ignorant about this process.

HAASS: You're too modest.

CARD: I thought there was a lot of operational discussion in the deputies committee. I was actually surprised.

HAASS: You went over that one time with Baker to check out the plan. I did stuff with Brent.

KIMMITT: Defense didn't like it.

HAASS: They didn't like it.

KANTER: Just in case you think that actually there's nothing to worry about, that, in fact, things have gotten better, that the services have gotten much more sophisticated in their political assumptions, let me tell you about a recent episode. Hugh Shelton had rescheduled his trip to China.¹⁰⁰ He couldn't go because of the war. So they agreed they would reschedule the trip. And the Joint Staff, to show how politically sophisticated it is, offered the Chinese a new date, June 4-6 – the anniversary of Tiananmen Square.

DESTLER: On that note, what we promised you was that we'd finish by 8:30 p.m. Thank you very much.

¹⁰⁰ General Henry H. Shelton has served as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since 1997.

APPENDIX A: AGENDA

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

General

- How did the Bush NSC process compare with others you have participated in or observed? What were its special characteristics? In what respects was it structured to emulate practices of past administrations? To eschew practices of past administrations?
- On what sorts of issues did the Bush national security process perform particularly well? On what sorts of issues did it perform less well?

The President and His Senior Team

- Bush was a President who was himself deeply familiar with the foreign policy process and had strong personal relationships with key foreign leaders. How did this affect the process and the NSC's ability to manage it effectively?
- The President and his top foreign policy advisors constituted a small, close-knit group of friends and former colleagues.
 - How difficult was it to break into this small group of policy makers? Through whom and how could access be gained?
 - How did this small group avoid the dangers of "group think"? By what process were ideas tested, alternative options offered, and decisions second-guessed?
 - Were there serious costs this tightness: in the handling, for example, of issues that were not of top priority to the senior team?

The National Security Council

- To what extent were the major conclusions of the Tower Commission reflected in the way that the Bush NSC structure was set up and operated?
- In what instances, if any, did its actual operation deviate from the norm of the Tower Commission? Why did this occur?
- To what extent was the formal process set forth in NSD-1 followed in practice during the 4 years of the Bush Presidency?
- What was the relationship of this formal process to the informal decision-making structure consisting of the President and his closest foreign policy advisors?

The National Security Advisor and his Staff

- What were Brent Scowcroft's strengths and weaknesses as National Security Advisor?
 - How did he manage the inevitable tension between being the President's personal aide for national security matters and running the interagency process?
 - How did he balance his role as honest broker with being a policy advisor and advocate to the President?
- How did Scowcroft manage the NSC staff? What did he see as their main role? What kind of people did he want on his staff? In what ways did this vary from the staff preferences of prior National Security Advisors?
- What was the role of the Deputy National Security Advisor? Did this change over time?

Issues

- Which two issues do you think demonstrate the NSC process working particularly well during the Bush administration?
- Which two issues do you think demonstrate significant problems in the process?

ABOUT THE CO-DIRECTORS

Ivo H. Daalder is a senior fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution. A specialist in American foreign policy, European security, and national security affairs, Daalder is the author and co-editor of eight books, including *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (forthcoming); *Force, Order, and Global Governance* (forthcoming); *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy* (2000); *The United States and Europe in the Global Arena* (1999); *Rethinking the Unthinkable: New Dimensions for Nuclear Arms Control* (1993); *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response: NATO Strategy and Theater Nuclear Forces since 1967* (1991); and *Strategic Defenses in the 1990s: Criteria for Deployment* (1991). Along with this project on the National Security Council, he is co-authoring another book on the politics and policy of missile defense.

Prior to joining Brookings, Daalder was associate professor at the University of Maryland's School of Public Affairs, where he was also director of research at the Center for International and Security Studies. In 1995-96, he served as director for European Affairs on President Clinton's National Security Council staff, where he was responsible for coordinating U.S. policy toward Bosnia. Daalder currently serves as a member of the Study Group of the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century, an examination of U.S. national security requirements and institutions. He has been a fellow at Harvard University's Center for Science and International Affairs and the International Institute for Strategic Studies. He is the recipient of a Pew Faculty Fellowship in International Affairs and an International Affairs Fellowship of the Council on Foreign Relations.

I. M. (Mac) Destler is professor at the School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland, on sabbatical in Almaty, Kazakhstan, for the 1999-2000 academic year. He served as acting dean of the School in 1994-95, and director of the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) from 1992 to 1999. Professor Destler is also visiting fellow at the Institute for International Economics (IIE) in Washington, D.C., where he wrote *American Trade Politics*, (third edition, 1995), winner of the Gladys M. Kammerer Award of the American Political Science Association for the best book on U.S. national policy. His most recent works are *The New Politics of American Trade* (IIE, October 1999, co-authored) *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism* (Brookings Institution Press for CISSM, 1999, co-authored); and *Renewing Fast Track Legislation* (IIE, September 1997). He is the recipient of the University of Maryland's Distinguished International Service Award for 1998.

Professor Destler has held senior research positions at the Institute for International Economics (1983-87), the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1977-83), and the Brookings Institution (1972-77). He served as a consultant to the President's Task Force on Government Organization in 1967 and on the reorganization of the executive office of the president in 1977. His other books include: *Presidents, Bureaucrats, and Foreign Policy* (1972), *The Textile Wrangle: Conflict in Japanese-American Relations, 1969-71* (co-authored, 1979); *Making Foreign Economic Policy* (1980). *Our Own Worst Enemy: The Unmaking of American Foreign Policy* (co-authored, 1984); and *Beyond the Beltway: Engaging the Public in U.S. Foreign Policy* (co-edited, 1994).