



**GEORGE W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT**

**INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN J. HADLEY**

October 31–November 1, 2011  
Washington, D.C.

**Participants**

*University of Virginia*

Russell Riley, chair  
Barbara Perry

*Southern Methodist University*

Seyom Brown

**Also Present**

Judy Ansley  
Kia Ghorashi  
Jack Dyer Crouch II

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## FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

### INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN J. HADLEY

**October 31, 2011**

**Riley:** This is the Stephen Hadley interview as part of the George W. Bush Oral History Project, the 43rd administration. Steve was generously with us in California for a few hours also. One of the things that we typically do here is ask people to identify themselves. I'm Russell Riley, the Chair of the Presidential Oral History Program.

**Brown:** I'm Seyom Brown. I'm with the Tower Center at SMU [Southern Methodist University].

**Perry:** I'm Barbara Perry and I'm a Senior Fellow in the Presidential Oral History Program at the Miller Center.

**Hadley:** I'm Steve Hadley. I'm being interviewed.

**Ghorashi:** I'm Kia Ghorashi. I work for Steve Hadley.

**Riley:** We'd like to hear a little bit about the journey that you took to get into the 43rd administration. If you could just tell us a little bit about your upbringing and your service in the Navy, and then particularly the experience of working for the National Security Council staff under President [Gerald] Ford, and we'll take things from there.

**Hadley:** My biography is not very interesting. Let me talk, though, about how I got started in this business because it really has relevance to understand how the period worked for my generation.

I am a product of the Vietnam generation. I went to Cornell University and then went to law school at Yale in New Haven, Connecticut.

**Riley:** Were you at Cornell when the problems arose?

**Hadley:** I was there from '65 to '69. I was in student government and was there during the seizure of Willard Straight Hall and all of that period that made such big news on the front page of the *New York Times*. It was a turbulent period. It was coincidence of the civil rights era, the antiwar movement, the social change on campus, the getting rid of what we used to call parietals—you probably remember, nobody else does—restrictions on student activities of various sorts. And then, for Cornell, an experiment that failed of bringing black students from urban areas, without adequate support on the campus, and dumping them in the center of Cornell

University in Ithaca, New York. It was an experiment that was not well thought through. The kids got isolated, didn't have adequate support, and civil disobedience, seizing Willard Straight Hall, leaving with guns. It was a very turbulent period.

**Brown:** Can you tell us what side of that basic confrontation you were on as a student?

**Hadley:** There wasn't really a side in the sense that there was a lot of sympathy on the campus for the plight of blacks, but there's an inconsistency between the presence of guns on campus and intimidation and the kind of free flow of ideas that is the essence of the university. I think that was what, when there was a kind of teach-in in Barton Hall, a lot of the faculty came to sort of push back, that was how the issue got framed at the end of the time. But it was wrenching for a lot of people.

I remember a conversation between Tom Jones, who was one of the leaders of the movement, and Walter Berns. I don't know if you recall Walter Berns.

**Riley:** Sure.

**Hadley:** He was a pupil of Leo Strauss. Berns was a conservative guy. He left Cornell as a result of the riots and went up to Toronto and then ended up here at AEI [American Enterprise Institute]. Tom was pleading with him: how do I convince these black students that declaring war, if you will, on the university and the introduction of guns and all of this is not really the approach to take? I remember that Walter said, "Tom, you're asking me to give rational arguments to irrational men. I can't give you arguments to persuade them." I think it was a bit of a cop-out.

Tom was one of the people who, in solidarity with the black students, joined the movement and at one point famously pronounced that the university would die at midnight. The blacks took hold of Willard Straight Hall. There were rumors that people from the town were going to come up and evict the blacks. That led to the introduction of guns into Willard Straight Hall. Steven Muller, who later became head of Johns Hopkins University, was then Dean of Public Affairs. He went in and negotiated a truce. Black students agreed to leave Willard Straight Hall. This was also on parents' weekend, if you can imagine.

He makes a mistake. He lets the kids leave with their weapons. So you have these front-page pictures of Tom Jones and Ed Whitfield and these guys coming out of the hall. Ed Whitfield, who is a mathematician, another student of Allan Bloom, who was also a student of Leo Strauss, is a very conservative guy; he's close to Walter Berns. He's a lovely guy. They come out with bands of bullets on their chest, holding carbines in the air, and it's on the front page of *Life* magazine and *Time* and all the rest. So it was a mistake. That was a very volatile period.

**Perry:** What was your major?

**Hadley:** Government, political science. From there I went to Yale Law School. I signed up for Navy ROTC, Reserve Officers' Training Corps, on the campus. I had shorter hair then than I have even now. I would go to drill once a week in what we called "working blues," which was a blue wool uniform with white spats on the bottom and a white cover. You'd have to walk from

the Yale Law School to the NROTC building across the Yale campus. I would get a lot of what I would call “one-finger salutes.”

The NROTC was a very small unit at Yale. It was protested by the students—I think the building was burned by the students—and it was finally thrown off campus. Navy ROTC returned to Yale University only this year.

**Riley:** Was the draft still going on when you signed up for ROTC?

**Hadley:** The draft was going on for ROTC. As it turns out, if I had gone with the lottery, I would have been fine; I had a very high number. But this is a very turbulent time.

**Riley:** Sure.

**Hadley:** On the one hand, I decide the country can ask young men and women to serve in uniform and I should be ready to serve in uniform, so I go into ROTC at the same time my good friend Chester Judah from college decides he wants to be a conscientious objector. He asked me to write a letter to his draft board in support of his conscientious objector application, which I did. This is a crazy time. The kids demonstrate at the Navy ROTC unit at New Haven at the same time we’re all showing up for drill in our uniform. The campus police clear a corridor so we can get into the building. Then a melee breaks out and the campus police overreact. I can remember to this day a big, beefy campus police guy just bashing, hitting over and over, the face of a young kid.

I went in and told the commander of the Navy unit that I thought the campus police were overreacting and he needed to do something. Ten minutes later, he marched into our classroom and said that he was astonished to find that one of his students in the ROTC unit had some sympathy for these demonstrators when everybody knew that they were desecrating the flag and represented everything wrong in the country. He was outraged that anyone would join in sympathy. He laughed. I went up to the lieutenant and said, “I think he was talking about me.” He said, “Yes, you got that right.” I said, “What should I do? Are you going to toss me out?” He said, “Keep your head down. Work your maneuvering board.” That’s a navigation tool we had in the Navy in those days. I’m sure it’s all linked right now.

I saw the young man who was being beaten by the campus policeman later in the dining hall of the law school. I went up and offered to give him a statement on his behalf. So when you ask what side were you on, in these times everybody’s on every side and everybody is trying to find a way through these very difficult issues. It’s why a lot of people after college asked why don’t you go to Europe and study for a year or two in England or something like that? Who would have wanted to be out in the United States in that period, late ’60s, early ’70s?

**Perry:** Speaking of people who chose to go out of the country at that time, I’m thinking of the Clintons. Were you at Yale Law School at the same time they were?

**Hadley:** I went to Yale Law School in ’69; Hillary Clinton was there. She was in my small group.

**Riley:** That’s a two- or three-hour conversation in itself.

**Hadley:** It was with Charles Black, who's a great constitutional law scholar. He had been part of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] Legal Defense Fund and had been active in the civil rights movement. He's a wonderful guy. She and I were in the small group. I've kept up with her a little bit over the years; she has always treated me extremely well.

So I go to Yale Law School and there's the Bobby Seale trial in the 1970s and the National Guard is called out for that. There was the Cambodian bombing and the campus erupts; there's teargas on the campus.

**Brown:** Just one interjection in appreciation of what you were saying. I was at the Rand Corporation at Santa Monica during those years that you're talking about and also doing some work at the Pentagon. I can remember sitting in my Rand Office on one occasion and there was a demonstration outside, and I said to myself, looking through the glass, *There but for the grace of God go I*. In other words, you have this ambivalence toward both sides of the issue.

**Hadley:** It was crazy. One night during the Bobby Seale period, there was a lot of tear gas and people were in the law school and kids were coming in with tears streaming down their faces. So I, being a good-hearted person, joined a lot of people and we got some big basins of water and some towels and we cleaned these kids up as they came in. You'd clean them up and they'd say, "Gee, that was great. This tear gas is even better than the stuff we got at X," some other demonstration. They'd go running back out. So I figured they can clean up themselves and I can go back up to the library, which I did. It was a very turbulent time. It's not relevant to your project, *except* the following.

So when George W. Bush asked me to be National Security Advisor in January of 2005 and Iraq is going very badly and it looks like we're going to start this cycle of demonstrations and opposition to the war and all the rest, I'm thinking, *Great, I get to be National Security Advisor when we go through the Vietnam experience again*. We all saw what that did to the country's sense of confidence, to our willingness to play the role we need to play in the world, to our military, which came home a broken military, really ignored and shunned by the American people. It was a terrible period in our country.

One of the things that was behind all the work we did on Iraq and the surge and everything else was to try to not have to rerun that history. We'll talk about the surge and I can tell you what I think it accomplished. I'm going to give it to you now so we don't lose it. It achieved a country that did not support terror, was not pursuing weapons of mass destruction, was not disrupting its neighbors, and was an ally in the War on Terror. Those were narrow national security objectives. It's a country that now, as our troops leave, has been able to defend itself, sustain itself, govern itself, and is an ally in the War on Terror. If it works out, it will be an example to all the countries experiencing the era of awakening.

In fact you can have Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurds all working together to advance a common future for their country in a democratic framework, rather than the history of Iraq and the history of the Middle East, which has been either Sunni oppressing Shi'a, Shi'a oppressing Kurds, and both oppressing Sunnis and both of them beating up on the Kurds. So there's a lot that is positive. But for me, the goal of the surge was narrower in a way: for us to come out of the Iraq experience

without repeating Vietnam, where the country feels defeated, the Army feels defeated and shattered by the experience, and the country is torn apart over the conclusion of the Iraq experience. We avoided all of that. It was not Vietnam two. That was my minimum objective and it was very much formed by the experience of having lived through the '60s and '70s.

**Riley:** Did you have a sense that your experience and your sensitivities were something that the President himself shared by virtue of his own personal experience with this time, or was there a—I can't recall the age difference between you and the President.

**Hadley:** He's six months older than I am. I'm not sure. I went through the '60s at Cornell University and Yale Law School, '65 to '72. Remember, he graduates in '68 from Yale. It's not really ramped up on that campus, and then he goes to Texas. Texas is a different world, so I don't think he felt it the same way I did it. He saw it on the TV, but for me it was much more vivid.

Now, why do I go through all of this? Because there were a lot of us in that period who went through it. Some people were drafted, some people volunteered, some people went into the Reserves, and some people went into ROTC. There were a number of people who went into ROTC as I did and came out of very elite institutions and came down to Washington and served in the Army or in the Navy or whatever. Many of them served in the Pentagon or other places. So you got, in some sense, a generation of people from elite schools who came into the military service for whatever reason and served in the military. They got bitten by the bug of national security and foreign policy. I can't give you a list, but Walt Slocombe is a guy who did that, who went on to a career. I certainly did. Bob Gates had a little different route because he came through military service and then went to the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency].

It brought to Washington a generation of people who decided in addition to all the other things they might do in their lives—whether it was a law practice as Walt and I did, or other things—they would make national security and foreign policy part of their professional life. For me, coming out of law school, coming to Washington, being a year and a half in the Comptroller's office at the Pentagon—I'll take a digression.

It was a small office of four people, two lawyers and two business grads who were a think tank, if you will, for the Comptroller of the Defense Department. Hank Paulson was in that group; a Congressman from South Carolina who just retired, whose name will come back to me, was in that group. Walt Minnick was in that group; he became a one-term Congressman in this last year from some place up in North Dakota. If you look at the genealogy, it was a group of people with very talented backgrounds. Again, it was these people who found themselves in the military for all kinds of reasons as they got out of business school or law school and got bitten by the bug and stayed.

So in that year and a half in the Pentagon and then two and a half years that followed at the National Security Council, I met a whole generation of people. Bob Blackwill and Richard Burt and Paul Wolfowitz; the list goes on. People who started with me and I started with them, who stayed in this national security, foreign policy area, and who have been my professional colleagues for 30 years.

Bob Gates came to the NSC [National Security Council]. I came in in July of '74, the month before [Richard] Nixon resigned. I think Bob arrived a month or two earlier. We got to know one another and we've been friends for 35 years. It makes a big difference when you're National Security Advisor and the Secretary of Defense is someone you've known for 35 years and you have complete confidence and vice versa. If you add that Condi [Condoleezza Rice] had worked with them in the [George H. W.] Bush 41 generation, those three people then are people who know each other very well and have a lot of confidence in one another.

What's interesting for me in that period is coming to Washington, being in the national security arena at a very young age with a generation of people who I got to know and who became my professional colleagues for 35 years. And every job I ever got in the national security space was because of one of those people I got to know in the first five years I was in Washington, without a doubt. So it's an interesting phenomenon and I'm not sure it's reproducible for future generations. It accounts for one of the things that Bob Gates talks about in his book, *From the Shadows*, that there was a group of people who did national security and foreign policy who got to know one another. Some were Democrats, some were Republicans. They knew one another, they were friends with one another, and when some part of them was in government, the other part was out. We would meet at the Council on Foreign Relations, the Atlantic Council, at seminars, and talk about the issues of foreign policy and national security. That provided continuity to our country for people who knew one another and had confidence in one another, but it also developed an outlook together over this period of time.

So whether it was a Republican President or a Democratic President, they staffed their administrations out of this pool. It helped give continuity to our policy over time, because continuity is one of the things that—it's hard for democratic governments to do. I argue there is a lot more continuity between administrations than anybody wants to admit, and we've seen it going from Bush to [Barack] Obama, especially in the counterterrorism policies that were so divisive in the election, and yet there has been so much continuity.

But it's one of the reasons why I think the country successfully maintained the policies it did in the Cold War for 40 years. Everybody says there was great consensus. Well, there wasn't. We all remember the pitched battles over the MX [missile eXperimental] missile and the notion of do you have to have a counterforce capability to counter the Russians in order to give them an incentive to try to negotiate them away? It was a huge argument. It passes the Senate by two or three votes.

The deployment of Glicums [GLCMs, or ground-launched cruise missiles]—I forget the other, Glicums, Slicums [SLCMs, or submarine-launched cruise missiles], and whatever it is—the intermediate-range nuclear forces to Europe. It was a huge issue in the United States and a huge issue in Europe. So this notion that the Cold War was a remarkable consensus that everybody agreed—we didn't; we fought those battles. But the truth is, we did have roughly a consensus at the end of the day on the nature of the threat and it needed to be confronted. We had a policy of containment and deterrence, which we maintained over 30 or 40 years. At the end of the day, the Soviet Union came apart. That's a real success of continuity in policy. I think having this group of people who cut their teeth together, knew one another, and were the pool from which administrations drew to staff their administration was one of the elements that provided some of that continuity.

So it's an interesting story for my generation. It probably will not be the same story for my daughter's generation and those kids now who, like Kia, want to work in foreign policy and national security. It will be a very different story. But it's an interesting story. Nobody has really written it; somebody ought to.

**Brown:** A reflection a little bit on that generation that you're talking about. A large segment of that generation was also the "no more Vietnams" segment. I remember that I was working at the time in the think tank world, primarily in Washington at Brookings and so on. A lot of people were associated with getting into Vietnam, like McGeorge Bundy and others and Bundy's disciples in the various foundations, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller, and so on. This translated into a notion that we're not going to work on foreign policy anymore; we're going to work on domestic policy. A lot of the so-called best-and-brightest types, the younger generation, decided they were not going to work on foreign policy.

**Hadley:** Interesting.

**Brown:** So I think one consequence of that is that those who remain to work on foreign policy probably had—although they differed with one another, particularly on strategic force issues and so on, they were nonetheless basically devoted toward the fundamental Cold War principles. In other words, those who had a more—I don't want to call it a radical view, and liberal is too vague a term—but nonetheless, I think what happened is that the people who remained, your generation, working on foreign policy had more in common than the larger complex of young intellectuals coming out of college.

**Hadley:** I think that's right because it was a group that self-selected. They went into ROTC. Bob Gates served in the Army and then went into CIA. Or they went into the Foreign Service, like Bob Blackwill and some of these others. It became a cadre of people who continued to believe in American power and America's role in the world, rather than people who became suspicious of American power and America's role in the world and who even thought it was a bad thing.

I remember that Victor Utgoff, you may remember in the [Jimmy] Carter period, gets front-page news by saying maybe America does need to be checked in the world, maybe Vietnam proves that American power can run amuck. We need checks on American power. It's very French. It's exactly what Jacques Chirac believed.

**Brown:** Yes.

**Hadley:** That was the most left-hand spectrum of those people who stayed in the business and worked in national security.

**Riley:** So that suggests, then, that there's not a Democratic counterpart to this community of people, or is there a Democratic counterpart?

**Hadley:** My view is these people I'm talking about were Republicans and Democrats. Jan Lodol became a Democrat, Walt Slocombe was a Democrat. It was a pool of Republicans *and* Democrats who nonetheless had developed some common perspectives and a common commitment to America's role in the world and to seeing through the Cold War. They provided



continuity, whether it was a Republican administration or a Democratic administration; they were drawing from the same pool of people.

**Brown:** Now another interesting development, it seems to me, within the group that stayed engaged in foreign policy was the division between the so-called realists, who said no more Vietnams, we're not going to go around the world intervening in other countries, how the governments treat their people and so on, that's not really what foreign policy ought to be about. They were kind of [Henry] Kissingerian realists versus those who still felt that the Cold War was not simply state-to-state relations but had a lot to do with ways of life, with basic ideology and so on.

**Hadley:** I don't think so. Vietnam was not waged by the idealists; it was waged by the realists. The rationale was that this is China, an emerging global power that needs to be checked. This is the spread of communism. This is the dominos. This was not spreading freedom and dignity. This was checking China and checking communism. There was an element of freedom versus totalitarianism, but I think for the people who made the war it was more about geopolitics.

**Perry:** Could I just say there was a film from 1965 that ran over the weekend that had been put out by the Department of Defense called *Why Vietnam*. It begins with Lyndon Johnson speaking those words, "Why Vietnam?" Interestingly enough, it goes back yet another generation, so to carry on your line of thinking, and it talks about appeasement at Munich. It says look at what happened when the world did not stop [Adolph] Hitler and [Benito] Mussolini, and then it just jumps immediately, literally, to a map of Southeast Asia; back to the domino discussion. But it links that Vietnam decision to pre-World War II and appeasement at Munich. I'm just saying this is how the government was presenting the view to Americans.

**Brown:** Yes, that's true, but the defectors from U.S. foreign policy engagement and so on, they were ones who said no more Vietnams. We shouldn't be going around the world trying to teach other people what kinds of governments they ought to have. We don't know enough about their cultures. In other words, you had this kind of split that then takes place. What I want to pose to you—

**Hadley:** It's not uniform. I mean, a lot of people said our interests were not engaged in Vietnam.

**Brown:** This is what [John F.] Kennedy said, of course.

**Hadley:** It was not a war that was justified by a calculation of American interests and therefore was a war that should not have been waged. So it's a split view. I don't think it fits realists and idealists, to be honest.

**Brown:** But then to bring it forward, at the end of Gulf War 1, those who really believed that we shouldn't go into Iraq, that we shouldn't go into Baghdad and so on, part of the argument was that it was going to be too messy. We don't know enough about the Arab culture there. So it was, curiously, part of the Vietnam syndrome that still operated at the end of the Gulf War. I hope we can talk with you a little bit about who was for going in, who was not for going in, and so on.

**Hadley:** Have you read Marvin Kalb's new book?

**Brown:** No.

**Hadley:** I haven't read it but he interviewed me for it. It tries to trace the legacy of the Vietnam syndrome in Presidential decision making all the way through to George W. Bush. You'd enjoy it.

**Perry:** He was just at the Miller Center, by the way, and did a forum, so you can also go to the Miller Center website.

**Hadley:** About the book?

**Perry:** Yes, Marvin Kalb and his daughter—he wrote it with his daughter—they were both just here and speaking about it.

**Riley:** Let's move ahead. You get your first White House experience working in the Ford administration. How did that come about and what did you do and what did you learn from the experience?

**Hadley:** It came about in the following way. I was working in this office, [John] Spratt—Congressman Spratt is the other name—Hank Paulson was in that office, Walt Minnick, Congressman Spratt was in that office. I'm in that office and I'm working with Bob Murray, who is then Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, Jim Schlesinger and Bill Clements, respectively. It's the spring of '74. Everybody knows Nixon is going to resign but nobody knows exactly when. A lot of people are leaving the NSC staff.

So Jan Lodol, who is running the Office of Defense programs on the NSC staff, calls Bob Murray and says, "We need some people over here. Do you know anybody who might want to serve on the NSC staff?" So Bob Murray gets in touch with me and says, "They're looking for someone over at the NSC staff. Why don't you go interview with them?" So I did.

Lynn Davis was working for Jan at the time and Lynn interviewed me. She's a wonderful person. My version of the interview, which is probably not true in fact but is true in spirit, was, "So we do SALT [Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty] negotiations here. What do you know about strategic forces and SALT?" Answer? "Nothing." "Well, we also do conventional force planning and we do NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] planning and we do MBFR [Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions], which nobody knows probably other than Sam. What do you know about that?" Absolutely nothing.

"So how about proliferation, the danger of?" "Gee, that's an interesting problem, I don't know anything about that either." "Well, do you have an active security clearance?" "Yes, I do." "Great." [*laughter*] "Start on Monday." They said, "But by the way, you're a Navy ensign. Do not wear your uniform. Do not tell anybody you're in the Navy, and certainly don't tell them you're an ensign because no one will listen to you. You're going to have to deal with Deputy Assistant Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries, so just tell them you're a civilian."

I came over and I worked MBFR, conventional force reductions in Europe, the negotiation that was designed not to produce agreement but as a device to maintain our troop levels in Europe. I worked on NATO force issues. I did a little proliferation. I worked on the German offset

agreement, which is another thing lost in time, efforts by Germany to compensate us for the cost of our troop presence there. I had a great time. I stayed there through the Ford administration and was invited by Zbig [Zbigniew Brzezinski] and David Aaron to stay on in the Carter administration and actually head the office. I thought that was a mistake for them to ask because Zbig did not have great credit on the political/military side, so my recommendation was that they not offer me to head the office because I was 30 years old at the time, but that they get a senior military officer who would give Zbig credibility on political/military issues, which is what that office did. They did not follow my advice. Instead they got Victor Utgoff, a very nice guy, who came over from IDA [Institute for Defense Analyses] to take that job.

What that experience does for me, of course, is it extends my knowledge of this generation. I met Jim Dobbins during that time. It extends the knowledge of this generation of people who are going to be my colleagues for the next 30 or 40 years. But it's also terrific to come to the NSC as a junior-level person. You get to know how the interagency process works. The vision from the NSC is like nowhere else in government because you see how the agencies work, you see how their work comes into the White House, and then you see how you'd have a congressional perspective, a political perspective, a communications perspective, the President's perspective, which is something else again. You see how that all works together to result in the foreign policy of the United States. It's a unique vantage point.

If you can come in there at a young age, at an early age, where you are two levels down from anything important and where your mistakes probably—probably, not necessarily—won't become the front page of the *Washington Post*, it's a very good experience. Then you go out to your other agencies and other things, and at some point 10 or 20 years later, come back to the NSC in a senior director position. Then you are prepared to actually do some good and you know how the system works and you have, in some sense, made your mistakes at a time when they didn't count.

The exception, of course, was Dan Christman, who you may know. He was then a captain or maybe major in the Army and went on to be head of the Corps of Engineers and Superintendent of West Point until he retired. He's now in town. Dan worked with Roger Molander on SALT, on strategic force issues. He got enmeshed in the hearings about the CIA for reasons that are not clear to me and was hauled up and had some very public testimony before a Congressman whose name I cannot recall.

So the NSC and the White House is a very politically and legally dangerous place to work. As we've seen in our history, people can get in trouble. So you want good adult supervision and you want experienced people to come there. For me, it was a great opportunity to fulfill a desire I had in college to have a chance to work in the NSC but, again, to work at a level where you learn, you get that perspective. If you make some mistakes, you're a couple of levels down and it probably does no real damage. Then you go out into the world, take that experience, and you come back. In my case, I came back as Deputy and then National Security Advisor, and I like to think I did a lot better job because I'd been there once before.

**Riley:** Did you have a chance from your perch to get a sense about the proper interaction between the National Security Advise

r and the President during the Ford administration?

**Hadley:** Not so much, because I didn't see that so much. I am a couple of layers down. I had a meeting or two with Henry Kissinger. I had the temerity to pass him a note during a meeting, which he didn't think much of. I knew Brent [Scowcroft] a little bit better when Brent replaced Henry as National Security Advisor. But for me that came, again because of associations, in '87 when there's the Iran arms sales problem and there's the [John] Tower Commission. Clark McFadden, who I had worked with in this analysis group for the Comptroller's office, from '72 to '74, had subsequently become general counsel to the Armed Services Committee, where he got to know John Tower.

So John Tower was asked to join Brent Scowcroft and Ed Muskie to do the Tower Commission, the President's review board of the Iran arms sales. Tower asked Clark to become the general counsel of the panel. Clark told Tower, there's this great guy named Steve Hadley and you ought to bring him on board to help write the report. Tower asked Brent Scowcroft, whom I worked for at the NSC under the Ford White House, about it and Brent says, "Yes, Hadley would be good."

So I come and participate in the Tower Board. The Tower Board, of course, is an investigation of what happened in the NSC staff to allow arms for hostages to become a policy of our government. In the course of that Tower Commission we looked at all of the issues of the operation of the NSC staff, including how the National Security Advisor should perform his or her role. I was the draftsperson of the report but it meant I did the first draft because the three commissioners were very involved in it. The most involved of all was Brent Scowcroft, who would routinely rewrite my papers.

You can still get the Tower Commission report. If you don't have one, I actually still have some on my shelf.

**Riley:** We don't have one, so please bring one tomorrow.

**Hadley:** It's the best statement, in my view, of the base case for the National Security Advisor, what the role should be. It's the role that Brent really carved out in two administrations and which we wrote there. Then Brent practiced it under Bush 41 and I ended up practicing the same model under Bush 43.

So for me, the interaction between the President and the National Security Advisor is not something I observed in that first tour at the NSC from '74 to '77, but it's something I learned in the postmortem of the NSC process that we did for the Tower Commission, where we did a lot of case studies about the NSC and how it operated in various crises. We did a lot of interviews of all the former National Security Advisors and we put together a report that was to try to identify what went wrong, and then lay out how the NSC should be organized and function. In that context I got to, with Brent, write the section on how the National Security Advisor ought to do his or her job and relate to the President.

So for me, coming in in 2001 as Deputy National Security Advisor was great because I had had a tour at the NSC. I had been at an agency, namely the Pentagon, for a year and a half. I had a tour at the NSC to see how it works and to get a view from that perch on the interagency process. I

had then been able to become, in a four- or five-month cram course, a student of the NSC system and write what I would call the normative case as to how it's supposed to operate.

I went to the Pentagon under Bush 41 and again saw the perspective from an agency, and then became Deputy National Security Advisor in 2001. My sense is that's not bad preparation for that job.

**Riley:** I guess there must have been congressional reviews done after the Tower Commission report.

**Hadley:** Correct.

**Riley:** The minority report, which becomes famous later, is I think where Dick Cheney has subsequently said if you want to understand his prevailing congressional theory of Presidential powers, it's embedded in the minority report of the Tower Commission. I just want to throw that out.

**Hadley:** The Tower Commission was not who did what and hold them accountable. It actually discovered the link to the Contras. So it's really Iran arms sales for power, and then we discover this Contras stuff and we put it in the back of the report and say someone is going to have to do that. Then over to the [Lee] Hamilton cochaired Iran-Contra joint committee, I've forgotten what they called it, and that does the whole thing, soup to nuts. Cheney is on that, and Cheney with David Addington—another name comes up—write their dissent on the congressional report.

**Riley:** My question for you is, in moving through that process to that latter report, are you at all engaged in the process of producing that latter report and was there a—what I don't know is whether the minority report of the congressional committee is in any way critical of the approach that the Tower Commission took in its own report.

**Hadley:** I don't know. The focus is very different. My guess is that you won't find much in that minority report that is critical of the model of the NSC staff and the National Security Advisor that's in the Tower Report.

**Riley:** That was my question because I've got these two loose bits of information in my head and I'm trying to figure out—

**Hadley:** I don't think so because the Tower Commission was supposed to fix the process. The Joint Committee of the Congress was trying to figure out who did what to whom. Of course, the big question became, what did the President know and when did he know it? Ronald Reagan very shrewdly figured out, I think, that the way to save himself was to be able to say, "I never knew about the diversion of funds from the arms sales to the Contras." It's ironic because otherwise Ollie North was doing exactly what Ronald Reagan wanted him to do. Ronald Reagan could have been in great trouble politically but he somehow convinced everybody that the key test for his culpability was whether he knew about the transfer of the funds and it turned out that he did not. So that's the thing that got him off but put Ollie North and [John] Poindexter in the soup.

Interestingly enough, one of the things Cheney draws from that experience is, concomitant about what I said that Poindexter and North were basically carrying out President Reagan's policy, that he *did* want to trade arms for hostages and he *did* want to do everything he could to keep the Contras afloat. Cheney concludes that midlevel people are being allowed, in those televised Iran-Contra hearings, to take the fall for Presidential decisions. He concludes that is unconscionable.

If you talk to him he will say—and I thought at the time, *Boy, if that ever happens, if someone ever tries to do that on my watch and I can stop it, I will.* So fast-forward to May of 2009; the Obama administration has come in and they have done two things. They have reopened investigations that were closed by DOJ [Department of Justice] professional people into the conduct of CIA people who were running the interrogation programs. They had concluded their investigations and thought nobody should be held accountable, and the President and his Attorney General reopened those investigations.

So suddenly the people who ran the interrogation program, which was clearly authorized by the President of the United States, are at risk. Then they start inquiries into the lawyers, whether they broke professional standards and should be sanctioned and disbarred for the opinions they wrote that established the legal limits of what could be done in the interrogation program. Dick Cheney comes out and gives his heritage speech. The White House foolishly knows Dick Cheney is giving his AEI speech on a particular day and decides to go ahead and schedule a Presidential speech at the same time.

Cheney delays his speech, the President gives his speech on these counterterrorism policies, and then Cheney comes out and excoriates the Obama administration, excoriates them for investigating these people and trying to impose legal liability on people who were carrying out Presidential policies in order to defend the country. He gets top billing with the President. Every newspaper in the country has Obama on one side, a sitting President with a 60-plus approval rating, and Dick Cheney on the other side, a former Vice President whose approval rating is in the low 20s on a good day, and Cheney gets equal billing and basically stops the Obama administration in its tracks. In the end they decide closing GTMO [Guantanamo] probably is something they cannot do.

**Brown:** They also had [Joseph] Biden after that as the one who countered Cheney rather than the President.

**Hadley:** Right. Finally the decision is made to let the lawyers off the hook. The investigations are largely closed except for one or two things that are still open. I talked to Cheney afterward and I said, "Everybody wonders why you came out of the box so hard. My theory is you did it because you thought it was unseemly for midlevel people to be held accountable and pilloried and maybe prosecuted for decisions the President made." He then tells me the story about Iran-Contra and his service as the leader of the minority in that hearing, and the minority report and his conclusion that Reagan let midlevel people swing, if you will, for Reagan's policy decisions and that was inappropriate. He was never going to let that happen.

That's why he comes out so forcefully in May of 2009. He just thinks it's a point of honor. As he said, if you have problems with these policies, it's me and the President and you know where we

live; come see us. It's a very courageous decision and it comes right out of his experience with the Iran-Contra inquiry.

**Riley:** How are you doing with time?

**Hadley:** Let's take a ten-minute break.

[BREAK]

**Riley:** We've been joined by Judy Ansley.

**Hadley:** Judy was the Senior Director for Europe until Jim Jeffrey left, and then she became the Deputy National Security Advisor for Regional Programs. She was there through the conclusion of the second term. You were there for five years total?

**Ansley:** Four, I started in August of 2005, so three and a half, most of the second term.

**Riley:** Steve had been National Security Advisor for how long when you came in?

**Ansley:** About eight months?

**Hadley:** Since January.

**Ansley:** Yes, since January.

**Hadley:** I'd been trying to hire Judy for about 20 years and I finally got a job she was willing to take.

**Perry:** You had been on the Hill prior?

**Ansley:** I had been there for about 20 years.

**Riley:** Just briefly, who did you work for there?

**Ansley:** Mostly for Senator John Warner from Virginia and almost exclusively on the Armed Services Committee staff. I spent a couple of years with him on the Intelligence Committee staff and a few in his personal office, but Armed Services mostly. I ended up there as the staff director until Steve lured me away to the White House, which Senator Warner understood. It was about the only job he would have understood.

**Riley:** Were you doing almost exclusively European issues there? It sounds like something beyond that.

**Ansley:** I started there doing European issues; the first job I had on the committee was doing NATO and a number of foreign policy issues. Then because I had different positions on the

committee, by the time I left I was basically managing everything that the committee did, which was the entire defense budget and then the foreign policy issues we dealt with, which was pretty worldwide.

**Riley:** Steve, let's fast-forward then. Maybe the logical place to start is about your own transition from deputy to the assistant. Does that make sense to everybody? I seem to recall, and maybe this was something we talked about in the earlier interview, this didn't seem to be a natural progression to you, or have I got that wrong?

**Hadley:** No, I had recommended at the beginning of the second term, when the President was still thinking about appointments, I argued that he should get rid of his National Security Council team and basically start over because the first term had been really quite divisive, and I thought it was a way to give the President a new start. Some of the baggage would depart from him with the departure of his team. He could bring in a new team, have a fresh start, which would send a strong message to the country that he could come up with a second-term team that was even stronger than his first-term team and also be another set of eyes on the problems.

Iraq was not going well. Afghanistan had been going well but was beginning to look a little shaky, and there were all the issues associated with the various policies on the War on Terror that had been controversial. So that was my recommendation to him. He did not accept that recommendation, I think for a lot of reasons.

One of the reasons was that he really wanted Condi to stay around. He told her that he thought his first term had been characterized by the War on Terror and Iraq and Afghanistan, and that the second term was going to be a term of diplomacy. I think he saw possibilities in North Korea, Middle East peace, and he wanted to have a Secretary of State for his second term, as he had in his first term, who was someone he knew very well and had real confidence in. He had seen the tensions between the State Department institutional organization and the White House in the first term and he wanted to make sure that, since he was going to need the State Department to do his diplomacy, that they were headed by someone who knew his mind, knew his thinking, and in whom he had complete confidence. That, of course, was Condi.

So I think part of the get rid of the whole team was an issue that he didn't want to get rid of Condi. Colin [Powell] had made clear that he wanted to leave after the first term and the President honored that request. There was an issue about [Donald] Rumsfeld, as the President talks about in his book. He thought of it but he did not have a good replacement. Fred Smith was always on the horizon but it never quite worked because of personal situations. So he rejected the idea of a clean sweep.

**Riley:** Did you make a recommendation about Cabinet as well as—

**Hadley:** I said that he ought to get rid of his national security team, which I defined as Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor, and Deputy National Security Advisor, and get a whole new team.

**Riley:** Did you make recommendations beyond that for people who should come in and take those jobs?



**Hadley:** I did not, except with respect to National Security Advisor because he told me he wanted me to take that job and I told him I thought that was not a good thing. I think generally you should not promote number twos to be number one. I think it's actually a very different job being a number two, and not everybody who is good at number two is good at number one, and in some sense vice versa. I also thought he could do better. So I gave him a list of people that I thought he should consider as National Security Advisor.

**Riley:** Can you tell us some of the names on the list?

**Hadley:** Now, do I want to do that? That's a good question.

**Riley:** You can pull it later if you choose.

**Hadley:** One, do I remember? Then do I want to do that? One name I remember that was on the list was Bob Zoellick, who I thought was underutilized, particularly because he had command of the economic stuff. He had worked for Condi as her deputy—no, not a deputy because she was still National Security Advisor—but he had been one of those that Condi could work well with. So I know Bob Zoellick was one of the names on the list.

I also think Bob Kimmitt was one of the names on the list, a person who had a lot of broad background and had been at the Department of the Treasury and at the State Department. But the President decided not to go in that direction. Bob Kimmitt became Deputy Secretary of the Treasury and Bob Zoellick ultimately became head of the World Bank. So he had good places where he used these people who had a lot of talent.

**Riley:** May I ask, because those two names are people with demonstrated experience in the economic sphere, were you intentionally attempting to avoid people who had experience in the antiterrorism or more broadly defined national security area?

**Hadley:** No, my view was that they could do all the political-military stuff, certainly somebody like Bob Kimmitt, who'd been Under Secretary for Political Affairs and was in the Army Reserve. Bob also had served on the NSC staff, like I had, so he knew how the NSC should work. No, I did it because I thought they were very strong people who I thought could serve the President very well in that job. The fact that Bob in particular had economics was a plus.

I think the reason the President did what he did was because he really did want to have the State Department lead on the diplomacy and there were, as the President talks about in his book, a lot of divisions and tensions that had occurred and became fairly pronounced at the end of the administration between NSC, State, and Defense. I think he really wanted to avoid those in the second term. So having had in Condi and me people who had worked with him for four years, who knew his mind, had his confidence, and Condi and I having worked together, he was confident that there would not be tensions between the National Security Advisor and the Secretary of State. He really wanted a knit-up team that would follow his leadership, and he got it.

We could finish each other's sentences. There was no tension between any of the three of us in terms of the President and Condi and me, Condi at State and me as National Security Advisor. I

think that's what he wanted and it's what he got. He had good places for and made good use of Bob Kimmitt and Bob Zoellick in the administration. So I think that's why he did it.

My job was to go from being a number two to being a number one and figuring out how to do that job, and that's what I went about doing. My job was to get a strong deputy who could do for me what I tried to do for Condi. I had terrific deputies in terms of J. D. Crouch and Jim Jeffrey and Judy. It's essential because I didn't realize—even though I would have told you as deputy that I knew everything that Condi was doing, I kind of knew it by the boxes, but I didn't know what was inside the box. At least with George W. Bush, a National Security Advisor spends an enormous amount of time with the President. The maintenance of the President is what you do. That means somebody has got to be back there full time working the process and moving the issues along, getting him prepared, teed up, and all the rest. That's what the deputy does, so that relationship becomes critical. The President knows that that is what the deputy is doing and depends on it. That's what makes the President feel so easy about taking the time of the National Security Advisor, because he actually knows that there is a process, the deputy is running to get the issues framed up.

**Riley:** Is that a generic role for the National Security Advisor or is it a role that was particular to this President, that is, the enormous amount of face time that you're getting?

**Hadley:** I think it's the National Security Advisor's first job, the care and feeding of the President, and it's always the case. If you were to talk to Brent Scowcroft or Zbig or Tom Donilon, I think they would tell you the same thing. When your President is doing a lot of foreign policy—we did have a wartime President—it means you're spending a lot of time with him. So in the mornings when you would come to the office, if you're National Security Advisor, you would be mostly getting yourself prepared in terms of the press, intelligence and events overnight, and events from the day before to go see the President at 7:05 and brief him on all the things you think he needs to know to get through his day.

Then many times at 7:30 there would be head-of-state phone calls. At 8 o'clock you'd have the intelligence briefing. At 9 o'clock he would have his meeting with his senior leadership team, the Chief of Staff, Karl Rove in terms of the politics and Dan Bartlett in terms of communications, and you would do the Chief of Staff kind of meeting, which was looking over the full set of things that were going to go on for that day. Many times after that, at 10:00 or 10:30, you would have a National Security Council meeting in the Situation Room.

In your morning you're spending a lot of time with the President. Then usually in the afternoon he's launched into doing other things. But he's the kind of guy that if he's on the road or if it's 5:30 in the afternoon you might get one of these calls, "Hadley, what's going on? What's happening?" So you're working the President.

**Brown:** You were telling us about how your ideas with respect to the model, National Security Advisor and National Security Council, grew out of your work on the Tower Commission. Now you're in office; is it your assessment that Condi fulfilled the requirements of that model completely, or were there some aspects of the way she functioned as National Security Advisor that didn't quite measure up to your model?

**Hadley:** I think she took it as her base case. But the whole point about the national security structure and system, the reason the National Security Advisor does not testify before Congress, the reason why the organization of the NSC staff is not specified in law, is because it needs to be adapted to the management style, the leadership style, and personality of the President.

**Brown:** Right.

**Hadley:** I think what the Tower Commission does is it gives you the base case, the normative case, the plain vanilla case subject to modifications to suit the particular President you're serving, the issues before the country at the moment, and in some sense the personality of the National Security Advisor.

Secondly—and one of the things we'll talk about—a first-term President is very different from a second-term President. As Joe Nye asked me one time at Harvard when I got out of the administration, Presidents learn on the job and they are different in their second term than they are in the first term.

So in a way the situation Condi finds in the first term with a President who is a first-term President, who has been a domestic policy candidate, and is relatively inexperienced on national security and foreign policy, and suddenly after 9/11 finds himself Commander in Chief of a nation at war—the situation she faces as National Security Advisor serving that President is very different from the second term. The second term he has done, in my view, a stunning job in helping the country through the War on Terror. We've been through Afghanistan; we've been through Iraq. He's had four years of intelligence briefings, four grueling years as President. He knows what he thinks, he knows what he knows. He knows a lot more than the intel [intelligence] briefers who are coming to brief him every morning on almost every subject. He's a different guy. He's confident.

So the challenge is very different for what she's dealing with in the first term and what I'm dealing with in the second term. The issues are different. We're in a different part of his Presidency. I've got a second-term President who is much more accomplished than what she had. So it varies with where the President is on his learning curve. It varies with the situations that he's grappling with at the time and, in some sense, the personalities of the National Security Advisor.

Condi is a gifted individual. She has one of these big personalities. Hillary Clinton is the same way, and Colin Powell. These are big personalities. She was a public figure and had real communication gifts. And it was a time when we had tough policies that needed to be explained to the American people. I think if you looked at Brent Scowcroft under Ford or Bush 41 and Condi Rice in the first term of the Bush administration, she's out there publicly a lot more than he was.

I was actually, probably in the second term, out there more publicly than he was too, but a lot less publicly than Condi was. Colin, for example, understood that about Condi. I think he was very accepting of it. I think Colin handled extremely well the fact that she was very public in that way, more than most National Security Advisors had been. Again, one of the reasons is that Colin and Condi were very close friends. She'd come to work for him while doing the work for

the Joint Chiefs of Staff and met him at that time. They had become friends. This friendship and personal chemistry and personal trust is really important.

**Brown:** That's fascinating because a lot of the popular notion is that Colin was not an insider, he didn't have an inside track, but you're saying that he did through Condi.

**Hadley:** He did through Condi. He also did directly with the President. The President had, and has, a lot of regard for him. He could see the President any time he wanted to. But one of the things you also do as National Security Advisor—you've got two ways you want to play that role. If you want, you can use your proximity to the President to make Cabinet Secretaries look really bad. I'll give you an example—stop me if we talked about this out in California.

It's always the little things. You open the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* and you see a leak out of the State Department. Now, one way you can do it is you can go into the President of the United States at 7:05 and say, "Mr. President, I don't know if you saw the leak in the *Washington Post* today but somebody over at the State Department is undermining your policy. It's outrageous. I've talked to Condi about this problem a number of times. It just doesn't seem to do any good, but don't worry, Mr. President. I'll take care of it; I'll call her this morning and see if I can get this back in the box. I'll try to pull her chestnuts out of the fire." I mean, you could do that.

It makes the Secretary of State look bad, it makes you look good, and it plays up to the President. Don't do it. What you do is you see that in the morning and you call Condi and say, "I'm sorry to interrupt your 5:30 treadmill but there's something in the *Washington Post* this morning. Somebody is talking about X, Y, and Z. You know how the President is going to react when he sees that in the morning. You may want to get on top of it and give him a call." That's what you do.

Then when you go in at 7:10 the President is on the phone and he puts his hand over the receiver and he says [*whispering*], "It's Condi. She's talking about the *Washington Post* article." She's saying, "I saw it this morning. Here's how it happened. Here's what I'm going to do about it, Mr. President. I'll fix it." That restores his faith in his Cabinet Secretary. That's what you want to do. If you have the right team with people who know each other and have confidence in each other, it's the second scenario that happens and not the first. That's terribly important. That's what you should be doing as National Security Advisor. You should be encouraging the President to deal directly with your Cabinet Secretaries. You should be trying to give him confidence in the Cabinet Secretaries. If at the end of the day they screw up, the President is going to have to deal with that. But you want to be encouraging that relationship.

Here's another example. It's very easy when you have an NSC meeting and the President says, "I want to think about an issue. I'll let you know tomorrow." So you go in at 7:10 in the morning. The President says, "I thought about the NSC and here's what I want to do." The President, being busy, is liable to say, for example, as the President would do, "So call Gates and let him know my decision."

I would say, "Mr. President, this is a chain-of-command issue. I'm not in the chain of command. It goes from you to Gates. You've got a phone right on your desk. If you push that top button,

Bob Gates will be right there, Mr. President. You should talk to him directly.” The President, being no fool, would always say, “You’re right, of course.” He would pick up the phone and he would tell Gates directly.

So one of the things you want is a national security team where everybody is in some sense advocating for everybody else and everybody is trying to help everybody else succeed, because if everybody succeeds, the President succeeds, and if the President succeeds, the country succeeds. That’s how it works.

**Brown:** But you also have to have Cabinet Secretaries who want it to function that way. It looked like that that wasn’t happening during the first term all the time that it should. There were so many press reports on bickering going on between State, between Powell and Rumsfeld, and so on.

**Hadley:** On the press reports, but I will tell you during my tenure, first, I would do that for Condi; secondly, I would do it for Don Rumsfeld.

**Brown:** But would they do it? Did they appreciate that?

**Hadley:** Sure. Look, Don Rumsfeld had been a Chief of Staff. He’s no fool. So I go at 7:10, the President would be worried about something going on at Defense. I would call Don and say, “The President is worried about X and Y. You’re going to see him later this morning; you may want to raise it with him.”

So Don, being no fool, would say, “Thank you very much.” At 9:10 he would come in and he would say, “Mr. President, Steve called me this morning and told me you were concerned about X and Y. The Chairman and I have looked into it. If you’ve got five minutes, let me tell you what I know.” That’s how you want it to work.

**Brown:** Right, but can I just press the—

**Hadley:** The National Security Advisor can do a lot to make sure it’s working.

**Brown:** As long as they want to. But some important things like the de-Ba’athification policy and so on, the story is that Rumsfeld instituted that as policy through [L. Paul, III] Bremer and left you and Condi out of the loop.

**Hadley:** No. Actually, the story is, unfortunately, a little different. The story both on de-Ba’athification and the dismantling of the Iraqi Army is Jerry Bremer taking action that’s somewhat loosely coordinated in terms of the Defense Department. It’s pretty clear on the Army that Doug Feith knew. It’s not clear how much Don Rumsfeld knew. But in any sense it comes to the White House as a fait accompli. That’s not the way it should work. Process fouled. No question about it. Stuff like that happened.

Condi’s going to talk in her book about the military commissions’ Executive order, which went from the Vice President and David Addington to the White House counsel, Al Gonzales, to the President, and the President signs it. The Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and the National Security Advisor, Condi Rice, find out about it after the fact. Condi says in her book that she

went to the President and said, “Mr. President, this isn’t the way it should work, and if it happens again either Al Gonzales or I is going to leave.” The President says, “You’re right. I thought the thing had been fully coordinated; there’s breakdown in the process.” There’s breakdown all the time.

The other problem you have in these bureaucracies is, the Vice President says in his book that he believes that Colin Powell and Rich Armitage would air disagreements within the administration to the press as a way of getting their views outside. I don’t know whether they did or not, but I can tell you that one of the problems in these bureaucracies is that they tend to be more protective of the prerogatives of the Cabinet Secretary than good Cabinet Secretaries are themselves. So in the heat of the disagreements, the temperature actually goes up as you go down through the bureaucracy rather than up.

**Brown:** Interesting.

**Hadley:** That’s been my experience. So if you give these guys half a chance, these bureaucracies will go after each other, particularly if there is some tension at the top, as sometimes there was. No question. Don and Colin had tense moments, as you’ll see from Condi’s book. She and Don had some very tense moments. That kind of tension gets magnified as you go down the chain.

One of the things you do is you try to mitigate that. There are a couple of things I used to do on that. I used to say to people, if you hear that I’ve done something that you think is nuts, do me a favor: count to ten and then pick up the phone and call me before you act on that information. That actually works pretty well. What I found, again, if the principals really know one another, someone would come into the office breathlessly and say, “Condi told her staff meeting yesterday that you’re wrong to be pushing X and Y, and what she wants to do is X. This is just outrageous, blah, blah, blah.”

I would say, “I’ve been working with Condi now six years, seven years if you take the campaign. I know her pretty well and this sure doesn’t sound like her to me. Let’s see.” Then you pick up the phone and you push her button and you say, “Condi,” or “Bob,” or “Don,” more Bob than Condi. “So-and-So is telling me that you said this in your staff meeting yesterday and you want the policy to be X and Y.” She would invariably say, “That’s certainly news to me. Who said that?” You can cut off a lot of those things if your communication with the principals is good. That’s what you need to try to do.

**Riley:** Your calculus of heat getting higher as you go further down in the organization, did that make the deputies’ meetings more complicated than the principals’ meetings were?

**Hadley:** [*To Ansley*] What do you think?

**Ansley:** Probably, because the deputies were a little bit further away from knowing what the President’s views really were. I think the further away you are from that, the more contentious. Although to add to what Steve was saying, a lot of times I was working with, at least for my first few years, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs over at State, who was my principal counterpart. There were many times that I would have to do with him exactly what Steve would do with Condi.

One of my guys would run in and say, “It’s outrageous what’s going on.” I’d have to say, “Let’s just call Dan and see what is going on.” So further down, absolutely. Even some of the meetings that I had, lower level, the PCCs, the Policy Coordinating Committee meetings, would be more contentious, and when they get too contentious you try to bump it up. I guess I never thought of it the way Steve is putting it, but I think that’s absolutely the case.

Whenever I would have troubles with my counterparts, I’d just go in to Steve because I knew that he and Condi knew what the President wanted, and if there was a misunderstanding they could resolve it.

**Hadley:** One of the things on your sheet, there’s a rap on Condi that she wasn’t able to knock heads together and get decisions and get a consensus. I think that’s not accurate, but it’s also the wrong model. I can tell you my model. When I became National Security Advisor, I remember earlier on there was a bunch of press people and they’re sort of looking at me like this kid is never going to make it. So one of them says, let me ask you this, if Condoleezza Rice, with her vaunted close relationship with the President, wasn’t able to keep the peace between the 600-pound gorillas, Colin Powell, Don Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, how are you going to do it? Not to put too fine a point on it, I said, “I have no intention of knocking heads among those 600-pound gorillas, no intention whatever. Nor is there any need because I have down the hall an 1,800-pound gorilla called the President of the United States who loves to make decisions.”

I also know these people. So if we have a disagreement, we’re going to walk down there to that 1,800-pound gorilla and we’re going to tell him what the issue is. He’s going to make a decision, and the one thing that I know about all the 600-pound gorillas, because I know them very well, is that when this 1,800-pound gorilla makes a decision, they will salute smartly and they will execute his decision. That’s how we’re going to do business. And that was how we did business.

That’s why those Tuesday afternoon meetings that Cheney talks about in his book were so important. These were meetings that we’d have every Tuesday. Sometimes we’d have one on Thursday, in my office. It was the Vice President, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, the DNI [Director of National Intelligence], the DCI [Director of Central Intelligence], the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and my deputy. Those were the only people. We would serve soft drinks, tortilla chips, and warm cheese dip because at 4 o’clock in the afternoon, especially if you’re older people, these older white males get a little cranky. I found that little taste treats made things go easy. In that setting we would take on all the contentious issues, all the sensitive operational issues. We would talk through those at that time.

Probably the most interesting set of notes in the government are the notes that Judy and Jim Jeffrey took of those sessions. Those were the only notes that exist. We kept them for historical purposes because those conversations, as the Vice President points out, were very candid, very respectful. We would get all the issues on the table. A lot of times it was Condi disagreeing with the Vice President because they have very different perspectives.

This tells you a little bit about the Vice President. At the end of those meetings when we would have a good discussion, it was almost invariably the Vice President who would turn to me and say, “Steve, this is a great conversation. How are we going to get that before the man?” which is

the President. We would then talk a little bit about do we want to bring it to the President as a formal national security issue in the Situation Room?

The downside of that is when a President gets in the Situation Room for an NSC meeting, he's in his decider mode; any President is. Do we want to do it in the Oval Office? That's a little more informal. Do we want to do it over in the Residence, maybe on a Sunday night when the President is very relaxed and really in a listening mode? We would talk about it and then I would then go see Josh Bolten. We would then talk to the President. We would try to get it in a venue and at a time that was most appropriate given the kind of conversation we wanted to go on.

But see, that, in my view, is how it's supposed to work. That's how I tried to work it, and that's how Condi tried to work it. So this notion that Don Rumsfeld has in his book, that issues simmered, that Condi tried to get a consensus rather than presenting issues to the President, that's not how the President remembers his first term. That's not how Condi remembers his first term. I can tell you it's not what we did in the second term. We brought them to the President for decision because that's how the system is going work.

The Vice President, rather than as he said sort of circumventing the process or having his own agenda or trying to substitute himself for the President in making decisions, all of that is not true. My experience with the Vice President is that he was the most protective of Presidential prerogatives and the President as the guy who would make decisions. He was very free to give the President advice, rightly so, but very protective of the fact that it's the President who is going to make the decision. The Vice President used to call me on the phone, particularly over the North Korea situation. He would get really exercised over Chris Hill and North Korea policy. He would give me an earful and then at the end he would always say, "But those are my views. Thanks for listening. You and the President are driving this train. I get that. I just want to make sure you know my views." You can't do better than that. I never recall a time when the Vice President ran around me; he always tried to work with me and through me.

I can't speak for all the things in the first term, but if we're talking about the normative role of how the system is supposed to work, I would say that was it. I think if there were problems in the first term, again, it's this role of the National Security Advisor, not undermining your principals, trying to encourage the President to deal directly with the principals. The Presidents of the United States tend to be dominant personalities. It's a little bit like wanting to please the teacher, so there is a tendency sometimes to say, "Mr. President, I'll go try to fix this for you." Sometimes you should see if you can get a consensus among the principals, see if you can get something worked out. But sometimes there's no substitute for the President fixing it himself and deciding it himself. You've got to be prepared as National Security Advisor to say, "Mr. President, this is something I can do. I can handle it. It's not worth your time. It will come out fine." Sometimes when the President wants you to do it you've got to say, "Mr. President, you've got to deal with your principals directly on this issue, you need to have a meeting and you need to make a decision." That's what you do.

**Riley:** The extent to which there are press reports about inefficiencies or whatever in the national security-making process in the first term, what I'm still trying to find out is, where do those originate then? If that isn't the reality as you experienced it in the first term, is it merely a press-manufactured—



**Hadley:** No, I'll give you some examples of how these things come about and it may sound trivial. We tried as deputies in the first term to circulate what we called SOC's, summary of conclusions, of the deputies' meetings. My view was that we would try to write what was the consensus and send them around, but if one or the other of the deputies had a problem they would call me and I would try to fix the language and recirculate it so we had a record of what was decided.

Well, Doug Feith could rarely resist the temptation to edit some of those SOC's, and Rich Armitage thought it was outrageous. He never tried to edit them. He used to be furious with me that I didn't just reject and squash Doug's edits to the SOC's. He thought it was an example of how the process was bending over backward to accommodate the Department of Defense. He would say it was an example of dysfunction in the NSC system. Well, from his vantage point, it was; from mine, it was I actually wanted to get the Summaries of Conclusion right. Doug is a very smart guy and many times he had a better formulation than I did and I was prepared to accept it.

I would always say, "Rich, you can do the same thing if you want." He said, "Well, if I say anything, we'll never get anything done around here." He was right too. So are there tensions between the principals? Sure. These are important issues. I love the press because on the one hand they will say, "Bush is surrounded by a bunch of yes men; they tell him exactly what he wants to hear." Then when you have an issue where people actually strongly disagree, it's "Contention and gridlock in the NSC system. NSC principals racked by divisions." You can't have it both ways.

I think the issue is having good, clear disagreements in front of the President so he can make a decision, and then saluting and carrying out that decision. That's what you want. But I think what happens, and what clearly happened over the course of the first term, is that some of those divisions became personal. They became personal between Don and Colin, between Colin and the Vice President, and in some sense between Condi and Don. I think less so between Condi and the Vice President, or Condi and Colin. It happens. The worse it got, the more it began to impair the decision-making process.

As those divisions start to spill out in the media, as a national security principal says something in his own office in the presence of his staff about another national security principal that you probably shouldn't have said in front of that staff and that gets passed on to the press, it then starts to feed on itself. That's what happened in the last year or two of the first term and it's one of the reasons why the President decided he had to make some personnel changes at the end of that term.

**Riley:** But because there was not an option, the change in Defense wasn't made?

**Hadley:** Initially he didn't have a good candidate. Then, of course, as the President says in his book, the revolt of the generals, retired generals attacking Rumsfeld for his management style and demanding that the President change him out. The President said, "Hold on here; this is an issue of civilian-military relations. If I start letting military officers who are talking out of school run a sitting Secretary of Defense out of town, that's not good. There has got to be a chain of

command and the military needs to accept civilian authority even when they disagree with that civilian authority.”

So once the generals start attacking him, I think in the spring of '05, the President says, and it's in his book, “I can't replace him now because this is replacing a Secretary of Defense in the middle of a war.”

**Riley:** Sure.

**Hadley:** So he initially couldn't find a substitute. Then it becomes more difficult for him to get rid of Don because Don begins to be under attack. There is, of course, the instance of Abu Ghraib, which is a first-term incident. I think the issue of replacing Don that history will have to judge is not in the second term. First it was that he couldn't find a good replacement, then Don gets attacked. Then it gets nearer the November '06 election and the President doesn't want to look like he's firing Don just to help Republicans do well in that election. You can decide how you feel about that; a lot of Republicans lost their jobs. A lot of Congressmen who lost their jobs in November 2006 wish the President had made a different call on that—they're pretty angry about it.

I think the issue on that is Abu Ghraib, when Don himself recognized that someone needed to take responsibility for what was done at Abu Ghraib and three times offered his resignation. Don was right to offer it. History will have to judge whether the President should have taken it.

**Riley:** Do you know whether Condi had made a recommendation? There must have been serious conversations about it.

**Hadley:** I was asked that the other day. I don't recall having a conversation with the President about it and I think I was informed by him that it had happened, but it was after he made a decision. Whether Condi had input to the President's decision in the first term, I don't know. The issue about Don resigning over Abu Ghraib, I just don't know.

**Riley:** Let me get one more question in and press you a little bit about there not being any suitable replacements. That stretches credulity—that's not the right word because it suggests that I'm questioning what I'm hearing.

**Hadley:** No, you'd think in a country of 300 million people how hard—One of the things you find is that it's very easy to come up with a long list for any of these positions, 30, 40 names. You can do it in a heartbeat. The short list of the two or three names that you're really prepared to give the job to is really harder than you think. Everybody has baggage and has down sides.

**Riley:** And I'm assuming that the continuity argument, given the fact that there is a hot war going on, is a pretty powerful factor.

**Hadley:** It certainly is.

**Perry:** Two questions, a broad one and a narrow one. The broad one takes us all the way back to the beginning of this discussion when you spoke about your knowing the mind of the President and Secretary Rice knowing the mind of the President. Can you talk about that? Talk about his

mind, talk about how he learned. You went on to say that he learned lessons, of course, as we hope all Presidents do from first term to second, should they get one.

What was his style of learning? What was his style in dealing with you and how you briefed him? Can you expand on that? How did you know his mind?

**Hadley:** I listened very carefully. What you see is what you get with this man. He's complicated but he's very straightforward. I say to people, if you want to know what George W. Bush thought, read his speeches. He's telling you. Every time he gives a speech. He's extremely smart and very quick to pick up information. You saw that in the intelligence briefings. He's very quick to see connections between events that may seem unrelated.

He has a very good memory. He has a better memory than I do. Again, you'd see it in these intel briefings. He could remember an intel briefing from two or three weeks ago. He'd say, "Is that the guy you told me about—" and he would start to reconstruct what he had been told two or three weeks earlier. So he's very quick at processing information and has a very good memory. He is also very good at trying and always pushing himself to see the significance of things and to see whether there's an opening for something creative and imaginative.

He used to sit in the Oval Office. He would be here, and the Vice President would be where Judy would be, and there would be couches on each side. When you'd have a policy discussion, most of the time he would be looking out the window behind the Resolute desk. I always used to wonder what he was seeing out there. What I decided was it was his way of almost physically looking past the details of what he was being offered and trying to think strategically about whether there are some opportunities out there. He was very good at seeing strategic opportunities, even when the foreign policy priesthood didn't, and being willing to seize them. My examples are things like [Yasser] Arafat is a failed leader and we shouldn't be dealing with him anymore. Bill Clinton gave him a great peace deal and he spurned it. He supported terrorism. And the President just decided I'm not going to deal with him anymore.

The foreign policy elite were shocked. He had to go to a G8 [Group of Eight] meeting. All the other world leaders thought he had taken leave of his senses. He was absolutely right. Arafat couldn't deliver. Now everybody just accepts it as orthodoxy. When Arafat finally dies, there is one day of celebration and then it's as if he never existed.

Similarly, his support for [Ariel] Sharon, calling him a man of peace, the two-state solution, being willing to do Gaza disengagement. These were very unpopular ideas that the President thought were really strategic opportunities for the United States, and by golly, he was prepared to go out, put his stake in the ground, and hold to it. Gradually events would occur and people would come around. Suddenly, over about six or nine months, it would become the new orthodoxy. That's pretty gutsy. He was prepared to do it. He enjoyed doing it. He rather liked going against the orthodox set of opinions.

**Brown:** Were these self-arrived at or were there people like you with whom he aired them out first, these big decisions?

**Hadley:** He did a lot of airing out and trying out things and seeing how they reacted. It's one of the reasons why we did not keep detailed notes of National Security Council meetings. He would

try on things. It's sort of "maybe we should do X" to see how his national security principals would respond. My concern was if we marked all of those things down, some of which were a little bit outrageous, and then someone started leaking those to the press, it would be like Reagan and "the missiles are on the way" kinds of statements. This was not fair to him because these were not really decisions—they might not even be ideas that commended themselves to him particularly, but they were ideas that he wanted to test out on his principals. He did a lot of that.

The other thing is that he's talking to a lot of people. He's going on rope lines, he has a lot of friends, he's talking to people on the Hill. He's getting a lot of information and he's processing all the time. He's processing, he's thinking about things all the time and spitting out ideas and trying ideas out on folks. So a lot of these initiatives are things that come out of a whole series of conversations he's had. An idea strikes him and then he'll try it out on people to see how good it is.

[To *Ansley*] How would you talk about him?

**Ansley:** I think I would absolutely agree with a lot of what you said. You obviously saw him a lot more than I did, but the amazing ability to make connections. I mean, you didn't have to tell him what was relevant. He knew exactly what was relevant and he could go all the way down the line on things. You had to be very crisp when you briefed him.

You could assume when you would go into a meeting with him that he has read the background material. Whatever was prepared for him he has read, and in a lot of cases had made notations. I always thought he was the smartest person in the room; he always showed it and he was very well prepared. So when I would go in to do a pre-brief it was one, two, three points, that's it. If he had questions, he would ask them because he had a grasp of the material.

When I first started working for him I was just amazed by what I saw because it was so different from the press reports that you would see about him. So different. So I would agree with Steve on what he said. That's just what I found; he's very quick, very quick to get things and to get to decisions.

**Brown:** Would he cut you off if you were rambling?

**Ansley:** He would. "This isn't my first rodeo," I think everybody heard that. [*laughter*] I'd go in a lot of times with our Ambassadors for meetings that the President would have with heads of state. You could tell when he wanted to move on, if somebody was rambling on. He'd just kind of look at you. We all had ways that we would just jump in and try to get to the point if the Ambassador wasn't getting it. These Ambassadors don't spend as much time with him. So that was the way I would deal with him.

The other thing is, he would always ask you a question that you wouldn't expect. I remember one time going in and briefing him on a phone call and he asked me the first name of a person who was just defeated in an election because he was friends with him and he wanted to call him. This was a foreign leader. I thought, *Oh, my God*. Let me tell you, I never again—I knew first names, last names, kids' names, pets' names before I went in from then on because he would always have something to ask. In his mind, the guy was just defeated, it was his friend. He

wasn't just going to call the victor, he was going to call his friend, who was the person he had a relationship with before. So I always found that very interesting.

But to go back to the discussion we were having before about no changes during the second term. Whereas the people at the top may have stayed the same, I think one thing that may have made things go more smoothly—I don't know because I wasn't there the first term—was that people changed below that top level. Doug Feith left; Rich Armitage left. J. D. came in, obviously, so I think at the deputies' level you did have a different set of personalities.

I can remember one of my first meetings when I had just come over as a senior director, and these were a level below deputies' meetings. I remember at the end of that we had a discussion; it was fine, OK. I remember at the end, Jeffrey coming up to me and saying, "Remarkable, this is the first meeting in three years that hasn't ended with somebody personally insulting someone." It got to the point where we just couldn't have these level meetings anymore, because the personalities weren't getting along. So I think that even though the people at the top stayed the same, some people changed and maybe those personalities made things go. I don't know.

**Brown:** In addition to personalities, what about views? Were the so-called neocons leaving more and more pragmatically oriented people who would have been consistent with Gates's type of thinking coming?

**Hadley:** This categorization stuff—I don't buy this whole neocon thing. Somebody asked me if I'm a neocon.

**Ansley:** Maybe you are? *[laughter]* Maybe I am.

**Hadley:** When you get down to discrete issues, a lot of the labels fall away and sometimes the positions people take are pretty unpredictable. Don Rumsfeld wasn't a neocon. Dick Cheney wasn't a neocon. They were very conservative folks, but this whole neocon thing, sort of the Paul Wolfowitz conspiracy and how Paul Wolfowitz hijacked the foreign policy of the Bush administration, I just don't buy it. It doesn't sort out that way because you're not having abstract discussions; you're actually dealing with concrete problems, with concrete issues. That tends to make hash of these kinds of ideological categories. That's my experience. There's an issue about principles, but at the end of the day almost everybody is pretty pragmatic about trying to solve problems.

I want to pick up the smartest person in the room point. He's the smartest person in the room who doesn't think he's the smartest person in the room, and it makes a big difference. If you think you're the smartest person in the room, then part of your time is spent proving to other people that you're the smartest person in the room. This President didn't care about any of that.

He used to have a little joke. He would say to folks if you're a C student you get to be President; if you flunked out of college you get to be Vice President; and if you're an A student you get to work for the other two. *[laughter]* I was an A student. Condi was an A student. Judy was an A student. He always felt that if I get smart people around me, I give them some direction, I empower them, and then I let them go do smart things. That was his view. It was not fire and forget.

It's one of the things that [Bob] Woodward got wrong and it's partly because the President—you know, word choice was not the President's strength. So he's talking to Woodward about the surge and he says, "I delegated all the surge to Hadley." Woodward takes this as, I just let Hadley do it and Hadley came back and told me when it was baked. No, no, no. The President didn't mean delegated, he meant, "I tasked it to Hadley." That is to say, I can't do the review that led to the surge. I'm President of the United States, I have to travel around the world, I've got to do all sorts of things, but I'm going to delegate it to Hadley. But almost every day when I came in he would say, "How's the discussion on the surge going? Has [Peter] Pace come around yet? Where's Condi?"

So part of it is a word-choice issue. He's very smart. He's very comfortable with smart people around him. He empowers them. But he also checks up on them, wants to know what they're doing by keeping tabs on it and making sure that it's going in a positive way. It's an interesting management style.

**Perry:** When we began this conversation you used the word "complicated." You described him as complicated and I wonder what you mean by that.

**Hadley:** I think he's a complicated guy in this sense. The one question I'd have for the President of the United States—and I don't know the answer to it—is when you've heard all the discussion, Mr. President, and you've left the room after you say I'm going to think about it overnight and you come in the next morning and you have a decision, what's your process between leaving the Sit [Situation] Room and coming in the next morning and saying I have a decision? That's what I don't know.

He does a lot of thinking. He's a guy who can be running on the track, listening to popular songs, and he's thinking about stuff. He's thinking it through. His decisions are a fusion of his experience, his views about human nature, his assessments of the people, other leaders, the assessments of people around him, his judgments about politics. I think it's partly his principles, his life experience. There's a big stew in there that he's processing all this stuff and he comes up with a decision. The thing I don't know is how that process works for this President. I'm not sure how it works for anybody.

With a lot of this stuff your subconscious stews about it and all of a sudden, boom, you get an answer. But that's the piece of it I never talked to him about, and I don't know quite what happened in that process.

**Riley:** How do you explain the disparity between the popular image of the President's intellect and what you're telling us as he is the smartest man in the room?

**Hadley:** One of the biggest problems we could never solve—he is so effective one-on-one and he was so uncomfortable in public settings. One of the things is he's a very physical guy; he's in very good shape. He's very mobile in his gestures when he talks to folks. Yet when he'd come up with an important speech and we'd put him up in front of a teleprompter and a podium, this very physical, very attractive guy would be one teleprompter leaning to the other, reading a speech. It just was not his medium. We couldn't find a way for him to deliver a speech that didn't make him prisoner of the podium and the teleprompters. The only thing we did was during

the 2004 campaign when he did some of these town meeting things where he'd be on a bar stool in a shirt, no tie, sleeves rolled up, holding a microphone, and talking to folks. That's when he's really good. That's what he's out there doing now. And everybody who sees him says, "Oh, my gosh, I never knew he was like this."

He did it in 2004. He wins that campaign and then it's back to being the President again. I think his press conferences tended to be—he always had trouble not looking defensive, getting combative, wanting to kid with and one-up the press. I don't think those worked for him. We would go overseas, for example, and we would have him meet with student groups and civil society groups and he would just be great. Even critical audiences, he'd charm the socks off them.

Dan Bartlett would say, "This is great, we've got to get this on camera." So he'd say, "Mr. President, let's put a camera in just for the first 10 or 15 minutes and let us record that." These were pretty low-risk things, civil society folks. You'd put the camera in for the first 15 minutes and he would just be formal and stiff. As soon as the camera would leave, the President would go, "OK, we got that done." Then the President would come out and I'd say, "Mr. President, you're so good, just let yourself go. It'll be fine."

But especially when the press got really hostile to him, he didn't feel that he was a great speaker and he would have this word-choice problem. He does it once or twice and that's the only thing people hear out of the press event.

**Riley:** Just like Gerald Ford tripping over—

**Hadley:** Right, this guy who is a world-class athlete, Chevy Chase is able to satirize as a klutz. They try to counter it by showing him skiing, and the one time he probably ever fell while skiing, he fell in front the camera; I remember that to this day. I think the President was just—we couldn't get him to let himself go and show the cameras the person we saw every day. So when he was on the cameras it was either stilted and formal and stiff, or the kind of bantering stuff with the press that works in the room but in my view never worked on the camera.

I think it's the biggest failure we as a White House staff—if you asked us what was your biggest failure in terms of the Bush years, we would say we never found a way to present to the American people the person we saw every day.

**Riley:** But that's not really your bailiwick. You've got a lot of very high-powered people whose profession—

**Hadley:** But it's all of our bailiwick because it's very important in this day and age, in terms of leadership. Being able to communicate and persuade is a terribly important thing, especially when you're asking the country to do very hard things.

**Riley:** Let me ask you this question, which just comes to mind as a result of what you talked about. You presumably were in a position to see him interacting with a lot of foreign leaders. I'd be especially interested in hearing your observations about his interaction with them, particularly if you can think back to the first encounters they may have had. I guess most of those would have been in the first term.

**Hadley:** I didn't see most of those. You'd have to talk to Condi about those. I wasn't there. He's very direct and he's disarmingly blunt, with everybody.

**Riley:** You've got a big smile on your face when you say that. I want the oral history record to record that.

**Hadley:** I mean, he does stuff like that, he just does. The first time or two he does something like that to a world leader, it takes the person a little aback, particularly if their English isn't that good. I know he did a couple of things with Angela Merkel early on. She hears it in English and she thinks, *He can't have said that*. She turns to her translator and the translator goes back and forth in German and she realizes he did say that.

But he's so engaging.

**Riley:** He gave her—

**Perry:** A back rub.

**Riley:** —a massage, at one point.

**Hadley:** Unfortunately.

**Perry:** But is that part of the personality? That didn't seem out of line.

**Hadley:** It's part of the personality.

**Ansley:** That's who he is.

**Perry:** It was just friendly.

**Hadley:** When you get used to it, as you do because he's very winning, it's fine. I think he and Merkel had probably the best relationship of any of them. He really liked her and she came to appreciate him, although he's very different from her. She appreciated his sense of humor. A sense of humor is *really* important for bonding among foreign leaders. If you don't have a sense of humor you're going to have trouble because you don't see these people long enough to really get to know them. He's funny and a little irreverent and very direct. It catches people unawares. He puts on no airs.

I mean, his view of the Presidency is that it's an office that you occupy temporarily. You do what you can for the country and then you leave it. The office is always bigger than the man. It's always borrowed furniture, it's never your own. That was always his view. It's an office that you occupy and you always show respect. So yes, you do wear a tie when you go into the Oval Office, not in respect for him as President, but all of us showing respect for the office of the Presidency and the American people that that office represents. That's his mindset. He puts on no airs. He's a very straightforward person, a very funny person.

It can put leaders off. But when they figure him out, and these are politicians after all and they do figure him out, he had very good ties with people. Now, the people he admired, though, were



people of principle who were willing to make tough decisions for their country. Courage, political courage, was really important to him, and secondly, trust. You don't want to tell the President of the United States one thing and do another. That was [Gerhard] Schroeder's problem. If you do Iraq quickly I'll be with you, and then Schroeder gets into a campaign and he starts campaigning against the war in Iraq and against George Bush, and his justice minister calls him a Nazi. Well, that's it for Schroeder. You lie to me, you lie to the President, you give your word on something and do something else, trust is a knockout factor for him.

Secondly, he liked courageous leaders willing to make hard decisions. So who were the people he really liked? [Alvaro] Uribe in Colombia, deciding that giving the terrorists sanctuary in 40 percent of your country probably wasn't a good idea and you're going to take the fight to the senior terrorist leadership even though it means they're going to try to kill you. That's the President's kind of guy.

[BREAK. J. D. Crouch arrives]

**Hadley:** J. D., we were trying to focus on the second term when you and Judy were deputies. We've done a lot of the process relations and the parties, first term versus second term; we went through a lot of that. What do we want to focus on while we have J. D. and Judy with us?

**Riley:** Again, I think the entirety of this second term will be of interest. I was thinking during lunch that I was enjoying the conversation we were having about Bush's relationship with foreign leaders. That's a simple thing to continue to the extent that you might have had, or the others had, experience in watching the President's interaction with foreign leaders. Maybe I should just throw that out for discussion.

**Brown:** Mr. Crouch had a lot of influence with the surge issue.

**Riley:** This afternoon I expect that to occupy a good deal of our time to the extent that we can.

**Hadley:** I was saying the President had a very direct style with foreign leaders. It took some leaders a while to get used to it, but it was very winning style. He used to talk about Merkel, how she really got won over by the President and they really had a strong relationship. I was also talking about how he liked leaders who were willing to make hard decisions on the part of their country, for their country, and I used Uribe of Colombia as an example. What more can you say about leaders?

**Ansley:** One thing that always struck me about the President and his meetings with foreign leaders is that he always seemed to put them at ease. He always played the role of, and I think very generously so, a host. They were coming to see him. I sat in on some meetings with some European leaders from some very small countries who were probably pretty intimidated walking into the Oval Office on their first visit to the White House.

He would invariably start with the direct style that he had, very folksy, just talking to them about their country. He would go into all kinds of questions about whatever it might be, some of the main things that were important to people on the street. What were the crops that they had? He just really got them talking. I think the foreign leaders left with the sense that they had someone they were meeting with who was interested in them, who was interested in their country, and who was really listening. I was struck by that, regardless of who he was meeting with. I've always liked that side of him.

**Perry:** What kind of briefings did he ask for before these trips abroad or having leaders come to this country? Again, how did he learn about them, how did he want to learn about the culture? What was your experience with that?

**Ansley:** Usually when he would have a meeting with a foreign leader we would prepare a memo, just a few pages most of the time. We'd go through the important things that were going on within the country. If there was a particular issue he wanted to talk about, we'd work with the embassy to try to come up with ideas and give the President background. Then the morning of the meeting or the day of the meeting we'd go in right before the meeting and do a prebrief. Usually what I would do beforehand if our Ambassador wasn't actually there, if it was a phone call or a personal meeting, I would talk to our Ambassador and we'd go through just a couple of the points, whatever might be, last-minute things that might have happened after the memo went in. So depending on the country, we would cover different issues. He would ask questions if he had any. That was kind of the general routine. What else, Steve?

**Hadley:** A couple of things. We'd give him a memo the night before, which he would have read, but when you came in, if the Ambassador was there it was very interesting because he would defer to the Ambassador. So even though it would have been better had he let Judy brief him, he would say to the Ambassador, "So Mr. Ambassador, or Madam Ambassador, what do you want to make sure I raise today?" He'd write it down. He got the input from the Ambassador, and the Ambassador felt central and part operational. Very smart.

On trips, we'd give him a big book with all the stuff you'd expect. I think he went through the book, but mostly on the flight over he'd get his senior staff and the State Department person, if one was along, in the room and then we'd go around the table because he liked to get stuff orally. He'd have the book open but he would get stuff orally from various folks around the table. The directness—I think it was at Heiligendamm, which was a G8 meeting in Germany, and at these meetings he would meet [Vladimir] Putin and Hu Jintao. His meeting of Hu Jintao is an example of how he worked. I think I'm going to get this right—he's sitting there with Hu Jintao and he says, "So, I've got some good news and some bad news, which do you want first?" This is the President of the United States. I've got some good news and some bad news, which do you want first?

And Hu Jintao being no fool says, "I'll take the good news." So he says, "I'm coming to the Beijing Olympics. I'm coming for the opening ceremonies and I'm bringing my family and I'm going to stay for seven days, and I'm not changing my mind."

Now, this was right at the time when Europe was starting to come apart and everybody said we shouldn't be going, and people were saying I won't go to the opening ceremonies, or I won't go

at all. There was about to be a snowball of let's not go to the Beijing Olympics. The President knew that would be bad for China and bad for U.S. relations with China. He's going to end that right there, in the way the President of the United States does by sort of jumping forward and saying I'm going, I'm not going to be dissuaded, it's the right thing to do and I'm bringing my family. I'm staying and I'm going to have a good time. So Hu Jintao is incredibly relieved; there's a big smile on his face. He says—and Hu Jintao would leave it right there—“Thank you very much.”

And the President says, “Now the bad news. I'm going to be meeting with the Dalai Lama. Not only am I going to be meeting with the Dalai Lama, but I'm meeting with him in front of television cameras, under the Capitol building. Now let me tell you the reason. I know you're not going to like it but I'm going to be meeting with the Dalai Lama and it's going to be in front of the television cameras in front of the Capitol dome. I'm doing it because the Congress gives him the Congressional Gold Medal and the President always comes to the ceremony and I can't not go. So I'm going to go and I'm going to be there in front of the television cameras. That's going to happen in a couple of months.”

Hu Jintao says, “Well, the Chinese people will not understand.”

The President says, “Look, I told you you're not going to like it, but I'm telling you I've got to do it. I'm going to have to do it.” At that point, what does Hu Jintao say? That's very much the President's diplomacy. Figuring out what you really need from him and giving you the most important thing, but also going to tell you the stuff you're not going to like that he's going to do because it's the right thing. That was an example of his approach.

**Crouch:** I was going to say the same thing Judy did. I was going to start by saying he had a way of putting people at ease, and I think that's exactly right. The only caveat I would say to it would be unless he had decided he was not going to put them at ease. I think that was a very rare occurrence. Obviously, there are always a few tense moments in the Oval Office.

**Perry:** Can you think of examples?

**Crouch:** I'm going to get to one, I think. I want to get some background from Steve on this.

**Hadley:** I don't know where he's going with this.

**Crouch:** I think there's also a corollary to what Steve just said. Not only was he direct and he delivered bad news directly in a way so that people could get it out on the table, deal with it, but he also really appreciated that in others. If a politician—they're all politicians—leader, who is also a politician, walked into the Oval Office and said I've got political concerns of my own, the President understood that. He listened to it and he factored it into how he would calibrate their public appearances and that sort of thing. In other words, he was not tone-deaf to other people's problems because he knew he had problems and he knew he had to deal with it.

What I think he disliked most was when you had somebody who walked in and said one thing in the Oval Office and then another thing in front of the cameras. I'm sort of groping. I know that there was back-and-forth on the question of the German position on Iraq, for example. You may have covered this earlier, Steve, but the issues of—

**Hadley:** Schroeder.

**Crouch:** —Schroeder and Schroeder's seeming acceptance of, "Look, we can work this out politically, it's not going to be a problem," and then going back to Germany and taking a very different stance, largely one—I don't know what was actually in his mind, but largely for what appeared to be political reasons. That sort of thing is something that you don't see the President doing to people. I mean, he'll tell a Hu Jintao, "I know this is politically difficult for you and I've got to go do it," but he would never have said, "I'm not going to meet with the Dalai Lama" and then go do it. It's just not something that I ever saw evidence that the President would do. So I think people came to respect that style, although there were probably a few who were a little afraid of it, a little intimidated by it, because it was so direct.

**Hadley:** He did the same thing with Putin on the ABM [antiballistic missile] treaty. He basically said, "Look, I'm getting out of the ABM treaty. I have to because I've got to be able to defend the country against countries like Iraq. It's not about you. I don't feel threatened by you. I don't think Russia is going to go to war with the United States. Quite frankly, I'm not worried about your strategic nuclear weapons. You shouldn't be worried about mine. We should both be worried about the Iranians and we should be cooperating on missile defense to do that. That's what we should be doing." He basically said, "I want to make this as easy for you as I can. So you tell me how to do it. I prefer if we both stepped out of the ABM treaty using the right of withdrawal clause. If that doesn't work for you and you prefer that I do it, I'll withdraw. I'd like to do it cooperatively with you, but you tell me what works for you and that's what I'll do." Putin went off to think about it.

**Crouch:** "But I'm not going to change my mind. That's the bottom line."

**Riley:** He's having this conversation with Putin in person, face-to-face?

**Hadley:** They have a couple of conversations about it. Putin finally basically says that "It's better for me if you go out unilaterally. I'm not going to like it, I'm not going to endorse it, but I'm not going to fuss at it too much." The President says, "Fine, however you want to do it, off we go." That's not a bad way to do things.

**Crouch:** And the Russians did do this. They said they didn't like it, but that's what he had said privately. But they didn't come out and say we're going to build missiles. The initial response was muted. I think it was noted by the press and others. So it was the right way to handle it.

**Riley:** My sense of chronology is a little bit fuzzy on this. Did he have this conversation before he makes a public announcement or does he go public?

**Hadley:** No, no. And that's J. D.'s point; he wouldn't do it publicly, that's dirty pool. You don't do that to politicians. He had this before he went public.

**Riley:** This was during the first term, right? So you're set with a team of people to sort of—if the conversation has already happened with Putin, I guess I'm trying to figure out what the purpose of your mission is going abroad.

**Hadley:** We're trying to sign up people for missile defense. That's why Paul Wolfowitz and I go to Moscow, to explain it to the bureaucracies and to try to convince the bureaucracies that this is actually something that's a threat as much to Russia as to us and we should be therefore cooperating on missile defense.

Two other vignettes, if they're helpful. Hu Jintao comes in April '06 and we refer to his country as the Republic of China and play the Republic of China national anthem. This, I'm happy to say, is the protocol department, not the National Security Council. This woman then gets up and starts yelling at him during his address. The President is fit to be tied. He's as pro-human rights in China as anybody, but you don't humiliate people.

**Riley:** That's the worst.

**Hadley:** That's not what you do. You don't humiliate people. So they take him back to the Oval Office and the President, again, not a lot of words. He's not a man of a lot of words. The President is stricken and he says, "I have to apologize for that, it should never have happened. I hope it will not be in the way of the conversation." Very direct, very sincere, very briefly, but very heartfelt.

Hu Jintao, notwithstanding the translator, gets it. "It's a problem for me, I'm going to have hell to pay back home, but I get this. They weren't setting me up."

**Crouch:** One of the things he used to do occasionally, he would spend some time walking folks around the Oval Office. Usually it wasn't on a first visit, but on a second visit maybe he would say, "This is why I have a statue of [Abraham] Lincoln in here. This is why this—" Again, it was all part of trying to say it's important for me to tell you what's important to me and what motivates me, and those kinds of things. So I remember he would do that. He did it to all creatures large and small. He did it with my kids when I brought them in, but he also did it with some world leaders. It was an interesting way he had of making people feel a little bit more comfortable in the most intimidating office in the world.

**Hadley:** That's exactly right. The other one that was, of course, in the President's book is the story of his meeting with the King of Saudi Arabia, who's about to leave over Sharon having Arafat cooped up in his office, and they talk about religion. The other thing, on J. D.'s point, he can be tough. For example, the exchange that's in his book with Putin at the Olympics over the Russian invasion of Georgia: "[Mikheil] Saakashvili is hot-blooded," and Putin says, "Well, I'm hot-blooded too." He says, "No, Vlad; you're cold-blooded."

I mean, the President could be tough if he needed to be. So you get the sense of maybe the warp and woof of leaders. The other thing that's terribly important is what he learned in office: he had a sense of what you have to do to be President and to lead a country, particularly in a time of difficulty. He really thought that he needed, for example, to help [Hamid] Karzai on the one hand and [Nouri al-] Maliki on the other, learn how to lead their countries in time of difficulty, both of whom were sort of thrust into their offices. That's what the much-maligned video conferences were. He thought we had a lot riding on these two leaders; he wanted to bond with them personally. He wanted to gain their trust. But he also felt he could help them walk through the challenges they faced and in some sense help them learn to become leaders of their country.

When you get to the surge, one of the things that has not been written that I thought Michael Gordon was going to write, and I'm not so confident that he is, is that the President of the United States was actually personally involved in putting all the key building blocks of the surge in place. One of those things was getting Maliki to agree to the surge, agree to accept our troops, agree that the surge would be going forward on a nonsectarian basis, which means no safe havens in Sadr City, in Baghdad, no more political interference with where operations are conducted. No more calling in and requiring that some Shiite leaders who had been arrested be let go, and to let it go to completion and to participate with Iraqi forces. All those things we need to happen before the military believes the surge will work.

The President is talking Maliki through this, through the citizens, urging him to give him a speech, talking with him about the kinds of messages that should be in that speech. And Maliki does give a speech and it wasn't good enough. So the President calls him and says we've got to do it again, bringing him along in a way. Then finally, of course, which again is an insight into this President, we're trying to do, at the end of the administration, the Status of Forces Agreement [SOFA], which allows us to keep the forces after the UN [United Nations] resolution. The September 7th Resolution expires, but this keeps them through December 31, 2011, but it also ends up having the withdrawal schedule and the strategic framework agreement, which is the framework agreement for our relationship after the end, after December 31 of 2011. These are very important agreements.

The CIA people are coming in for their morning briefings, almost every morning, and saying that Maliki doesn't want to do the SOFA, he doesn't want our troops to stay. They would cite intercepts and conversations with people who had had conversations with Maliki and they're telling him every day, "Maliki is not going to do this deal, Mr. President. This is a fool's errand."

So the President gets all this stuff. He says, "I'm going to raise it when I talk to the man." So we go down to have one of our biweekly SVTS [secure video teleconference system] with Maliki, and the team is all there. Then the President says, "I'm going to ask all my team to leave and I'd like you to do the same." So we all leave. The President does what he said he was going to do. He says, "Look,"—very Presidential—"we seem to have trouble closing the SOFA and the Strategic Framework Agreement. I don't have a lot of time left in my Presidency and I've got a lot of things to do, so if you don't want this agreement, tell me right now and we won't have it and I'll go do other things. But if you want it, then I need to know and we've got to tell our two sides to get this thing done."

Maliki gets it. He now knows the President, knows the President's style, and he says, "I'm telling you, Mr. President, I need a little help with some of the politics but I want this agreement." So for the President, that's the—as he would say, "The man looked me in the eye, he says he wants the agreement, so, by golly, let's go get the agreement." So the next day or a few days later, the CIA people come once again and say Maliki doesn't want this agreement. The President says, "Well, I talked to the man. I asked him directly. He says he wants the agreement." And he slams the book closed and he says, "So we'll see." He gives them back the book.

Of course, Maliki did want the agreement and he did get the agreement, and it was a good thing because it has been the framework of our relations. So that's the style of this guy. That said, he

didn't want to negotiate words or texts. In his view, that was not what Presidents do. **Riley:** There's a lot of laughing going on in the room right now.

**Hadley:** Condi has in her book one of the most painful incidents in my life. It was in Petersburg when we're negotiating some resolution, I think it was North Korea, and the President is fit to be tied because [Anthony] Blair wants him to go in and sit down and negotiate with Putin. And that's not what our President does. So he calls Condi and me over and says, "You've got to go do this because I'm not going to do it." That's not what he did. He engaged leaders, got agreements on principles, and other people did the details. That's exactly what you've got to do.

I think that gives you a picture of his relationships with these leaders. The other one, which is a great story and he gets no credit for, is [Pervez] Musharraf. He's also a man who is loyal. We all got frustrated with the limitation of what Musharraf could do in terms of cooperating on the War on Terror, the unreliability of the Pakistanis' military, and the fact that they would leak the intelligence before we could do an operation. Somebody would leak intelligence before an operation so the bad guys would be gone before we got there. There were frustrations.

But he thought Musharraf acted with courage after 9/11 to break and come over on our side and be willing to be an ally on the War on Terror. So when Musharraf gets into political trouble in early 2007—he fires the Chief Justice and is confronted by these demonstrations and by these lawyers, and he misreads the situation and Pakistan goes into crisis. Then Benazir Bhutto is killed in January of 2008.

In this period a number of people come and say to him that Musharraf is a liability, you ought to withdraw your support. The President says, "I'm not going to withdraw my support for this guy; he has been a loyal ally of the United States. Also, that's what we did with the Shah of Iran and look where that got us."

I can remember him saying to Condi, "You tell your people over there any notion we're going to pull the plug on Musharraf, that's not our policy." Well, what the President does do is he has a series of phone calls, kind of one a week over a three- to four-week period, and he steps Musharraf through the steps he needs to make for a free and fair election of the Parliament, which will then in turn elect the President. He says, "You've got to take the uniform off" and explains why that needs to be done. Musharraf takes the uniform off.

Then he says to Musharraf, "You've got to lift the state of emergency because if you have an election under a state of emergency, no one will think it's free and fair." There were a couple of other steps in there. He talks to Musharraf; Musharraf has confidence in him. He's making some very difficult political decisions. The last call is, "You've got to let inspectors in so they can see," and finally, "Mr. President, there has to be a free and fair election" because all the intelligence reports were coming in saying that Musharraf is going to steal the election. "You can't; it's got to be free and fair."

The election is held and it's free and fair, and Musharraf's party gets slaughtered and it's clear that he is not going to be President because the new Parliament is not going to select him. He calls up the President and he says, "Well, Mr. President, I did what you told me. I'm proud to say we've had a free and fair election. As I told you years ago, I'm going to preside over the

democratic transition in Pakistan,” and there is a democratic government. It’s weak; it has all the problems that we’ve now had. But the alternatives of either chaos or an Islamist outcome were not in our interest. Again, I think it’s a combination of the President’s vision, his courage, his loyalty to people, but also his ability to work with other leaders, to help them work through difficult political problems that they face that he has sympathy for, having been a President who also had difficult political problems.

That’s a pretty good portrait of his relations with leaders.

**Riley:** Let me ask a follow-up on that because as I’m sure you all know, the people who have studied these sorts of things are kind of up and down on whether the personal relationships with leaders is on balance a good thing or not a good thing. Were there instances where the President’s instincts missserved him during the course of the administration, where his gut told him this is a good guy and ultimately it turned out to be problematic for him? Or conversely where his gut told him the reverse and things turned out poorly for him? Do you remember any instances of that?

**Hadley:** Well, there’s looking into Putin’s soul.

**Riley:** That did come to mind.

**Hadley:** I think what the President says in his book is that when he was meeting Putin for the first time, he was trying to say Putin is new to the Presidency, new to the world stage. He wanted to have a decent relationship with him because he had things he needed to do with him, like get out of the ABM treaty, cooperate in the War on Terror, and proliferation and all the rest. He wanted to put him at ease. So he tells me this story about the locket that was blessed that’s the one thing that he cared about that survives the fire. He thinks, *Great, this is a personal thing that I can hook on to.*

So, rather than doing what Margaret Thatcher said about [Mikhail] Gorbachev, this is a man we can do business with, he says, “I looked into the man and I saw his soul.” A friend of mine says to look into Putin’s soul you need a flashlight and what you find when you get there is a KGB [Komitet Gosudarstvennoï Bezopasnosti] agent. [*laughter*] But the President says in his book that what he was trying to do was put him at ease, win him over, establish a good relationship. You didn’t want him sitting there and someone asks if you think you can trust the person, and you can’t say, no, I think he’s a liar.

You know, he could do that but it wouldn’t be very smart, would it? I think that was probably a right reading of Putin at the time, and it’s a longer discussion. Putin changed over the course of the eight years, and I think there are real reasons why he changed and how you saw that change. We could have an extended conversation about that. But that was kind of a misfire.

**Crouch:** I agree with everything you said, but by the time I got there I felt—the President had no illusions about Putin, in my view. This was painted publicly as a naïve comment. But I think you’re meeting the guy for the first time. You’re trying to establish a relationship with him, but interestingly, you’re also trying to set some standards for the relationship. I think that in some way is what the President was trying to do.



He was trying to say, “Look, I’m going to go out and say publicly that you’re essentially a guy that I can work with, so be a guy that I can work with and let’s demonstrate that.” So when—it became uncomfortable. I’m not saying it wasn’t uncomfortable at times, but when he had to pull back or say something that was contrary to what Putin would have wanted to say, he never pulled punches on the tough issues. So I don’t know, I never saw a President who I thought was in any way gaga over these guys, so it never became really personal. Is that fair?

**Hadley:** J. D. is on to something. He did the same thing with Sharon. Remember at one point in 2003 or 2004, he calls publicly Sharon a “man of peace.” Everybody just jumps all over the court. He’s doing exactly what J. D. said—I’m going to call you a man of peace and give you that cover. The implicit is, now you need to be a man of peace.

**Crouch:** Step up. Don’t make a liar out of me.

**Hadley:** Step up. I think that J. D. is absolutely right. There’s a getting off to a good start but also setting some expectations in the relationship. Again, the President has it in his book, he has these wonderful one-on-one conversations with Putin about democracy, and this is where Putin is becoming a different kind of Putin. Putin accuses him of firing Dan Rather. And the President says to him, “I didn’t fire Dan Rather.”

**Crouch:** If I only could. [*laughter*] I’ve got to take that one out.

**Hadley:** Then Vladimir also talks about you don’t elect your Presidents, the Electoral College elects your President. And he goes on about that, this is sort of justifying his own system. The President says to him, “Vlad, do me a favor. Don’t go out to the press and say those two things because they’ll just think you don’t know what you’re talking about.” Of course, sure enough, Putin goes out and has planted a question and he gets asked exactly those things and gives his prepared answer.

It’s a very freewheeling kind of relationship that he has with these leaders.

**Brown:** Now, before he meets with these leaders you prepare various kinds of briefing books for him. Is it essentially that you do it as National Security Advisor?

**Hadley:** Judy does it. The senior directors do it.

**Brown:** All right.

**Hadley:** I give them my sign-off and it goes into the President. He reads it, but he pretty much knows what he wants to do. He’s very economical. You can have a long list of things and we think—the way I would do it would take an hour and a half because I’d tell him what I was going to tell him, then I told him what I already told him. The President would sit down with these guys and he would go through these issues very quickly. He was very spare in his language, very economical.

We would always allocate more time than he would use because he had a way of moving through the agenda very comfortably but very economically, which is another thing about him. He’s very plainspoken. He uses simple words, subject, and verbs. If you’re not careful, you don’t

pay as much attention to what he's saying as you should. He's being very substantive and he's covering it, but he's doing his very straightforward ways. He's not a man of a lot of words but he knows what he wants and he knows the most economical way to get it and to get through it, and he would.

So at meetings he would get through what he needed to do sometimes before the meeting time was over. Of course, he was legendary with the speed with which he would get through dinners and lunches with foreign leaders. We decided that the record was a lunch with President Hosni Mubarak, which we think clocked a total of 24 minutes.

**Crouch:** I was working for Don Rumsfeld and he was invited to that. He came back and said, "I've never seen it that fast." He'd worked for three or four Presidents; he said it was amazing.

**Brown:** Apart from the style, which sometimes would produce comments that you didn't necessarily anticipate, were there any surprises in some of these meetings with foreign leaders in which it wasn't in the briefing book or maybe even contradicted what you had? Any surprises at all that you had to contend with or at least to adapt to?

**Ansley:** Not on big things. I can remember one trip he took—I'm blanking on the country, but the leader talked about Marine House. Do you remember this? We were in Europe, was it Romania? I can't remember which country, but anyway, it was a relatively minor issue and I remember talking to him ahead of time and he said, "It's not Presidential-level material. Let's not tell him. I think I can work it out." Then the leader brings it up and then immediately looks back at the Ambassador and Steve and me, and I thought, *OK, that probably wasn't the smartest thing*. But the President is a leader and resolved it. It probably wasn't the way the Ambassador wanted it, but the issue was resolved and we went on.

It was more minor things like that. I can't remember a big issue where there were surprises in these meetings or even in the phone calls. Can you, Steve?

**Hadley:** I remember—and Condi has it in her book, some of these issues like Taiwan—I remember early on, there's been a, what they called the "studied ambiguity" about whether we would come to the defense of Taiwan if attacked by China. So the President was about to do one of his first trips to Asia and he's doing a press event. I'm sitting in just to see how it goes. This is maybe in the first year of the administration. He's asked if the United States would come to the aid of Taiwan. "Absolutely. No question about it." Whew. So he comes out and he looks at me and I have this funny look, and he says, "Guess I made a little news there." [*laughter*] So he would do that, but usually he was pretty careful.

At one point there was something about what is one China policy, three communiques, Taiwan relations act, something like that, and he wanted to make a little change. Or maybe it was the Middle East peace, but it's one of these very formulated things. Condi thought it through and came up with a formula that he could make. So she says, "You've got to do this, and then you say this, and then you say this, and then you're done."

He says, "I don't think I want to do it that way." She says, "Mr. President, unless you do it exactly the way it is written on that piece of paper, you will set back U.S.–Middle East policy by

at least a decade.” He says, “All right, you win.” So in his own way, he knew when he had to be careful.

**Crouch:** Another interesting aspect is the line of questioning. I’m sure this is true of every President, but the briefing memo that you need the first month in the Oval Office is not the same as the briefing memo you need in the last month. You saw this with the President. You asked how did he digest the information and that sort of thing. By the time I’m there, my experience was more that he was as up on a lot of the issues as the senior directors were. He was pushing back with probing questions. When he would be briefed in the morning by the CIA folks, it was like that moment in Monty Python where the guy gets thrown into the ditch because he doesn’t know the answer to the question.

The President was firing back questions to these briefers, or sometimes we would even bring in the actual subject matter experts and let them sit down with the President. It was a fascinating experience because number one, this is the person they’re writing for and they’re sitting there thinking, *Oh, obviously we’re going to be able to show our stuff*. Well, he wasn’t trying to show his stuff; he was trying to get to the bottom of questions that were nagging at him. But he was actually showing his stuff. He was showing how he had mastered the material and was going after the kinds of issues that were important to a leader, so it was a real educational experience. That’s how I remember them. We probably didn’t do 20 of them, but we probably did ten or so of those.

**Hadley:** We tried to do a deep dive once a week and have the analysts come in. Part of it was because in the fall of 2004 there was a lot of leaking out of the Agency. The Agency would leak and the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* would print it. It got so bad that I actually shut down the interagency process for a month or two because I couldn’t be confident that what was going on wouldn’t end up in the newspapers and be used politically. It really soured the President on his intelligence community.

The intelligence community really has no constituent at the end of the day other than the President of the United States. As Jim Woolsey used to say, “The President is my safety. If somebody gets behind the President it’s an open field.”

So we felt we needed to try to rebuild the confidence that the President had in his intelligence community. One of the ways to do it was for him to actually see the analysts because he is very much a people person. He should get a sense of who they were, how they were thinking, and that they were trying to do the right thing and to give them a sense of who the President of the United States was that they were working for.

So that was what we were trying to do and it had that effect. He would always start with these kids, and a lot of them were kids; some of them were old guard. He would say, “Tell me about your career,” and how they got to be doing what they were doing. Then he would push them, and then in the end he would thank them for their service, then say, “I’m trying to force you to change my view. You need to call them the way you see them, but I need to understand why you think the way you think. That’s what my questions have been.”

**Riley:** Was this a problem for [George] Tenet?

**Hadley:** No, well, by then Tenet was gone and it was Mike McConnell. Mike McConnell thought it was great and it did great things for morale when people would come back and say, “Today I briefed my paper to the President of the United States.”

**Riley:** So there was not a sense at the top that this was somehow undercutting their authority or circumventing their—

**Hadley:** No, Mike Hayden and Mike McConnell were just terrific professionals and great to work with in that score. They encouraged it. They thought it would be a very useful thing to do. And we would do some of these deep dives with the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense there, so it would move very quickly actually into a policy discussion, which the intelligence officers could then observe. It was pretty fun.

**Crouch:** And they would take back what the burning questions were in that policy debate, which you’d think they would know. The things Steve said, the President would get a briefing from the intel community that said Maliki says this, that, and the other thing. He would say something like, “Well, I talked to Maliki and he said something different. Why is that not in the briefing?” In other words, my discussion with Maliki at least has the weight of some intercept or some other thing that’s going on.

So one of the things was to try to say there needs to be a feedback loop here; there needs to be a better way of feeding back but there also had to be a trusted relationship in order to be able to do that. Those are the two things that are key to that.

**Perry:** I’m going to sound like Justice [Stephen] Breyer at oral argument. I have a three-pronged question and I think it ties together a number of things that we’ve been talking about over lunch. How did the President, in terms of morale, deal with the depths of the difficulties in Iraq? First of all, dealing with Tony Blair, his relationship with him, and yet having to acknowledge that the war was becoming increasingly unpopular there.

I’m also thinking of, in traveling abroad and dealing with others, the shoe-throwing incident. And finally, to sort of double back and bring it right straight home and literally to Crawford, the Cindy Sheehan situation.

**Hadley:** You brought to mind a couple of other things about the President, which I may have already forgotten. So you want Cindy Sheehan?

**Perry:** Right.

**Hadley:** The dark days.

**Perry:** The dark days dealing with a leader like Tony Blair, not only just their relationship but how the President had to take into consideration what Tony Blair was facing on his domestic front because of the difficulties in Iraq. And then the shoe-throwing incident.

**Hadley:** I’ve forgotten what I wanted to say about this but it will come back to me. One of the things that’s interesting about this President is that he has a sense of the team, that he has a national security team. He leads the national security team but he wants the national security

team to be on board. It's interesting, he's very tough. He's willing to make a decision but he would just as soon have all the members of his national security team on board for the decision.

So one of the things we did on the surge, what a lot of the NSC meetings we had in December of 2006 were about—the President already knew what he wanted to do. He was running through a process to try to bring the rest of his national security team, particularly Condi and Pete Pace, on the page of where he wanted to go because he wanted to have everybody on board because he knew politically it was complicated, and executionally it was going to be difficult.

I can remember at one point Mrs. [Laura] Bush came in. We were all standing; he was about to greet a world leader and she came in and told him there was something on his tie or he shouldn't say something he was saying. He says to her, "Bushie, shh, not in front of the team." He's very conscious that he's in front of the team and he's the leader of that team. You would think the team is worried about keeping his morale up. He's more worried about keeping the team's morale up. So in the dark days, he felt the dark days personally. The toughest thing was those morning casualty statistics, which were overnighted. He would feel them; they would get to him.

He would sometimes say, "Find out, how could this happen? Are we not training our people right? Do we have the process wrong? How is it that 11 people could be standing around so that when a suicide bomb goes off they're all killed? Why is this happening?" A lot of it is, of course, because he spent a lot of time with the families of the folks, which were wrenching, emotional things. He's written about them. So he felt the dark days, really, very much. At the end of the day, he talks in his book about looking up and saying, "Hadley, we need a new strategy." So he feels the dark days and he feels the pain because he knows for every soldier who dies it's another family he's going to have to console.

But he's very strong. He's worried about the morale of the team and whether people are holding together. I can tell you we borrowed from his strength all the time; I'm not that strong. And you would borrow on his strength and determination all the way through.

So his notion of dark days, his notion of when you get more bad news—and you always got bad news in the Oval Office. For every new challenge there's a new opportunity, and we need to find that opportunity and cash in on it and make something happen that's good for the United States. He's a very optimistic guy.

I talked about how he respected people who had political courage. Blair had a lot of political courage. It was enormously helpful to the President to know that whatever happened, Tony Blair was going to be with him. But Tony Blair, of course, we get the 17th Security Council Resolution and Tony Blair comes in and says I need an 18th resolution. Nobody on the NSC team thinks we need an 18th resolution or should seek one because it's going to suggest that we don't think there's adequate authority in the 17 resolutions we've already got, and we may not get an 18th resolution.

Of course, at that point Schroder and Chirac break with us and we don't get it. But the President said, "Look, Tony Blair needs it. Tony Blair needs it politically at home so we're going to go with the 18th resolution." We do. We can't get it mostly because of Schroder and Chirac. Votes aren't there. We have to pull it down and Tony Blair has a vote coming in the Parliament.

The President calls him up; it's in the President's book. He says, "Tony, of course you have this vote coming up but you need to understand that it's more important to us that you survive in office than that you're with us on Iraq. If you need us to let you off the hook on your commitment to be with us on Iraq, I'm prepared to do it. You've been a good friend and we need you around and we want you to survive. So I'm prepared to let you take a pass on Iraq." Blair, to his credit says, "Mr. President, I'm with you on Iraq, I've been with you on Iraq from the beginning because it's the right thing to do."

**Crouch:** I'm not doing it for you; I'm doing it with you.

**Hadley:** I'm doing it with you because it's the right thing to do, and we'll win the vote. He does, and he wins it fairly handily. Well, you can imagine that only further endears Tony Blair to President Bush. This is a man of real courage. So he's very prepared to take into account people's domestic situations and to try to take into account and help in the domestic situations. But he really admires leaders who are prepared to do the right thing and who would bring their domestic populations along.

The shoe incident at the Baghdad press conference was really unfortunate. In retrospect, maybe he shouldn't have gone. Maybe we shouldn't have done press because you open the door to something that may kick you on the way out. It humiliated him a little bit, and it humiliated Maliki. Interestingly, he didn't feel it at all. He has one regret, and it's my regret. His one regret is that he didn't catch the second shoe and toss it back. But he sees it.

It's very interesting. The Secret Service guys come toward him, and he's not going to have any of that. He just signals them. He just takes command and he calms everybody down. Maliki is stricken. He introduces a little joke. He tries to not make it a metaphor, the final metaphor about our engagement in Iraq. That woman from AP [Associated Press] stands up and says, "Mr. President, you've just had a shoe thrown at you. This is the highest insult that anybody in the Arab world can do. What does that tell you?"

**Crouch:** Is this a metaphor for disrespect?

**Hadley:** Exactly. He says, "I knew she was going to do that and I shouldn't have called on her." But, again, the President is moving forward. So he goes upstairs for a meeting and Maliki is fuming. Maliki is angry, Maliki is upset. Maliki feels humiliated. I walk up to Maliki, grab the translator, and start trying to walk him off the cliff. The President is not upset, he's not humiliated. These things happen. This is not something you should worry about. Do whatever it takes to calm him down. Then I go tell the President that Maliki is spun up, and that's what I want to talk about, spinning.

Maliki is spun up. So when the President comes down—again, this guy, when he wants to be, there's no one more gracious. He puts his arm around Maliki and they go in to dinner, and there are reciprocal toasts at dinner. So you say, "Mr. President, sorry it spoiled your whole trip." "What do you mean it spoiled my whole trip?" He's a very resilient guy.

He does react to things and he can get spun up like any person can. One of the things we did at the NSC is we practiced spin control. Spin control of the President of the United States because a

lot of people, when you find out some bad news, there's a tendency to run and say, "Oh, Mr. President, I just found out, it's going to be terrible—"

**Crouch:** We're out of M&Ms.

**Hadley:** And the President doesn't know the context. Someone's come in—We're on fire!—so the President starts getting spun up. You know that pretty soon we're spinning each other; they're through the overhead. I always said our job is not to spin the President of the United States. Our job is to bring him information, flat, and if we bring him a problem we need to have a plan for getting a solution. That's what we do in measured tones. You don't want him spun up, you want him cool and collected. And he could spin, so we would practice spin control.

Josh Bolten was terrific at this. Josh would come in and say, "Mr. President, there's one small matter that I think I should bring to your attention. Hank Paulson just called and said we're probably facing the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression. It may even be bigger than the Great Depression. So your staff has thought about it and we've decided we're probably going to have a meeting about it, so Hank is going to come over at 2 o'clock." I'm exaggerating, but that's really what you wanted to do. Don't spin the President; particularly don't spin this President, it's not constructive. It's the one thing that we did have to manage.

**Crouch:** Don't get a bad fact in his head is one of the other things we said, and don't contribute—events themselves will spin up people. We're the decelerators. That's exactly right.

**Riley:** The first was, don't put a bad fact in his head?

**Hadley:** Yes, because he remembers it.

**Crouch:** One of the things is that this guy never forgot anything I ever told him. That's an enormous sense of responsibility. You long forgot it or you found out it wasn't true or something. So make sure that if you're walking in there and saying something that you really have a basis for saying it. He's in a position to use that bad fact to a really consequential effect. I know you're probably going to ask me if I have any anecdotes about it. I remember fearing it but I don't remember a particular one.

**Hadley:** I have one that I got into his head wrong, and he got it wrong three times before he got it right. Once it gets in there wrong, it can be hard to get out. Cheney was the same problem when I worked for him at the Pentagon. Cheney is also one of these guys with a phenomenal memory. You give him a bad fact and it could come out six months later.

Cindy Sheehan. As the President says, he loved being Commander in Chief. He had great regard for our men and women in uniform, particularly the people who were giving their lives or limbs in service to the country. So for that reason, Cindy Sheehan, the mother of someone who was lost in those wars, was to be treated with respect.

So when he sent Joe Hagin and me to meet with her in Texas, which we did, she handled herself very well. It was a measured conversation, it was respectful. I don't fault her at all about that. As it went on, some people began to think it was more about Cindy Sheehan and a cause for Cindy Sheehan, that that was becoming a dominant element of it. It was a reason not to engage her

further, but nobody wanted to confront her and nobody wanted to do anything other than convey respect, and I think we did that pretty well.

It's interesting. She said one thing. In all of these meetings he has with families of the fallen, which are very tough, and there were a number of them who blamed him and confronted him. But as he says in his book, they were wrenching and draining, but most of the time people were comforting him and he drew an enormous strength from that. There was also a sense of obligation.

One that stuck in my mind, I think it's in his book, is about a woman who he's consoling. They were about to leave and she looks at him and says, "My son has done his job, Mr. President, now you go do yours." So when you come to the surge in Iraq, we have to find a way to win this thing to justify the sacrifices that were made.

Now, Cindy Sheehan is saying at one point, "I don't want the President to say that we need to succeed in Iraq to pay our respects and honor the sacrifices made by those who went before, because I don't want my son's death to be used as an excuse to send other young men and women to their death." That was a point of view that she had and it's a legitimate point of view. It wasn't the President's point of view. The President's point of view was, we need to do everything we can to possibly succeed in Iraq. And that's what the surge strategy was about.

But at the same time he said to us—I remember one time in particular he said, "Hadley, do you think this surge strategy can succeed?" I said, "Mr. President, I think it can succeed." He said, "That's good. But if you ever think we cannot succeed in Iraq, you need to come tell me because I can't look these mothers and fathers in the eye and send their kids off to war and maybe to their death if we don't think that we can succeed."

So it's a very interesting balance that he's doing. Do everything we can to succeed, but on the other hand this isn't about trying, this isn't about best efforts, this isn't about covering as we withdraw, this is about succeeding if we can. But if we can't, I'm not sending our kids off to their death, which gets to my favorite story, which I've said and you've heard this story. It's his attitude about U.S. military and power, which is Yoda's rule from a *Star Wars* movie, the second film in the series, where Luke goes for training to some remote star and lands his ship in the muck. Yoda comes to him—you know the *Star Wars* movie, right? You don't? Does anybody know the *Star Wars* movie?

**Crouch:** I know the line you're about to quote and I've never heard this story.

**Hadley:** The premise of *Star Wars* is this thing called "the Force."

**Riley:** This much I know.

**Hadley:** Yoda says to Luke, "Use the Force, Luke." And Luke, he's sort of an adolescent, says, "All right, I'll try." Yoda says, "No, no. Do or do not. There is no try." That's the rule of the United States use of military force. If it's important enough for us to use military force and put our men and women at risk, we're going to succeed. We're not going to try and succeed; we're certainly not going to fail. We are going to succeed. So the President has an understanding of the use of military force.



The second thing is that he understands that when you're doing something hard, like Iraq, the President needs to will it to happen. And this is something a lot of people will criticize him for. They will say he's not introspective, it's all black-and-white, it's all two-dimensional. You bet. Once he commits troops, it's two-dimensional. It's, we are going to succeed. Every time he tried to give a speech on something other than the War on Terror it ended up being a War on Terror speech. I finally went to him and said, "Mr. President, why are we saying the same stuff over and over again?"

He said, "Hadley, you don't get it. We've got troops engaged; it's a nation at war. I have to make it clear over and over again that America is going to succeed. That's the message we need to send our enemies, that's the message we need to send our friends. That's the message I need to send to our men and women in uniform so they can go out every day and risk their lives to achieve this objective."

He also knew—this is this thing about the team—he needed to send that message to everyone around the Situation Room and the commanders on the SVTS from the field that he was committed and we were going to succeed. That's the glue. It's the President's commitment. That's the glue that holds it all together. If the President of the United States says, "I'm not sure that this is going to work. How long should we stay with this? Should we be thinking about fallbacks?" everybody starts saying that the guy is not committed so we'd better start to hedge our bets. These things are hard and they're painful.

So the second thing you realize is that if you're going to commit the country to war you've got to be absolutely clear that you are going to accept nothing less than success. Everybody will hitch up their trousers and they will get after it; that's one of his favorite phrases. "Well, Hadley, get after it. Let's get going, let's get it accomplished." That's what he understood.

Thirdly, he understood that if you're Commander in Chief, people are watching you and you need to be comfortable projecting that role as Commander in Chief. And he was. If you're not—without referencing to any particular Presidents—if you're not comfortable in that role, if you're not comfortable with everybody watching you, if you're not able to convey that commitment, you're going to have a hard time as Commander in Chief if you have to send our troops to war.

**Crouch:** I expect this is a really critical thing to say. When I was listening to your questions, this is what I was thinking as well. The *Washington Post* wants to believe that the speech the President is giving is responding to their nuanced critique of the administration's policies. He never once thought about that. He was thinking about who are my principal audiences for this? It was principally the troops, then their commanders, then our allies who were in Iraq—and we had lots of them in Iraq and Afghanistan—and then our enemies, some of them inside the country, some of them outside the country.

The Iranians were not helpful, as we know, in Iraq. So all of those people, those groups, were much more important in the hierarchy and they were all looking for a chink in that armor. They were looking for him to step back. How do you get good military advice if your military commanders think that you're running for cover?

You can say they're not supposed to think politically; they're supposed to be military. They're human beings just like all the rest of us. Everyone is going to look at a situation and make their own political determination on things, but what he was very good at saying is, "I'll deal with the politics; I need you to focus on what it is that we can do." Or, as Steve said, and I've had a similar conversation with him, "If we can't do this, J. D., tell me because I don't want to spend more blood on this endeavor." He was very clear about that. We got it through the whole the surge set of questions.

**Perry:** Where does that come from, for him? It sounds like we came back to our beginning this morning, which is just fascinating about your background in the Vietnam era. Where does the President get this "let's either do this or not do it, let's don't just try"? "If we're going to do it, let's succeed." Where does that sense come from?

**Hadley:** I think it's his commitment to the military. I think his view is that these men and women in uniform represent the best in us. It always used to be astonishing to me when people would say, "Well, you haven't—" The critics somehow thought that because we didn't raise taxes it suggested that we weren't really committed to the war and weren't calling on Americans to make sacrifices. The President would say that by committing our military overseas and putting these young men and women in harm's way, we're making the biggest sacrifice a nation can make, which is offering up and putting the best of your young people in harm's way. What higher sacrifice can you make than that? So if you have that perspective, you're not going to waste the best of what he calls the best and brightest of the American people. You're only going to use it reluctantly if the national interests of the country call for it, and then if you do it, you're going to succeed.

So I think for me, it was the history of the Vietnam War. I think for him, it was this very special bond he had with our military.

**Perry:** Does he bring that with him? Does that come in part from his father and his father's experience in World War II?

**Hadley:** No, I think it's him and his personal interaction with them. He came just a month ago to be with the senior staff. Did I tell you this?

**Riley:** No.

**Hadley:** We got the senior staff of the NSC together, about 75 of us. He came. He went from group to group making a couple of remarks. One of the things he said in his remarks was, "Do I miss being President? Yes, maybe. What I really miss is not being Commander in Chief. That's what I really miss." It was the connection between the honor and privilege of being the Commander in Chief of the best military in the world and those young men and women who represent the best of our country.

**Perry:** It's visceral for him?

**Hadley:** It is. It's personal, it's visceral, it's a connection he feels he has with them. It's not that cerebral for him, it's really right there and it makes it a lot more authentic in a way. I think it

comes from that, not the historical experience of Vietnam. I may be wrong, that may be there too, but I think front and center is this sort of visceral—

**Crouch:** I think it was visceral, but I think one of the things that was interesting, though, is that during the Presidency he's reading books about Presidents.

**Hadley:** That's true.

**Crouch:** What he's focusing on is common problems that Presidents have, and war is a big one. He probably read three or four books on [George] Washington, three or four books on Lincoln. All these guys had really dark days and really tough decisions to make and were very good at messaging the troops. I think he came at it instinctively; I agree with that. He also was interested in how the people who had gone before him had dealt with those problems. I don't know that there's any particular guidance that came out of that reading, but there was a general understanding of how the great men dealt with these issues before, in different contexts but with a lot of similarity. He was very interested in that.

**Hadley:** One of the things that J. D. talked about was the Oval Office tour. One of the stops on the tour, of course, is the picture of Lincoln that's on the wall. He says something like this—and in the Bush Library he has actually narrated his standard Oval Office tour—"Every President is allowed to put a picture of their favorite President on the wall. That's a special dilemma for me. So what I tell people, of course, is that a picture of my father has the place of honor in my heart but it's Lincoln who has the place of honor on the wall."

Lincoln was also a wartime President, also a President who was in deep trouble politically, and but for [William Tecumseh] Sherman taking Atlanta in the summer of 1864, he would not have been reelected. I remember meeting with the President and his national security folks in the Oval Office after the first Presidential debate in 2004 in which the President does very poorly. It was very interesting to see him because I had never seen him flummoxed or uncertain except for that moment.

He comes in and he says to everybody, "Well, Laura and I thought I won the debate last night but nobody else seems to think so." He just sort of blurts out, throwing his eyes up, and he says, "We can't lose this thing, it's just too important. We just can't lose this thing. We've got to win it." You could see him having had a real setback and facing the prospect, I think for the first time, of really thinking he could lose the reelection, like Lincoln must have thought in that summer of 1864, and thinking, *I just can't do it*. He knew what he thought [John] Kerry would do if he were President.

He rallies himself and beats him in the election. The other similarity with Lincoln was, he says, "During the darkest days of the Civil War, Lincoln—" One of the books he read said—and you probably read this book—he had two core constituencies that stayed with him in all accounts, the religious revival of the time, the religious revivalists—

**Crouch:** Based on the slavery issue, basically.

**Hadley:** —and the men and women in uniform. They stayed with the mission. In the same way, interestingly, those young men and women in Iraq have stayed with the Iraq mission through the

darkest days of 2005-2006. So there are a lot of similarities. But J. D.'s point—I didn't read a book during my eight years. I don't know where the guy got the time. Presidents do, and they should; this President did.

**Crouch:** Lots.

**Hadley:** And he got a lot of strength and a lot of insight from it.

**Riley:** We wanted to spend some time talking about the surge while you were here. I guess if we could go back to the earliest roots, at what point do you, coming into the second administration, start thinking that there has got to be a substantial revisiting of policy in Iraq? If you could trace us through maybe the critical decision points and the process that was set into motion, we'd like to hear as much of that account as you could give us.

**Brown:** But also just to connect the two, what we were talking about, President Bush's attitude toward the war. You portrayed it as a binary thing for him. In other words, we've got to have a commitment to succeed. We're not going to middle ground the whole thing. Yet there were people who he respected, like General [George, Jr.] Casey and others, who had a different strategy for it. It was not the surge.

**Hadley:** The comment is, we've got to have a commitment to succeed but then we need to have a strategy for how we will succeed.

**Crouch:** Right, how to do it.

**Hadley:** How to do it. Let me start by polls. The President's polls go down, come up a little bit through the election, and then they go down again and stay down. That's very tough for the President.

**Riley:** Why, because of his self-image?

**Hadley:** He says to people, "I'll manage the politics." In order to manage the politics you have to have the support of the American people, and the polls are telling the President he has lost the support of the American people on Iraq.

**Riley:** So it's not just the self-image, it's instrumental.

**Hadley:** No, it's his capacity to lead. But also he is a politician. In some sense, some people think polls are their report card and if so, he's not getting a passing grade. Now, initially we talked about limitations of the President. We talked about communication skills; we talked about not letting him get spun up. The other thing was actually in this area. He lost the country in Iraq. It was a problem for him as a leader. I think it hurt him personally. He's a hugely successful politician. Partly his reaction, rightly, was you can't trust the polls, it depends on how you ask the question. It depends on the sample, how many Republicans, how many Democrats are in the sample. He pushes back a lot of that.

Finally, Dan Bartlett says, "Mr. President, you can talk to Karl all you want about how the polls aren't right, but the American people are telling you that they don't support the war in Iraq and

we have to deal with that.” It was always something that was obviously troubling the President. One of the reactions he could say was, “I don’t read the polls.” He was saying, look, I know the polls are down but this is important and we have to see it through.

A couple of times, after those speeches when he would have said that in a press conference, “I don’t read the polls,” I went back to him and said, “Mr. President, I don’t do your politics, I’m your foreign policy person, but I have to tell you, I don’t think that’s a good answer because some Americans hear that, I don’t read the polls, as suggesting you don’t care what they, the American people, think. I know that’s not what you’re saying”—he said, “That’s right”—“but that’s what some people are going to hear.”

So we’ve lost the support of the American people. It’s important; we think it’s going to succeed and it informs the President about how we need a new strategy because A, our strategy isn’t succeeding, but B, we need a new strategy. Because his belief is that if you have a commitment, and it’s important, and you have a strategy that the American people think makes sense and that’s making progress and succeeding, they’ll give you the time. And I think that’s right.

The American people had given up the war. Some of them thought we probably never could have won the war, but they somehow intuitively knew that how the war came out mattered. The whole point of the surge was to get a strategy that would work, but would also start demonstrating to the American people that it would work so we could in some sense buy back the support of the American people to pursue the surge to success. I used to say to folks that we’re going to buy the support of the American people back by the drink.

If we have a new strategy and it works, if it looks like it’s working after a month, they’ll give us another month. If it looks like it’s working after two months, they may give us two months. And we did. We bought back enough support to beat down pressures by the Congress to prevent the surge, and ultimately we brought back enough support to see the surge through all the way through to December 31, 2011, interestingly enough, when the last troops would come out.

That’s kind of the context of it. So the issue is, when do we decide, why do we decide we need a new strategy? I have my view on that, but you’re going to lose these two guys [Ansley and Crouch] soon, so why don’t you start a series of questions and let’s get their answers for the next 25 to 30 minutes, and then we’ll go back and get mine.

**Riley:** OK, J. D., do you remember when you were first approached about revisiting the policy to see if something needed to be different?

**Crouch:** Yes, it was really in the early summer of ’06. I hope you understand that this was a long time ago in my—I live in dog years—One thing about the President, and you can say that this is a strength and you can also argue it’s a weakness, is the strong sense of loyalty that he had, and in particular the loyalty to the men and women who were fighting and loyalty to his commanders. He believed in them. He was constantly asking himself and them, are we giving you what you need to succeed?

I believe Iraq is actually a mosaic war, and at different times there were different problems, but things were starting to look fairly good. We got through the constitution, we got through a great election in the end of ’05. I think there was a lot of sense coming from the field that we’re

turning the corner. Then we had the golden mosque bombing in February '06. That to me was maybe a point at which we all should have realized that the significance of that, the impact of that, was going to be a lot greater than it was. Again, this is my view. I don't know whether these guys share it or not, but I look back and I think I missed that.

I partly missed it because our government and the Iraqi government initially responded fairly positively. I think General Casey believed things were under control. But what it really set ablaze underneath all this was a level of sectarian violence that we had not seen. This just intensified week after week after week until we get into June. You'll also remember that the government formation issues were there as well. So even though the election had happened in, was it December?

**Hadley:** Yes.

**Crouch:** The government wasn't formed until May. So a lot of the positive aspects of what had happened the year before politically with the constitution and the like dissipated in that as the sectarian violence is rampant. In the summer, a lot of people asked, why did the President end up putting a strategy in place, announcing it in January of '07, not earlier? I think part of that explanation was a sense we thought we had come off a politically good year. That's what we were hearing from the field at the time, and that they thought that the existing strategy would work. We underestimated the impact of the sectarian violence.

I tend to think that the best you probably could have done was to back it up three to six months in terms of when you might have recognized it. So in the summer of '06 the President asked Pete Pace and Condi to do independent reviews, and Secretary Rumsfeld in the same context, and they begin working on various pieces of this. He also, of course, turns to the NSC. This was not the formal review that started really in the fall, but this was the beginning of looking at our new strategy. This was in some ways, I think, sidetracked a little bit by the fact that we ended up focusing a lot in the early summer on government formation, getting the relationship with Maliki right, and the like.

I remember, for example, in June we had a meeting up in Camp David where we were going to talk about the strategy. The meeting basically got hijacked, for all the right reasons. There were a handful of people in the room who knew this. I don't know how I ended up being one of them, but the President basically excused himself for the evening, got on an airplane, and flew to Iraq. The next morning when we all woke up and we were going to have Casey talking to us in Iraq, we had Casey talking to us in Iraq with the President sitting next to him.

**Hadley:** And the whole Iraqi Cabinet.

**Crouch:** And the whole Iraqi Cabinet was there. This was, in some respects, an important "kumbaya" meeting where Iraqis in the newly elected government—and the President is standing there with his counterpart, "I'm proud to be here with my counterpart," forming a sort of a joint national security team. Now, needless to say, a lot of that was less about strategy and more about getting off to a good start with this new government.

There was a little bit of dissipation, if you will, and at the same time Condi's review was ongoing and Pete Pace's review was ongoing. So it wasn't really until late August or the early fall when

there was the more formal review. We were in the Oval Office and the President said to Steve, “You’re going to be doing this review” and basically pulling together the inputs and taking charge of it. He turned to me and said, “You’ll be doing the deputies’-level work on this.” That’s how I remember it starting.

It also then began with both of us going to Iraq on separate missions. Steve met with all the political leadership, Sunni, Shi’a, Kurdish and the like, inside and outside the Green Zone. I was focused more on the military side of it, meeting with our military leaders inside and outside. I met with General Casey and General [Peter] Chiarelli and those guys, but I also went out to Anbar, up to the Kurdish area, and down into the Shi’a area. We met with the British military commanders.

Just a personal vignette: that was an important trip for me. First of all, it was my first time to Iraq and I felt very limited in my knowledge, not having been on the ground. I was reading hundreds of briefing papers every week, but until you’re on the ground it’s not the same.

Secondly, I took a lot out of it because I didn’t see the doom and gloom in the faces of the military people I was talking to. I’ll give you an example. I was out at Anbar and I met with the highest level person in the room, who at that point was probably a one-star [general], but I met with people all the way down to noncommissioned officers, these were Marines. The head of the intelligence back here had just testified in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee that Anbar was lost. I said, “What do you think about that?” They said, “What? Anbar is not lost.” They threw a map out on the table and they go, “Look, it’s real simple. Anbar is a big place; it’s really hard to control. We don’t need to control the whole thing. There’s a river that runs through it, you may have heard of it, and there’s a road that runs down the river. If you control the whole thing, you can control this thing. We can do this but we only have enough force to do about two-thirds of it at a time, and wherever we aren’t, the enemy is.”

Then they started talking a little bit about the awakening and how difficult it was to work because you never knew whether the guys were shooting with you or against you. But there was something going on there. So I took a lot of that back as evidence that there was at least a will on the ground to win. I also came back with a strong feeling that our troops had bonded with the Iraqi mission. They bonded with the Iraqi Army. They felt like they had something to see through to completion. I didn’t draw a lot of conclusions from that at the time, but I thought it was important input, that this was not a we-don’t-trust-these-guys kind of environment.

I have to say that part of my thinking going over there was also this idea of, *Is this like Vietnam or not?* I didn’t know what Vietnam was like. All I knew was what I read about it, but I did feel that there were important differences.

**Hadley:** I want to interject one thing. One of the things that’s important about this is that in the surge decision, the President has a question before him. Do I do Baghdad, which was my big problem, where things were deteriorating, and then later do Anbar, which is my big opportunity, where we might actually turn the Sunnis against al-Qaeda, or should we do them together? J. D. was a big proponent of doing them together because he saw from his time out there the potential of turning Anbar around.

So the President, hearing that and views from others, decides he'll do both. He will both address his biggest problem, Baghdad, but also his biggest opportunity, Anbar. I think J. D. had an influence on the President, having been there, to say this can really turn it for us. It's an example. You say you can't jet in for three days and learn anything useful. Well, he jetted in for three days and learned something very useful that had an impact on a decision that the President made.

**Riley:** Was what you were hearing among the Iraqis in any way consonant with what he was hearing from the Americans? In other words, were the Iraqis pushing for more troops or were they pushing you to get out? Are you getting any kind of consensus view from them about what the future ought to hold?

**Hadley:** It goes like this, and let me just fix the dates. In February '06 we were holding our breath. I'm on the Sunday shows a week or two after and saying the Iraqis have looked into the abyss of sectarian violence and civil war and they decided to step back, because they didn't start going right at it. We thought, *Gee, this is an indication that this may be more resilient than we thought*. But, of course, beginning probably in April, the violence starts up. It's because [Abu Musab] al-Zarqawi, the chief al-Qaeda guy in Iraq, has been trying to provoke the Shi'a to retaliate against the Sunnis by attacking them. Because of [Ali al-] Sistani, the senior Shi'a cleric, the Shi'a had been restrained. But after the Samarra bombing, what becomes clear in April and May is that the Shi'a started to organize in terms of militia and death squads and are going after the Sunnis, and it's beginning to descend into sectarian violence. Zarqawi has finally succeeded in his strategy.

There isn't sectarian violence all over the country—as George Casey says at the time, 80 percent of it is within 100 kilometers of Baghdad—but the problem is that the whole country is watching Baghdad descend into violence. That's the problem, they're losing their capital. The Camp David review in June misfires. We try another one; we have a session that Woodward has written about where we have Casey and Zal [Khalilzad] and Don Rumsfeld on the SVTS, and in the name of the President I'm asking some very tough questions about where our strategy is going. Woodward talks about that. It's after that in the August/September time frame that these informal reviews start. Pace is asked by Don Rumsfeld to do a review. Condi is doing a review. We're doing an NSC review.

In the first week in October I ask J. D. to ask Bill Luti to do a briefing, just for J. D. and me, about what a surge would look like. Luti does. What's the rationale, what's the strategy, how would you get forces—that tells us that the surge is possible. Then the formalizing of the review comes in November, which J. D. leads as deputy. He's told that by the Sunday after Thanksgiving the President wants to sit down and see options for a new strategy, and that's what leads into the process for that Sunday through the next two years.

**Brown:** You guys, by around the third week in November, were already convinced that the surge was the way to go?

**Hadley:** Our little group, Meghan O'Sullivan and Brett McGurk and Bill Luti, and I think probably J. D., although he can speak for himself, were pretty pro-surge in that period. None of the other options worked. We had a session with Phil Zelikow and Condi and John Hannah from



the Vice President's office to go through a range of options. The other options—they're in the President's book, they're in Woodward's book—didn't really seem to make a lot of sense.

So our team is leaning toward it. I've got two things. What I know, the direction they're heading, but I'm pushing back on them because my view is that we have one last change in strategy left. The President can give a speech saying there's a new strategy in Iraq to the deafening silence of the world. You can only do that once; you can't do that twice. So this is our last shot. As I said to Meghan, we'd better be right.

Secondly, I didn't want to jam the process. It's not my view about how the NSC works that we run a process here, but then we have a faux process because we're whispering in the ear of the President of the United States. So I'd say to J. D. and Meghan that I want to make sure that there's a surge option in the list of options that goes to the President, but I want it to be vetted in the normal way as part of his interagency process. The surge needs to be worked through by everybody, like all the other options, so that everybody can have their shot both for and against. That's what J. D. produced, a review that had a number of options including the surge.

**Riley:** When you say that you wanted him to look at the surge, the germ of the idea, did it originate with you? Were you thinking, *OK, I've got the logical possibilities: either cut things, or they can stay the same or increase?* Or was there a strain of analysis out there or a dependent actor pushing this?

**Hadley:** It's a little bit how you think innovation comes in public policy, and I have a view on that. It's not like science, where one person thinks of something that nobody ever thought of before and it's right. And they patent it and they make a gazillion dollars and they become Steve Jobs or whatever. You know, this is policy. This is a bunch of people with roughly the same interests. We are all Americans, looking roughly at the same data, you're going to come up with roughly the same set of options: do more, do the same, do less, pack it in. For any problem, those are the four options. So surprise, surprise: we had more, which was the surge.

**Riley:** Right.

**Hadley:** Same, which is largely the military; less, which was the State Department; and go home, no takers. That's not going to be talked about in the Bush administration.

**Riley:** It was not an option.

**Hadley:** It was not an option at that point in time. So, what is the logic that begins emerging in a lot of people's minds, our staff, the President's mind, Jack Keane and [Frederick] Kagan over in AEI, in the minds of somebody like John McCain and [Joseph] Lieberman and [Lindsey] Graham, who were the big supporters in the Congress of this. Very simple. Don Rumsfeld and [John] Abizaid and Casey all believe that you can't win this militarily. You cannot kill your way to peace. At some point there has to be a political process of reconciliation among the Iraqis, and when that happens the violence will go down. And that's true and that's what ultimately happened.

But what the President begins to think—and we begin to think—is that the violence is now so high and the prospect of a meltdown in Baghdad is so great, that it has frozen the political

process. Everybody thinks a civil war is coming and they're all starting to go back into their sectarian holes. So the kind of political process you need of reconciliation, to bring the violence down, isn't going to happen if this violence keeps going up. So you can say yes, Abizaid, Casey, Rumsfeld, ultimately you're right, but you can't get there from here.

In order to get where you want to go you need to have a surge and a new strategy that gets the violence down, gets people feeling more secure, and that will provoke the kind of political process that in the end is the route to get the violence down and to stabilize the situation. So we came up with this idea of the surge as a bridge between where we are now and where we wanted to be and where Casey and Abizaid and Rumsfeld wanted to be, but where we couldn't get to with the escalating level of violence. That really was the concept.

The other piece of it was we couldn't afford a failure. Don had been saying for months, "It's time for us to take our hand off the seat of the bicycle." At one point the President says, "OK, Don, I'm prepared to take my hands off the seat of the bicycle, but if the bicycle starts to fall you've got to grab it because we can't afford for the bicycle to fall and for us to start over again." It sounds sort of homey, but that's the message that the President was beginning to say. We can't let this descend into violence. We've got to grab hold of the seat again. Secondly, we can't get to where you want to go, Don, without getting the violence down, and the only way to get the violence down was for us to change the strategy and put in more troops.

That's the logic that at the end of the day gives you the surge. It was viewed as a temporary thing. It was viewed as a bridge. Everybody forgets that when [David] Petraeus and [Ryan] Crocker come in September and report on a measure of real but fragile progress—I guess he said we made real progress on the security situation but it's still fragile. He also announced that the first combat brigade that's supposed to come out in December will not be replaced. So we've already actually started to neck down a little bit, but we've pushed the withdrawal out as far as we can so that the violence comes down.

The violence does come down dramatically. So that's what I would say is the kind of thinking that brought people to the point that the surge was the right approach. The military was reluctant because they thought it wouldn't work unless some things happened. One, the Iraqis needed to be on board, which meant the Iraqis had to contribute troops. It had to be nonsectarian. It was all the things I said earlier in the interview: we couldn't allow the people around Maliki to intervene, to provide safe haven so we couldn't go into Sadr City to release Shi'a that had been picked up; that would have been involved in terrorism and the like.

So one, the Iraqis had to have a surge that matched our military surge. Secondly, there needed to be a State Department surge of civilians who would come into the areas and try to help stabilize the situation and put together the reconciliation between Sunni and Shi'a. Third, at the end of the day, and this is what gets worked out when the President goes to meet the Joint Chiefs, the President needs to commit that we're going to expand the size of the Army and the Marine Corps so that our captains and lieutenants don't see these 12 months in theater, 12 months home, for the next three or four years.

So when you put those three things in place, the military then signs on for the surge. Finally, as I mentioned, the President brings Maliki on board with the surge and Condi comes around. She

basically says the price for her is you can't surge, that is, put in more troops, if you just continue doing what you're doing. That's why the change in strategy is even more important than the surge is. One of the things you ought to put into the transcript is the declassified briefing charts that came out of J. D.'s deputy group that set forth the change in strategy that was the surge. They are still the best single thing if you want to capture what was different in the surge. It's captured in those briefing charts in a very systematic and orderly way. I think you ought to find them and append them. We made them public; they're available on the Web.

**Crouch:** Early on when we had that second meeting—I think we were in the Roosevelt Room for that; I remember sitting in the back—one of the questions was, was there anything to surge? There were some in the military—it was even in the press—who were saying we're out of Schlitz. There's nothing more we can do. So part of the Luti briefing was to ask the question, not *should* we do it but *could* we do it? But that's an insufficient question because it doesn't answer the question to what end, to what effect. That's what took a lot of time working out.

In the end, I think what Steve was saying, the surge, as defined as more troops over some period of time, is actually not as important as the change in mission. The change in mission was really focusing on protecting the Iraqi people as the state. You might say well, what the hell were they doing over there in the meantime? But they actually weren't. It was much more focused on building Iraqi state institutions, building up, training the army, these kinds of things. The forces were not intermingled and out among the people.

So that became—again, in conversations with Keane, and ultimately that was the view of Petraeus and others—the thing that was mostly different. Of course, that was lost in many ways in the January speech because everybody said it's more troops, he's doubling down. To some degree that's true, but it was really the change in mission and change in personnel to execute that mission.

**Brown:** At this very time, Petraeus was finishing his drafting of the *U. S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, right? Which was essentially making that—

**Hadley:** Everybody asks who is the father of the surge? Well, three things are happening.

**Crouch:** Initially nobody, now everybody. [*laughter*]

**Hadley:** One, the interagency was getting its act together to give some options to the President that included the surge, and the surge then became the favorite option. So you had, in Washington, getting the President's authorization and direction to do the surge. You have Petraeus finishing up the doctrine of how you do the mission that is the essence of the surge and did require some additional troops. Then at the same time all this is going on, as is in some of the Tom Ricks's books, [Raymond] Odierno in Iraq is beginning to figure out and is thinking, *If I got a surge, five more brigades, what would I do with them in a way that is consistent with the operation?*

**Crouch:** He's the operations guy.

**Hadley:** He's the operations guy. He's figured out—and initially, by the way, in his first deployment over there he's a big tank guy. He's not a counterinsurgency guy. So he's figured it

out and in parallel, he says, "I thought I was the father of the surge." And in a way, he was because he's already figuring out how you would implement it and execute it on the ground. That's why I say there's a crossfertilization and these ideas begin to emerge and a lot of people start responding and doing pieces, and the trick is bringing it all together in real time.

**Brown:** Also the Sunni uprising, was that something that was also part of people's calculations or did that come later, kind of fortuitously?

**Hadley:** It's part of it. People are aware that something is going on, notwithstanding the fact that the key intelligence officer of the Marine Corps, the Marine unit that was out there, sort of said Anbar is lost. J. D. is having this experience. Some people say actually Anbar has an opportunity because the al-Qaeda were in control and the tribals didn't like it and are ready to throw them off. But again, they need assurance for their security before they're willing to come forth, risk their lives, and take on al-Qaeda. That's what the additional Marine units at Anbar enabled.

**Crouch:** Right.

**Riley:** At the stage where all this is boiling up, is the President off on the sideline dealing with the regular course of business he has to deal with? At one point you said that the President was very involved in pushing for the surge. At what point does he make the transition that this is something that needs to be a viable option?

**Hadley:** He does a couple of steps, and again, this is pretty well documented. Timing is a little tricky but in the spring it's pretty clear that Zarqawi has succeeded and has provoked sectarian violence and the incidents of violence are growing and were grizzly sect things. We're finding dozens of people with their hands tied behind them, their feet tied together, thrown into rivers. Pretty grizzly stuff, and retaliatory killings.

At some point, it's in the President's book and you can get it from there, but I think it's in the spring, as I remember he looks up and he says, "Hadley, we need a new strategy." And I said, "Yes, Mr. President, I think we probably do." Around that time, again, little things matter, he had a head-of-state call; he's calling Maliki, and of course Meghan O'Sullivan, who does Iraq for us, comes in and briefs him for the call. It's 7:30 in the morning, when we did head-of-state calls, and the President is pretty jolly. Meghan had served for a couple of years in Iraq with [L. Paul III] Jerry Bremer under the provisional authority on the CPA, Coalition Provisional Authority, and still had a lot of friends in Iraq. So the President says, "So Meghan, what do your friends in Iraq tell you about the situation over there?"

She says, "Mr. President, they're terrified. They have never been more scared about the situation in Iraq. It is grim, Mr. President." Now this is not someone who is a critic of the Iraq mission, this is someone who has risked her life for the Iraqi mission and spent a lot of her professional life doing it, and she's telling the President that something has changed, that it's going terribly wrong. So the President begins to realize that there's something wrong; we need a new strategy.

Then he starts pushing Casey. The President talks in his book about Casey saying it's not working. And Casey saying, "Mr. President, I guess I've got to be better convincing you." And he says, "Yes, George, you do." And he starts raising questions about the hands off the bicycle seat analogy. So the President is beginning to feel all this. We begin to start talking with him

about a surge option, a sort of double-down option, as Dan Bartlett calls it. He's intrigued and clearly likes the idea, but isn't committed to it. That's where I take it from and I say to folks that we're going to have a review; we're going to give the President all the options. We've got to make sure there's a surge option in there because he's intrigued with the notion.

When does he finally commit to the surge? It's hard to know. Probably sometime in that last week in November/first week in December time frame where he finally commits. Has he tried it on? Has he talked about it? Has he been encouraging about it? Sure. But when he's really prepared to say, "I'm going to go to the American people" and this is going to be—

**Crouch:** Part of it, when your President says, "OK, what are my other options?" He wanted to hear the other options. And you know what? The other options were not very good. They weren't very viable. I think that was part of it. You've got to say—in some ways, I was not absolutely convinced this was going to work, but I thought it could work, and I also thought it was better than all the other options. So I don't know whether that factored into his thinking or not, but if there had been a better option, or one that seemed nearly as good—it's an interesting question, whether or not we would have gone down that road. I don't know.

**Riley:** Two questions. One is, how difficult was it for you to keep this an exercise in keeping the President's options open rather than having this being perceived as you're putting the thumb on the scale in favor of this? I would think it would be rather difficult if you're tasking people out to do this, for them not to assume this is the direction the President is leaning.

**Hadley:** Well, they knew he was intrigued with it, but part of it is in how you do this. We had suggested to Rumsfeld about a year earlier that maybe there was a better strategy than the one we were pursuing. It was a briefing that came out from [Clayton] Odie Sheffield, a young Army officer who worked for Meghan. He had a briefing about an alternative strategy and I thought it was interesting. So I thought in the interest of interagency transparency I'd call Don Rumsfeld and tell him I wanted to bring Odie Sheffield over with Meghan and give him a little briefing on some ideas that we were thinking about.

Of course, he's the Secretary of Defense and the military planners are over there. We don't do military planning, but things aren't going well and we've got some ideas to share. So we went over to brief him. Don is a very courteous person; he was very nice about it. Pete Pace is a very nice person; he sat there, but it was pretty clear they couldn't figure out what the NSC was doing in the business of military planning. They took the briefing but it was clear to me it was not the way we were going to have to proceed, but it was useful because I learned something.

So when the surge comes, when we ask Bill Luti to do this briefing and he does, the first thing I do is I bring Pete Pace in, whom Don Rumsfeld has asked to do a review. I said, "Pete, I've asked for this briefing to be done. It's an option people were talking about, and here are the results of it. I want to give it to you and have you give it whatever consideration you find useful." I gave him the briefing charts. To the extent I got additional information from the NSC staff on the surge issue, I gave it to Pete. So it was completely transparent.

I made it very clear that I didn't want to put a thumb on the scale. The only thing I did say was that the briefing that finally goes to the President has to have a surge option in it because I know

he's interested enough in it that it has to have that. Now, some people would say that's putting a thumb on the scale but I don't think so. I think that was the right way to balance it.

**Crouch:** So in my group at the same time—this is going to come as a surprise—that briefing paper that he's talking about was never briefed in the group that I chaired. After he handed it to Pete Pace, I handed it—I'll never forget—in a sealed envelope to Doug Lute, who at that point was working for the Joint [Chiefs of Staff] staff; he was the JD3 [Head of Operations for the Joint Staff], I guess. I said the exact same words. "This has been handed to the Chairman; I didn't want you to be blindsided by it. It's some stuff we've worked up. Take a look at it. If it's useful in the process, we're not going to brief it in here." Because I didn't want to put the military people in the position of having the NSC briefing a military option in front of the entire interagency, right?

That was the guidance I got from Steve. I think it was actually handled very well in that respect. If we had interjected it in that way, it would have looked like the thumb on the scale.

**Hadley:** Right. When the President asked me to do this job he said, "I want you to be an honest broker." That's what we always tried to do. That was our plan. So you don't put your thumb on the scales, but you do make sure that the President has the full range of options.

**Brown:** There is this famous meeting of December 11th that some of my academic colleagues were at, Steve Biddle, Eliot Cohen, and so on.

**Hadley:** Yes.

**Brown:** Was this already after the fact and the President was building support for it, or was it still something that was germinating as an option?

**Hadley:** It's interesting. Again, this has been written about. I'm going to get the dates wrong but they're close. The [James III] Baker-[Lee] Hamilton Commission reports, and is supposed to report, the end of the first week in December, December 4, 5, or 6. We had participated very actively in the Baker-Hamilton report. We all testified before them. We've given them our best ideas. We've given them, in some sense, the very ideas that become the surge strategy; I mean, it's very transparent.

But they've written their report. Our hope is that it can be the basis, a bipartisan basis, for the shift to the new strategy. Indeed, it could be because it does have a surge piece in it as one of the options. It says, "If the Commanders think it would facilitate the process, the President could do a surge." It's less about the new strategy, more on terms and numbers. So we think it, and we cooperate precisely to give us a bipartisan landing zone because Iraq is not very popular and we're trying to get some public support for it. And so the theory is, Baker-Hamilton reports December 4, 5, or 6 and the President gives his surge speech December 9 or 10. That was our plan. He can say "I'm pulling from the Baker-Hamilton" and it's all nice—

**Riley:** The momentum is all in one direction.

**Hadley:** So we have a speech pretty much ready to go and the decision largely done by December 9th, or actually a couple of days before. Two things happen. One, the President calls

me in at that time, probably over the weekend, I think the speech was supposed to be Tuesday or maybe Wednesday, and says, “I’ve decided I don’t want to give the speech.” I say, “OK, Mr. President.” “No,” he says, “I like the speech, I like where we’re headed and I like the option we’re going with. I think it’s a great strategy, but I want to make sure Bob Gates is part of it.” Bob Gates is supposed to go to Iraq, “So I want to hold off the speech until he has gone to Iraq and can come back and give me his personal report and it will be clear that he’s on board with the strategy that I’m recommending.” Fine.

The second thing that has happened is—and when it leaks to the press that the speech has been moved, the press interprets it that Baker-Hamilton didn’t say what we hoped it would say, that we didn’t like the Baker-Hamilton strategy and therefore we were going to have to go and develop our own. We had already developed our strategy; it was done and in the can. But that’s the narrative that came out.

In some sense it was OK because, regrettably, Baker-Hamilton got characterized in the region, and Condi goes out to the region in this time frame and attests to it, and it’s in her book. It gets framed in the region as a cover for cut and run. The *Wall Street Journal* treats it as a cover for cut and run, and the Vice President of the United States absolutely believes it’s a cover for cut and run.

So at that point, we adopt and implement 97 percent of the recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton report as part of the new strategy. There are the three things that we don’t do: negotiate with Iranians, negotiate with the Syrians, and set a firm deadline for withdrawal. Everything else in the Baker-Hamilton report, largely because we helped put it in the Baker-Hamilton report, is part of the surge. But the narrative is, we actually have to step away from it because it’s being characterized in a way that isn’t our strategy.

Even though the President says in his speech, which he finally gives in January, that a lot of folks are doing this, it’s consistent with Baker-Hamilton and nobody believes it. Everybody believes that we hated Baker-Hamilton, it’s a surrender strategy and therefore we rejected it. So it does not provide the bipartisan base that we hoped. The President puts off the speech. Gates goes to Iraq. He comes back and confirms that Maliki is on board for the surge and we give the speech in January. And that’s really how it plays out in the end.

**Riley:** We stepped over Rumsfeld. If Rumsfeld is still around, does this happen?

**Hadley:** Rumsfeld is very interesting in this time frame, as is Cheney’s role. Rumsfeld comes around to believe that a change should occur. One of the ways you can check—I don’t know how much of that you’re going to do in these transcripts—and I need to go back to your question about Maliki. I need to come back to the meeting in Amman, which occurs at the end of October, we’ll have to look. I’ll come back to it. I messed this up a little bit, so what was your question?

**Riley:** My question was about Rumsfeld, who leaves in November.

**Hadley:** Remember, this trip that J. D. talks about, I go to Iraq in, I think October. I see everybody, including Maliki, and I come back and I give a trip report. That trip report is sent around to all the principals, along with a memo from Don Rumsfeld, both of which Michael Gordon leaks to the *New York Times*. The memo from Don Rumsfeld is very interesting because

it begins by saying we're not making progress fast enough and soon enough or quick enough or good enough. It's sort of Rumsfeld's admission that we need a new strategy. Then he has a long laundry list of things that the President might consider as elements of the new strategy, one of which, on the second or third page, is the surge.

So Rumsfeld is beginning to recognize and support the proposition that there is a surge, but he's not, I think it's fair to say, a leading architect of the surge. Quite the contrary, he's reluctant, and more to the point, the Joint Chiefs are reluctant, and this process in December is gradually bringing the Joint Chiefs along. Well, as we bring the Joint Chiefs along, we bring Don Rumsfeld along. So at the end of the day he can rightly say he supported the surge, and quite rightly say that the choice of Petraeus to be the new commander in Iraq is supported jointly by the incoming Secretary of Defense, Bob Gates, and the outgoing Secretary of Defense, Don Rumsfeld. So Don is slow to the party. He's not the architect of the new strategy, but at the end of the day he supports it.

In a funny sort of way, Cheney is the same way. It's a little tricky for Cheney because Don Rumsfeld is his closest friend, and it's really changing Don Rumsfeld's strategy. I think Cheney believed we needed a new strategy. Remember, Jack Keane is initially talking mostly to Cheney and has a surge concept, which I think Cheney is comfortable with. I think Cheney was comfortable with the process that we all were leading and comfortable with the direction it was heading and therefore didn't need to be in the lead. He didn't want to be in the lead, in a way, because it complicated things with Rumsfeld and it was all going in the same direction, so Cheney is fine.

But Cheney is there. And remember, in that meeting in the tank, Cheney offers to be the lead in answering the tough questions that are part of the process of getting the Joint Chiefs to understand that the surge is the way we need to go. So Cheney is very much on board, but it's an interesting role that he plays. You see it in his book because there is nowhere in his book that he says, "So I went to the President and I said, 'Mr. President, we need a new strategy in Iraq.'" Interesting. If he had done that it would be in the book.

**Crouch:** There isn't any doubt, however, that Cheney supported what the President decided to do.

**Hadley:** No question about it.

**Crouch:** There's no question about it. With Secretary Rumsfeld, I think it was a serious set of concerns. One, for all that people have said about how tough Secretary Rumsfeld is on his commanders, he too believed in his commanders and he too believed that George Casey and Abizaid had it right. Those are two really smart guys who I worked with and had enormous respect for and still do. So it's a tough call.

The other thing was this real concern about, at some point you do have to take your hands off the bicycle seat, and he's right about that. He's absolutely right about that.

**Hadley:** And we had. But we just couldn't get there from here.



**Crouch:** That was where it really came down to. I remember having those discussions with Doug Lute in that surge. He kept saying, “You’ve got to get the politics right before we’re willing to commit more.” I said, “We won’t get the politics right if we don’t stop the violence.”

It’s a little bit of an academic thing, but one of the issues was also, is this a civil war or is this sectarian violence largely driven by insurgencies? We had the intel community all over the place on that issue, as you might imagine. You could find analysts on both sides and people really didn’t know. But I do think that to some degree in the end it was more sectarian violence fueled by insurgency than it was a true civil war. It turned out the Iraqi people could live together and were willing to live together, but not in the presence of horrific and constant violence.

**Hadley:** I’ve never heard anyone say it quite the way J. D. did, and I think it’s exactly right. It brings us to one of the heroes of this. If you’re Pete Pace, you’ve got a Secretary of Defense who really thinks hands off the bicycle seat is the strategy, so do your operational commanders, regional commander Abizaid, and Casey, commander in Iraq. And your Joint Chiefs are worried about breaking the force and worried about rotations and shortening the stay-at-home time for the Army and shortening the time by which the Army can turn and go back and how long they can stay. Remember, we’re doing a 15-month deployment in the Army and seven months for the Marines. Fifteen-month deployment for the Army, one year home, then you go back. This is really tough.

You’re Pete Pace and you know the President wants a new strategy and you’re pretty sure he’s looking toward a surge. Pete’s job is to gradually bring everybody along. He says to me at one point, “I want this new strategy to be George Casey’s strategy.” There are two things you don’t want to have in wartime, a split between the Commander in Chief and his military, and a split within the military. It’s bad civil-military relations. It would have been fatal to the surge because it was clear that nobody was going to be enthusiastic for the surge. It was going to astonish the American people, who were waiting for a withdrawal and instead we’re getting a buildup.

If we did not have the military on board, the Congress would have had a set of hearings that would have played the military off against one another and would establish that the military were not in support of the surge, and it would have fueled all their efforts to kill it. Pete Pace’s job was to line up everybody. He did a fabulous job. He’s working with Abizaid and Casey. Casey gradually comes on and says, “Well, maybe we need a surge, but a brigade, maybe two brigades, are enough. We’ll put one on the ground and we’ll have one in Kuwait for reinforcement.”

Well, no, maybe we need a little bit more. Five seems to be the magic number. Casey doesn’t think we need five. Maybe we’ll compromise and we’ll have a call on five. No, we want to convey the message that it’s a new strategy and a commitment to win. We need to commit the five. So rather than have five on call, we’ll commit the five and if the commander doesn’t need them he cannot call on them.

We’re going through all of this painstakingly, but it’s to try to bring Casey and Abizaid on board. We know that everybody is thinking about Petraeus as the new commander. We know he’s on board. We know Odierno is on board because he’s already planning how he’s going to use the forces. Then, of course, we have to bring the Joint Chiefs on board. Pace is trying to do that. The way he does that is he first comes in that period of November and says that the Chiefs have

concerns. They're prepared to support the surge if the President orders it but they don't think it will work unless there's a surge of Iraqis, surge of State Department, and the third one I've forgotten now.

**Ansley:** Increase in troops.

**Hadley:** Increasing the size of the Army. That meeting in the tank is where the President finally brings them on board. The deal clincher is that the Chief of Staff of the Army, [Peter Jan] Schoomaker, says, "Mr. President, there's a lot of pressure on the force. It sure would be nice if we had more troops." Of course, we had talked with the President about that months ago as a potential deal closer and he said fine. And if the Marine Corps Commandant says me too, we've got the deal. The President says two very important other things in that meeting. One, Schoomaker says, "Mr. President, I don't think the American people will support it."

The President says, "Let me worry about that. I'm the politician, that's my job." Now, think about the conversation we had about the polls.

**Riley:** Sure.

**Hadley:** So the President is out on a limb here because he doesn't have the support of the American people for Iraq at that point. But the President says, "I will take care of that issue, take that off the list." Then someone talks about the health of the force and the President says, "Look, you guys, you don't fight the force. You guys raise and train the force. That's what the Chiefs of Staff do and you need to pay attention to the health of the force and I agree with that." But then he says, "But remember, the best way to break a force is to lose a war." That was heard by everyone in the room.

So that brings the Joint Chiefs along in the end. At that point Pete Pace has done it. He's got support for the surge from the outgoing commanders, from the incoming commanders, and from the Joint Chiefs. Is everybody identical? No. Are there some reservations? Right. But he got them all in the boat. Some leaned right, some leaned left; they're about equally divided so the boat is fairly stable. This is terribly important because when they go to the Hill for the hearings and the Hill is looking to find the fissures, there are no fissures to be found.

Although the Hill tries to defeat the surge, they're unable to do so. [John, Jr.] Murtha initially says he'll fund the troops, the surge; that doesn't work. They then try to put operational restraints, dwell time, how much training you have to have had before you could go. Things that if adopted would have made the surge impossible. Then there are formal cutoff dates. They all clear the House but they all die in the Senate. We have 42 to 43 votes effectively in support of the surge in the Senate and because of the 60-vote rule, we're able to put down all those efforts in the Senate. So the surge has the time to begin to do its will.

Now, there's one thing I want to discuss before we leave you and that is, why did the surge succeed? That's a question you want to ask. You asked about George Casey earlier. George's strategy in 2003 into 2004 is a city strategy. Pick the 16 most important cities, stabilize them, don't worry too much about the countryside, and all will be fine. He then decides, rightly, sometime in 2004-2005, I think that's right, that the accelerator of the violence is al-Qaeda, and

he changes his strategy to focus on al-Qaeda and their efforts to try to provoke sectarian violence.

He brings in [Stanley] McChrystal, who starts this extraordinary operation of fusing intelligence and Special Forces to go after al-Qaeda leadership and operators in Iraq and it's incredibly effective. So during that period, up until the surge, McChrystal is taking out the operational leadership of al-Qaeda. Secondly, they're training Iraqi security forces, stutter-step. Petraeus has a little trouble getting it started but it does get started. By the time of the surge, there are 350,000-plus Iraqi security forces. So we've got something to work with. Three, we have had, since the summer of 2005, a unity government in Iraq. So we have something, we have a partner. We couldn't do much before then because we didn't really have a governmental partner that had been the result of an election pursuant to a constitution adopted by the Iraqi people. We didn't have that before the middle of 2005. So the idea that you could have done the surge sooner, we didn't have any governmental partner.

Four, the President was able to get Maliki to, despite the reservations in my memo after meeting with him, sign on and to make statements that make clear that he's not a sectarian leader but he's going to lead for all Iraq, terribly important. We don't know it at the time but we learn early in 2008 that Maliki has a lot of courage. And in 2008 he comes south. He takes on the Shi'a in Basra, his own Shi'a brethren. And more to the point, he actually goes into Sadr City. Sadrists, remember, are the folks who put him in power, and he takes them on in early 2008.

The list is longer; I've forgotten a couple of them.

One more item. The President decides not just to deal with the problem he's got in Baghdad, but we have an opportunity in Anbar, where people are trying to throw off al-Qaeda, so he decides to take advantage of that by adding additional troops. All of these things, taken together, are a result in some sense of some of George Casey's policies. I think there's a little of this in Rumsfeld's book.

So the surge was the right strategy shift at the right time. It required additional troops, but it stood on a series of prerequisites that had been gradually put in place. If you put all of them together, it was a critical mass for a reduction in violence after the surge that went faster than any of us thought. I had this chart that I kept with me all the time showing incidents of violence from 2003 up to 2005, into 2006, and it goes up like this. My hope was we could see it go down like this. That's how these things work. It takes as long to unravel it as it takes to build it.

**Crouch:** Our biggest fear was that it wouldn't go fast enough to keep up with the politics back home.

**Brown:** Did it also require a change in commanders or was that something already foregone earlier?

**Hadley:** No, that's a very good point. Of these prerequisites and the things the President did, of course, changing the commander, changing our Ambassador, a whole new team and a charge that they work together on an integrated way with a common political-military strategy. And that's what Petraeus and Crocker go about developing. They take the surge and turn it into an operational plan that is integrated political and military. It's a great story.

Maliki was reluctant. Maliki believed when he met him in Amman, Jordan, in November that we needed something like the surge, but he was going to do it. It was going to be not only Iraqi-led, it was going to be Iraqi forces. He presented to the President at that meeting a plan for how his surge was going to work. The President said to George Casey, “George, is this the first you’ve seen this?”

Casey said, “No, Mr. President, I helped him develop it. It was sort of on the QT [on the quiet].” The President said, “George, do you think that the Iraqis can do this?” Casey said, “No, Mr. President, I don’t. Their forces aren’t going to be enough to pull this off.”

So at that point the President says, “Well, if we’re going to do a surge, we’re going to do a surge that will succeed, not one that will fail.” He then goes into a one-on-one meeting with Maliki that he talks about in his book. He says to Maliki, “You’re absolutely right about a surge, but your forces aren’t going to be able to do it, let me loan you mine.” That’s what he says, “Let me loan you my forces so we can do your surge.”

Initially Maliki is very reluctant. It’s sort of the mirror image of George Casey. George Casey says you only need a brigade or two to do the surge. Maliki says I’m only willing to accept a brigade or two. So the trick is to get each of them up to five brigades. That’s the magic number we need here, gentlemen. Over time we get Maliki to the five brigades, and the way we do that is by saying you kick in five brigades, we’ll kick in five brigades. I think that’s right; maybe they kicked in six. That’s basically how we did that.

**Crouch:** We were five and two-thirds.

**Hadley:** Something like that.

**Crouch:** If you count the Marines.

**Hadley:** If you count the Marines, that’s exactly right. So that was Maliki’s reaction, and we had to get him comfortable so he could use our forces and we had to get him to commit to the kind of nonsectarian surge and change of strategy that was going to work.

I would say in retrospect it’s a lot clearer than it was for us. We had put in place the building blocks that allowed the surge to succeed, and for people who ask why didn’t you do the surge earlier, they weren’t in place much earlier.

**Crouch:** I told them when you were out of the room that I thought we probably could have done it three months earlier. The absolute max, in my view, would have been six months earlier, but not before then. We probably could have done it a little bit earlier, maybe three months, but conditions weren’t there to do it before then.

**Hadley:** Right. Part of that three months was the price of bringing everybody on board.

**Crouch:** It absolutely was.

**Hadley:** Which we needed to. If there had been divisions within the administration it would have killed us. But the other thing is—and the President is criticized for this. All of this is done out of

the public domain. That was one of the problems with President Obama's Afghan review, it was all public. So everybody knew a new strategy was coming but they didn't know when and they didn't know what. So the enemy says, "Great, let's kill more Americans so we can give strength to those people who want to come home." The Afghans say, "Gee, are they with us or against us? Maybe we should be a little bit cautious about our supporting the coalition troops because we don't know whether this strategy is here." And our men and women in uniform, the last thing you want to do is be the last man killed pursuant to a failed strategy. So it was a mistake. Unfortunately, mistakes were made and a couple of people, I think General McChrystal being one, talked publicly about the strategy review and they shouldn't.

We kept ours completely under wraps but it had a cost because it required the President, in this period, to continue to talk about how he supported the mission and he supported our troops. So people afterward said, well weren't you—

**Crouch:** Tone-deaf.

**Hadley:** —lying to the American people by saying we supported the strategy, we're going to proceed, and I've confidence in my commanders, when you were doing a new strategy. The answer is, life is hard and choices have to be made, and the President did exactly the right thing. It's the problem [Franklin D.] Roosevelt had in World War II. Those are difficult decisions. The President did the right thing because it bought us some time to get it right.

**Riley:** Did you have a political management problem with Jim Baker and Lee Hamilton? My recollection is, you look back on the story now and it has an almost inevitable logic that this is going to transpire, which is not how I recall things unfolding because the popular perception was you've got these wise men who have surveyed the landscape and are presenting you with what must be the salable option available and you're rejecting it. The question is, were they trying to market the report afterward in a way that was in any way competing with what you were trying to do?

**Hadley:** I don't recall it, and part of it is because they're just wonderful public servants. I mean, they're just terrific people. Baker in particular; he only took it on when he met personally with the President of the United States and the President told him he wanted him to do it. He kept in very close touch with me as far as the work we were doing. Indeed, I had a pretty good idea what they were going to recommend before they did it. Some of the things they were concerned about in terms of whether they made military sense, quite frankly I made sure that I ran them by Pete Pace so that I could say to Jim Baker, "Militarily this makes some sense."

So these two guys wanted to be helpful, wanted to be constructive, but Jim Baker in particular knew that at the end of the day the President of the United States was going to make this decision and no study group is going to make it for him. So, whereas Lee Hamilton has been very active on the 9/11 report, making sure those get adopted, I think they basically said they did their best, they gave the best advice to the President and to the country, and then the President made his decision and they stood down. That's my recollection and I think it speaks very well for them. They did not let themselves be used politically.

**Crouch:** What he said is exactly right. But I would say one other thing. When they got into it they realized how hard and how complicated this was. It really wasn't a failure of imagination on the part of the current administration; it was more, this was very complex, very difficult. When they got to see all the options, they not only had stuff from us, they had stuff from all kinds of outside people. There wasn't an obvious "why didn't you guys do this?" So they really ended up adopting a lot of the stuff that we said we wanted, the direction that we wanted to move in, and put it into the report. We were quite happy that it was in the report and not something that we were standing up saying because, to be honest, at that point we didn't have that much credibility; they had a lot of credibility.

**Hadley:** That's why I kept saying to the President, "Don't trash them and say that we've adopted 97 percent of what they recommended." I got some resistance from that from the Vice President, who thought it's going to look like a cover for withdrawal; we ought to repudiate it. That was a mistake because most of the stuff they said, we wanted to do; it was in there because we recommended it. It's consistent with my view that for hard problems a bunch of smart people of good will focusing on the same problem will come roughly to the same kinds of solutions.

**Brown:** Now the past lies ahead of us. Now we are approaching the full dénouement of all of this. Are you worried that things in Iraq may yet fall apart?

**Hadley:** Sure, but you know, when we replaced Saddam [Hussein] and there's a meeting in the Situation Room and the issue is, what do we owe the Iraqi people? Do we owe them Saddamism without Saddam? That is to say, just turn it over to some military dictator who will not pursue WMD [weapons of mass destruction], will not support terror, will not invade his neighbors, and won't oppress his people too badly and maybe help us out on terror? Is that good enough? It's interesting that Dick Cheney says in his book that he supported the view that because we are the United States of America, because we believe in democracy and freedom, we owed the Iraqi people more. We owed it to give them a chance to build a democratic future for themselves. It's partly because we think democracies are stable over the long term.

Over time we increasingly came to think that if we could help the Iraqis establish a democratic regime it would be a good example in the Middle East, as I said before how Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurds could work together in a democratic framework to build a common future. That would be a good thing to show in the Middle East. That took the day. We would give the Iraqis a chance to build a democratic future, particularly since that's what the Iraqis that came into power said was what they wanted. But it wasn't a guarantee. It wasn't, we won't leave until there is a Jeffersonian democracy. We knew it wasn't going to be a Jeffersonian democracy. It would be an Iraqi democracy; it would look different from ours. It would reflect its own history, traditions, and all the rest. But we would give them a chance to build a democratic future.

**Crouch:** So have we done that, is your earlier question.

**Hadley:** The way I would say in terms of results, and I tried to shorthand it earlier, why did we go to war? We went to war because we had a regime that pursued WMD, supported terrorists, invaded their neighbors, and oppressed their own people. That is not Iraq today. Iraq does none of those things. Therefore, have we achieved our narrow national security objectives?

Absolutely. Is Iraq liable to go back to those things I just described? Pretty unlikely. So have we accomplished our narrow national security objectives? Yes.

Now, we can talk about the price, the money, the lives, the Iraqi lives, tens of thousands, hugely high cost. Was it worth it? History will judge. Did we achieve our narrow national security objectives? Yes. That was tier-one objectives. What were tier-two objectives? The President said, "An Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, sustain itself, and is an ally in the War on Terror." Well, we're just about to bring all our troops out and it's not falling apart. There is some violence but it's not enough to really provoke sectarian violence or upset the regime. So I think we've achieved that objective. This is Iraq that has governed itself, defended itself, sustained itself, and is an ally in the War on Terror.

Is it an Iraq where Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurds are working together in a democratic framework rather than oppressing each other? Yes. Is it going to last? Maybe. Tough, take a long time, probably take 20 years or a generation to know. It's a pretty good start, better than we thought. Is there a risk it will backslide? Sure. Would the Bush administration have actually gone to zero troops December 31, 2011? Probably not. It was our expectation that somewhere in that process the Iraqis would come forward to us and ask us to extend the agreement and retain some level of troops beyond, probably 10,000 to 20,000, roughly what the military asked for.

As kind of an insurance policy, have some of those troops in the north between the Kurds and the Sunnis so they don't go at it. Have a unit of them in probably Mosul, some places in the north, some place in the center, some place in the south just to give some stability, to continue to train the Iraqi forces, to help the Iraqi forces absorb into their Armed Forces all these weapons they're buying. To help them develop the logistic train to support those weapons, help them develop an air force and a navy so at the end of the day they're not subject to intimidation and blackmail from Iran, because they now can't defend themselves, quite frankly.

I think that's what we would have done. I think it's what the Iraqis were willing to do and I think that's what they effectively asked for in May, because I am told that in May Maliki got out of his Cabinet unanimous support for a request for additional American troops and it included Sadrist who did not vote for but did not vote against, basically abstained, and said we'll criticize you in public but at the end of the day we won't bring down your government. I think what happened is that Maliki said, "I've got it," and came to the President, came to the administration, and said, "We'd like to request an extension." That we would have to do something about immunity; everybody knew a change in direction; that was the last issue the last time we did this strategic frame of agreement; we have to find a way to finesse it again.

**Riley:** It was workable.

**Hadley:** It was workable. My view is, and there's some support for it, that President Obama didn't want to leave the troops. He wanted to go into the election being able to say, "I ended the war in Iraq and all our troops are home." That's what he wanted to do. I think it's reflected by the fact that the military comes to him and says we want to leave some troops, maybe 10,000 to 20,000 and as far as I know, President Obama says no. If we're going to do it at all it's 3,000 or 4,000, maybe 5,000 troops, which I'm told is the Tom Donilon number. It may not be right; you can ask Tom himself.

My worry is that if you're Maliki and you say, "I'm taking all this political heat for having the Americans stay in order to get 3,000 to 4,000 troops, is this worth it?" I think what they should have done, and what I'm hopeful they will do in December when Maliki comes to Washington, is that they will agree that the troop deployments under the SOFA, which are viewed as occupation troops, will come to the end December 31, 2011. SOFA will be no more. But they will then transition to the strategic framework agreement that provides for U.S. and Iraqi cooperation after December 31, 2011, and which explicitly says that that cooperation will have economic, political, and security dimensions. Under that arrangement, we will have a training force of several thousand, maybe 5,000, maybe 7,000, which will do all the things I described: train, help them absorb the equipment, help them build the logistics systems, help them build an air force, and maybe be a cover for a small number of folks who actually help them on the counterterrorism.

**Brown:** Do you think that the immunity issue be extracted from that?

**Hadley:** They can work the immunity issue. We have these kinds of deployments all over the world.

**Crouch:** Hopefully, that's what will happen because I think there's an opportunity there. The immunity thing is important, not to trivialize it, but it's workable. This is one of those deals; that's what you pay while you spar. Thank you all.

[J. D. Crouch leaves.]

**Riley:** I wanted to ask one or two follow-up questions about the surge, and I'm sorry J. D. isn't here for this, but was there ever an advocate within the administration for partition?

**Hadley:** There was an advocate outside the administration.

**Riley:** Sure.

**Hadley:** For partition, namely Les Gelb and Joe Biden.

**Riley:** Right.

**Hadley:** The Iraqis killed it. The Iraqis made it absolutely clear they had no interest in partition. Of course, we thought partition was a mistake because if you partition and you have a Kurdish area, that's the Turk and the Syrian and the Iranian nightmare because that Kurdish area becomes the kernel of Kurdistan, and could provoke the dismemberment and a similar kind of solution for Turkey, Syria, and Iran, which nobody wanted.

Secondly, we felt from the beginning, and it was a judgment—the intelligence was conflicted, as is so often the case, at the end of the day you make a judgment. The Saudis kept saying, "You've done a terrible thing. Saddam was the barrier between Iran and the rest of the Middle East. You eliminated the barrier and you have put in a Shi'a puppet state, which is going to spread Iranian influence in the Middle East." That was their view.



Our view was that Iraqi nationalism would trump Iraqi Shiism. At the end of the day Iraq would not become a vassal state of Iran. Iraqis are very active and are playing. One of the reasons to keep U.S. troops there in some number is to stiffen the Iraqis a little bit as they stand up to the Iranians. I noticed that [inaudible] today was out there heralding this is a great victory that all Americans are going by December 31, 2011, and congratulating the Iraqi people for having thrown off the oppressor. That's a little bit of stretch, but he's going to do all he can with it.

So our view was that Iraqi nationalism would hold together, and that again argues against partition. Of the options that went to the President at the time of the surge, partition was not one of them.

**Riley:** OK, the other one is a more global question. This is sort of derived out of some of what I read in the analysis of your own role as National Security Advisor. You had said earlier that the President wanted you to be an honest broker. I want to hear from you how you square the honest broker role with this very activist role that you defined for us over the last hour or so about putting together a policy like the surge that seems to have much more of a policy advocacy slant to it than one might expect from a conventional definition of an honest broker.

**Hadley:** I think it was consistent with an honest broker—an active broker, not a passive broker. I would cite the following. First, all of this was transparent to everybody in the interagency. We were having J. D.'s group, which was everybody in the interagency; all the analytical work was done in that group and everybody participated. It was all transparent.

Secondly, we stayed in our lane. As he described very clearly, to the extent that we had some analysis we never presented it to the group as an NSC option. All we did was share it with the military folks and other folks around. Three, it was Pete Pace who brokered the operation among the military. It was Condi who brokered getting the support within our own building. So I would say it was an honest broker role doing a transparent process, doing what the NSC is supposed to do, which is to develop options for the President and make sure that the President has a full range of options. That's also part of being an honest broker.

The one thing that might suggest I went too far was when I said the paper that goes to the President will have a surge option. I think that's actually an appropriate thing to do for an honest broker, and I think the problem of the Woodward book about the Obama administration review of Afghanistan was that the interagency process there did not present the President with a full range of options but a much more truncated set of options. I think that's a failure of the process. I also think that process did not answer some very important strategy questions that the President was posing that never got answered in their strategy.

If you look at the memo that's in the Woodward book that is the contract between the President and the military, some of the things that should be strategy are either questions or criteria to judge. One of the criteria for judging is whether Pakistan has become more supportive of our activities in Afghanistan. Well, that's a great criterion. Where in that document is there an element of strategy that's supposed to achieve that objective? It's not there.

You contrast that with the briefing charts I described that were released on the same day as the surge speech and we addressed all aspects of the strategy; they're there. So I think it's a better

process. It's an honest broker process but it has as its objective treating all the issues raised by the President and giving him a full range of options, which everybody had an opportunity to weigh in on, and on which the President then made a decision. Finally, I think it's interesting that the President didn't want to make the decision over the objections of folks. He wanted as much as possible to have everybody in support of it. I think that's a very interesting model of civil-military relations that's not what the academic literature says.

Peter Feaver has an international security article on this that is worth reading. There are two norms. One norm says the military knows best, so in issues of military strategy the civilians should defer to the military. The other option says that actually the President is the decider and he makes the decision and the military subsumes, even if they don't agree. I think, like with so many academic pieces, there's an effort to turn things into binary—it's one or the other. The reality is that it's always a mix.

**Riley:** My question wasn't intended to betray a position on this, it was to give you a chance to answer what I've read.

**Hadley:** This is a mix and the President decided, yes, I can decide. The military will salute but they have to carry it out and their heart won't be in it, and there will be disagreements and they'll be displayed before the Congress and it may kill the surge. On the other hand, the President said, "I've gone with the military on their strategy and it's not working. I am the Commander in Chief and I have an obligation to find and see if there is a better strategy out there," and that's what he decided to do. So I think it was an interesting blending of the two pure cases and the President did it very smartly.

**Brown:** Can I push just a little bit more on this? You're describing two aspects of the policy. One aspect is the implementation of the policy and not being ready to move toward implementation until you really have everybody on board. OK. The other is the policy formulation phase. It sounded to me as if both you and J. D. had, before the President had, decided that the logic of the surge policy trumped the other policies.

**Hadley:** No, I hadn't.

**Brown:** Really?

**Hadley:** I didn't come to the conclusion that it was the right thing until we put all the pieces together. That's why, as I said to you, I kept pushing back on our people: "Think it through, this is our last chance." I think some of them read it as Hadley is somewhat resistant to the surge. I meant what I said. I wanted to have a full set of options for the President. I wanted it to be fully fleshed out so he knew what he was getting and I wanted one of those options to be the surge. And in this process, particularly those meetings that are the first week in December, we have about five or six NSC meetings, painfully going through all these options. I'm finalizing in my own thinking, and as J. D. said, there are risks with this surge option. But particularly at the end of that week, it was clear that the surge option made a lot more sense than any of the others.

There's a narrative you could write on this, which some people would say would be a wonderful narrative. Hadley having great vision; he and his small band of intrepid NSCers saw the strategy

early and with great artistry and subtlety orchestrated a process that produced the surge and resulted in the dramatic success we saw in Iraq.

**Brown:** OK, I'm going to strike that out of my book.

**Hadley:** It was nothing like that. As I said, it's an idea that came from a lot of places that people were working on that needed to be reflected in the strategy options for the President. We ran a transparent process in which everybody participated and had their say. At the end of the day the President made a courageous decision. Americans were—there was a stunned silence after he finished the speech. People could not believe it.

The role of Keane and Kagan was not really in the construction of the strategy because it really came out of the process I described. I never got the Keane briefing until the middle of December, and by then it had largely been done. But they were terribly important because first, Keane was talking to the military and was having an influence within the military. Second, he was talking to Petraeus and Odierno and having an influence on them. Third, he was talking to the Vice President, which is one of the reasons the Vice President was comfortable letting this process go in the way that we described. That's my reading of the Vice President.

But it was particularly important when the President gives his speech, and there's this stunned silence throughout the land, to have Keane come out and say, "It's the right strategy" and being able to articulate why it was the right strategy. Jack paid an enormous price for that because he was criticized by the active duty in the military, and by Mike Mullen in particular, that he should not be public on a military issue because he was retired and he was not in the chain of command, and the only people who should be heard from on a military issue are those people who have the responsibility, namely Casey, Abizaid, and the Chairman. Casey said that explicitly.

It took a lot of courage for Jack to do what he did. I think it was very important for the country. The other three people, of course, were Graham and Joe Lieberman and John McCain, who were terribly important voices to be out there saying that the President was doing the right thing. So they were terribly important as validators for the President's strategy and, in a small way, when Jim Baker was asked about it he said, "Our report contained a recommendation for the surge if the commanders request it and if the President thinks it will accelerate the prospect for success. The President obviously thinks so." So even Jim Baker could say the surge was part of the strategy that they contemplated. He was a very important validator.

**Brown:** In the think tank world, [Stephen] Biddle was also very important in persuading a lot of us that listen to him.

**Hadley:** Biddle was very important. I think Eliot Cohen was very important. You ask why we had those folks involved? A, it was an indication that the President still hadn't finally made up his mind as late as that was in the process. He still wanted to hear from those folks from the outside. I think it confirmed a lot of things that he said. Remember, one of the people who was at that meeting was Barry McCaffrey, who was not an advocate for the surge. But I think generally it validated what the President said, and of course put them in positions to be authoritative spokesmen and validators of the surge because they could say, "I talked about it to the President personally."

So that's really the thinking. It was wanting to get more input because the President hadn't finally made up his mind. I think largely it was confirming the direction in which it was headed and it helped empower them to be advocates for the surge when the President finally announced it.

**Riley:** Steve, you've been very generous with your time.

**Hadley:** Great.

**Riley:** We will meet tomorrow morning and I'm thinking we'll pick back up where we left off this morning since it will just be you. We very much look forward to it.

## **November 1, 2011**

**Riley:** This is day two of the Stephen Hadley interview. We're going to pick up where we left off. We don't want to spend a lot of time on this, but you served in the first Bush administration in the Defense Department. We haven't heard anything about that. What did you do? What was your takeaway from that experience?

**Hadley:** I served as the Assistant Secretary for International Security Policy. It was a job that was created for Richard Perle under the Reagan administration and was continued by Ron Lehman at the end of the Reagan administration and into the Bush administration. It involved arms control and a little bit about conventional arms planning, export controls, and U.S. policy with respect to NATO and Europe. That was the bag of goodies, so it was a nice portfolio of issues.

If you liked arms control, we did all the big arms control agreements that people had been working at for a long time. We did the chemical weapons convention. We did START [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty] I and START II. START II was a particularly interesting agreement because it involved not only deep reductions but elimination of MIRV [Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle] ICBMs [Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles], which had been the *bête noire* of the arms control community and the main source of strategic instability. And also, of course, the fourth big one, chemical weapons convention, conventional forces in Europe, which was the old MBFR that we talked about before. And there were the two nuclear agreements. We did a couple of other things but it was really a period of a lot of arms control agreements.

Then President Bush also did what we called Presidential Nuclear Initiative 1 and 2, which was a very original effort. When the Soviet Union broke up, we saw that tactical nuclear weapons were throughout the Soviet Union and that independent states like Armenia or Azerbaijan and others, Georgia, were going to inherit tactical nuclear weapons. That did not sound like a good idea in terms of either proliferation or the risk that they would fall into the hands of terrorists as these states began to try to govern themselves.

So the President decided there was not enough time to negotiate something. He contacted Gorbachev and said, “What would you do if I unilaterally agreed to get rid of all tactical nuclear weapons in the ground forces and all tactical nuclear weapons off surface ships and consolidate them in a few locations? Would you be willing to do the same thing?” We explained that we thought it was in the Soviet Union’s interest not to have these nuclear weapons proliferated, and he agreed.

So on Day One, the President announced what he was going to do, and on day four Gorbachev announced a reciprocal move. It was not a formally negotiated agreement. We were going to try to rely for verification on a post–Cold War notion that we could have transparency between the United States and the Soviet Union and then later Russia. We simply would exchange information of what we were doing to comply with these unilateral undertakings and have quarterly meetings in which our militaries would sit down and review them.

We did what we said we would do. The Soviets and then the Russians initially did what they were going to do. But the transparency from the data exchanges and the periodic meetings broke down. They really were not ready to go into the post–Cold War world as we had envisioned it. So there’ve been some questions about how much backsliding there has been by the Russians on those undertakings.

We also agreed in terms of START II, in the PNI [Presidential Nuclear Initiative] 2 we had a series of measures that we did on strategic forces. I don’t really remember all of them, but I remember one of them was to say that even though reductions of strategic forces are supposed to occur over a ten-year period, why don’t we agree that while the dismantle and destruction will take place over a ten-year period, why don’t we all agree that we will take all of those strategic nuclear weapons that are slated for production and take them off-line now. Take them off alert. Don’t just take them off alert, take them off-line so that in fact the effective nuclear forces would drop down fairly dramatically, those that were operationally deployed, if you will, and had some kind of readiness category, even though it was going to take ten years to actually dismantle and destroy them.

So it was creative stuff. A lot of people would say the fact that you got those arms control agreements proved that the irony of arms control is when agreements are actually possible because the politics of the states have changed to make them possible. The agreements are no longer necessary because the states are no longer a threat to one another, and people who negotiate will debate that for a long period of time.

**Brown:** Can I ask one other question? You inherited Reagan’s commitment to the larger Star Wars program.

**Hadley:** Yes.

**Brown:** Wasn’t this a period where it was kind of scaled down, or did you keep that set of—

**Hadley:** We actually transformed it. We did a lot of the arms control. We also transformed missile defense, because the theory was in a post–Cold War world, actually Russia shouldn’t be a threat to the United States and the United States shouldn’t be a threat to Russia, so why would they need defenses against each other? But there are a couple of emerging threats that threaten us

both. One, something Sam Nunn talked about, which was the accidental or unauthorized launch of ballistic missiles by the United States or Russia, respectively, but more so the threat of third-country threats: the Irans and North Koreas of the world.

So President Bush 41 restructured the missile-defense program from Star Wars to GPALS, Global Protection Against Limited Strikes. One of the things we then tried to do was go to our NATO allies and then to Russia and explain to Russia that this was a system not directed against them, but would address a danger that threatened them as much as us. This would have been in '90, '91, and '92. We actually showed them charts with range charts from Iran showing how ballistic missiles from Iran threatened Russia more than they did the United States. So why don't you cooperate with us on missile defense to develop these capabilities? We had a proposal for how we would cooperate in doing that. It was a pretty good priority for the administration.

Dennis Ross, who was very close to Jim Baker, was charged with working with his Russian counterpart, a guy named Georgiy Mamedov, who you probably remember. The last I heard he was their Ambassador to Canada. They were to be a working group to try to see if we could come up with a program of cooperation of ballistic missile defense. I was the representative of the Office of the Secretary of Defense on that panel. We actually went pretty far and we think we got them interested, but it did not make the transition to the Clinton administration because the Clinton administration had the then Democratic Party view that missile defense was a bad thing and it was destabilizing.

So, ironically, I'm told that in the first meeting that President Clinton had with President [Boris] Yeltsin—and we had gotten positive statements from both Gorbachev and Yeltsin about cooperating on missile defense—Yeltsin said, “By the way, on the issue of cooperation on missile defense we're ready to go, we want to do it.” President Clinton had no idea what he was talking about. Basically, the Clinton administration then sent word that they had no interest in cooperating on missile defense and they dramatically cut back the missile-defense budget.

**Brown:** By the end of the Clinton administration they had come back closer to your position, right?

**Hadley:** Yes, having trashed it and cut missile-defense spending. There was then a big struggle between Republicans and Democrats, and the Republicans forced some money back into the budget, initially over the Clinton administration's objections. Then I got a call from Strobe Talbot in either '98 or '99 and he said, “They tell me that you were part of the dialogue at the end of the Bush administration on missile-defense cooperation with the Russians. Can you come in and tell me about it?”

So I went in and described it to him and of course Jim Timbie, the ever-present Jim Timbie who has been the one-man continuity over Democratic and Republican administrations, was there and Jim knew all about it. The Clinton administration, having killed missile-defense cooperation, tried to get it started in '98 or '99 but they didn't have any of the papers. I had the unclassified papers that we had given the Russians. So I remember standing at the State Department copy machine, copying my own personal notes that I had brought with me to the meeting just to refresh my memory, and realized there were no archives in the State Department. No record at all

of these conversations or of the papers we had given the Russians. So I basically copied all my sheaf of notes and gave them to Strobe and said, "Here's your starting point."

So they made a run at missile-defense cooperation with the Russians. They didn't get anywhere on it; they ran out of gas. Then thirdly, we tried to do it in the Bush 43 administration. For a lot of reasons, some of our own making, we failed. But I think the big issue is that the Russians just can't get their—I'm now part of a track two effort in support of the Obama administration's effort, which is now the fourth attempt by the United States to get the Russians to cooperate on missile defense.

So that's that period. What did I learn from that period? What did I take away from that period? One, Dick Cheney was a good Secretary of Defense and a great Secretary of War.

**Brown:** I hope you'll elaborate on that. That's an interesting formulation.

**Hadley:** It's something that Calvin Waller told me, and he's a good Cheney fan. Calvin's view was that Cheney was a good Secretary of War because he handled the Gulf War very well. He was not such a good Secretary of Defense because Calvin didn't like how we did the reduction in U.S. military forces at the end of the Cold War, which we did and which we felt we had to do because if we did it we would control it and come up with a rational force, whereas if we had let the Congress do it, who knows what we would get?

So Calvin didn't like that. What it told me was that there are really two separate roles. There is managing the building, managing the force, managing the procurement, and then there is leading a fighting force. They are two different parts of the job of Secretary of Defense. I think Bob Gates is going to go down in history as a superb Secretary of Defense; he's both a Secretary of Defense and a Secretary of War, if you will, with both hats. I think Cheney did that as well.

Cheney and Powell also did not want the Office of Secretary of Defense staff and the Joint Chiefs staff to fight, which is very easy to happen in the Pentagon. A couple of times they sat down with me in the room and Howard Graves in the room. Howard was the Assistant to the Chairman and the person that the Chairman sent over to these interagency meetings on arms control, which were then chaired by the late Arnie Kanter at the White House.

Cheney said, "Now, when you two guys go over to the White House I want to make sure you're on the same page. If you're not on the same page, get Colin and me in here and we'll all be on the same page. Because when we go to the White House, if we, the two of you or Colin and I, are on the same page, we get two votes. If we're not on the same page, we've got zero votes because we cancel each other out." I thought that was a very smart rule and one we tried to adhere to. So the cooperation between the Joint Chiefs staff and the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] staff was very good in that period.

The third thing I took away from it was a wonderful vignette that Powell talks about in his book. Powell is a very gifted guy. At one meeting at the White House he started giving his political advice. This was in the meeting that President Bush had with the Joint Chiefs where Schoomaker said I don't think the American people will support the Iraq war much longer and President Bush said, "You let me worry about the politics." Powell started giving some political advice. They

come back in the car and Powell, who was a very sensitive guy, realizes that Cheney is not saying anything.

So they get back and he follows Cheney up to the Secretary's office. He says, "I guess I crossed the line in that meeting, didn't I?" Cheney said, "Yes, Colin, you did. I'll handle the politics; you handle the military planning." That's also a pretty good example of this working out, watching the two of them work out the relationship of Secretary of Defense and Chairman. The way Cheney did it, they didn't compete.

I remember a couple of times, maybe it was Gulf War briefings, they would go together and Cheney would open the meeting and give some comments and then he would turn it over to Powell, and Powell would give military briefing. I remember watching Cheney watch Powell with this kind of smile of amusement and a little bit of pride and satisfaction that his Chairman was doing a great job in the briefing.

So Cheney was a very secure person and he wasn't threatened by subordinates who were doing well. If you kept him informed he would give you a lot of leash. Paul Wolfowitz had a fairly visible role in that period, so did Colin. At one point somebody asked Cheney if he felt threatened by them. He said, "No, they work for me and the better they do, the better I look." That's a great attitude of a leader, the better they do, the better I look. I'm not threatened by them. I'm going to enable and empower them. I think that's a terrific rule of leadership, when you're confident enough to do that. I think they worked that relationship.

They also were clear as to who worked for whom. One of the things that the Clinton administration did, which I think was not so good, is that they put John Shalikashvili as Chairman and initially Les Aspin and then Bill Perry as Chairman, and they would put them out together on the Sunday shows, almost as if they were peers. They're not peers. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs reports to the President through the Secretary of Defense. He can give independent military advice to the President, that's true, but the chain of command is President, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Cheney and Powell had that right. The Chairman had a visible role. They were good partners, but it was clear that Cheney was the Secretary of Defense, and for Powell he was Mr. Secretary, my boss, the Secretary of Defense. It's very important to get that relationship right. I think that's what I wanted to say.

It echoed one thing. When I became Deputy National Security Advisor, there was a guy named Dan Fried, who we kept from the Clinton administration to do European affairs for us, a wonderfully funny guy. At one point he came into my office, closed the door and he said, "Let me tell you how to do your job."

**Riley:** This is while you were deputy?

**Hadley:** Yes, when I was Deputy National Security Advisor. So I said, "Great, Dan, come on in. I'd love to have a little advice."

He said, "Some of your predecessors, unspecified, thought their job was to be the super senior director for fill-in-the-blank, Europe, Africa, defense programs. We don't need you to be super,



and the President and Condi don't need you to be a super senior director. You've got lots of senior directors. What they need you to do and what we need you to do is empower us, to get us decisions when we can't get them, to get us meetings when we can't get them on our own. That's what we need you to do. We need you to help empower us so we can do the things that the President, Condi, and you need us to you. That's what you can do."

Of course, it's true. If you become the super senior director then everything funnels in through you and you become a bottleneck and your span of influence is this [indicates a span with hands]. If you're willing to have a more open architecture and empower your senior directors and enable them to do the jobs, then your field of impact is this.

**Riley:** Much broader.

**Hadley:** Much broader, much larger. You can have much more leverage. That's where you get your leverage. Not by making them staff you so you can take all the actions, but empowering them so that they can take the actions. Then you've got leverage. You've multiplied yourself by 15 or 20 times.

I thought that was a very good lesson and it's an echo of what I learned from Dick Cheney over at the Pentagon and applied to the job of Deputy National Security Advisor. I thought Dan Fried was absolutely right. I tell this to people in Dan's presence and Dan always winces and says, "Was I really that forward?" and the answer is, "Yes, you were, and it was good."

**Riley:** I was going to ask you, you talked about the proper role between the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, did that always prevail in the 43rd administration? Were there ever issues with Rumsfeld, to your mind?

**Hadley:** The rap on Rumsfeld, of course, was that he was too domineering, that he was too preemptory to military subordinates, and therefore did not get the best out of them, that he didn't consult with them. I don't know the answer to that. Don addresses it in his book. As I said, I haven't read all of his book; I read some parts of it. In terms of my presence, he was clearly the Secretary, but I don't think people felt unconstrained to talk up at meetings or offer their views to the President of the United States. He certainly had them briefing rather than trying to give their briefings.

**Brown:** Was this reflected at all in the [Eric] Shinseki episode with respect to resourcing Operation Iraqi Freedom?

**Hadley:** I would say that's what everybody uses as the example, and I think it's largely not right. There is the issue of Paul Wolfowitz and his testimony, but I will tell you before we went to war in Iraq the President of the United States had in the Cabinet room all the Joint Chiefs and all the combatant commanders. After having had a summary briefing of the Iraq strategy by CENTCOM [Central Command] and been informed by the Secretary of Defense that Tommy Franks had given that briefing to the Joint Chiefs and to the combatant commanders before they had come over to meet with the President, the President went around the table and said to each of them, "Do you support Tommy's plan? Is this the right plan with which to go to war?" Everyone, including Shinseki, said that they did. So I'm not sure the facts on that are out.

I thought, however, it came out that the administration did not treat Shinseki well. Announcing very early that he wouldn't be renewed and who his replacement was going to be kind of made him a lame duck, because I think that Don and Paul thought he was not sufficiently reformist. My understanding is that happened; it was an unnecessary humiliation of a very distinguished officer. I was delighted that President Obama made him head of Veterans Affairs.

**Brown:** So they had a larger set of issues with him.

**Hadley:** They did.

**Brown:** Because he wasn't on board with transformation.

**Hadley:** I think it was much more that he was not willing to try to transform the Army and that's why they brought in Schoomaker, as someone from the Special Forces tradition who was willing to think a little bit more outside the box. I think their problems with Shinseki had a lot more to do with that than this notion about whether we had enough troops to do the Iraq operation because Shinseki had an opportunity to tell the President.

Now Condi, in her book that's out today, will talk about the struggle we had with the Pentagon on rear area security, where we said as you make this fast movement to Baghdad, what is the plan to leave behind to maintain order? They had a plan and we didn't find it very persuasive. We brought them back several times to brief it. One of the briefers showed a considerable amount of impatience with Condi and me as to why when they were about to start a major campaign we were fussing at them about rear area security. It turns out we should have fussed even more about rear area security because we didn't get that problem fixed and it bit us. But I think the Shinseki situation is more about transforming the Army than it is about the issue about Iraq strategy.

**Riley:** Can you tell us how you became involved in the Vulcans group, how that all came about?

**Hadley:** I can.

**Riley:** Am I missing something important between those intervals?

**Hadley:** No, I don't think so. I worked for Paul Wolfowitz under the Bush 41 administration. He was Under Secretary for International Policy and I was Assistant Secretary for International Security Policy. I reported to Paul, so I worked very closely with him for four years. I'm a big fan of Paul Wolfowitz. It's very sad how things have worked out for him but he is a fine guy and he was a great boss and a great colleague.

I guess I heard in the newspaper that he and Condi had been asked to put together a group of people to advise Governor Bush. The way I got involved was somebody, I think it was Paul, invited me to come down to Austin to talk to the President about missile defense.

**Riley:** Is this '99?

**Hadley:** It was '98 or '99. It's in Condi's book.

**Riley:** But your connection, then, would have been more through Wolfowitz. We didn't ask you about how you knew—

**Hadley:** I thought so. So I get this invitation from Paul to come down and talk about missile defense. So I go down and there's a group of us. Bob Blackwill is there and a bunch of others. We have some lunch before we met with the Governor to talk missile defense. Condi comes and sits down and says, "You've all been called down here because we would like you to serve on a panel of people to support Governor Bush as he runs for President." It was the first time I really knew much about it, much less knew that I was to be part of it.

So great. We brief the then Governor on missile defense. He's very engaged and he gets it just like that [snapping fingers]. He says, "So once I'm out of the ABM treaty what are we going to do?" We go back and say, "Well, in order to get out of the ABM treaty—" He says, "I get that. I'm going to get out of the ABM treaty. We'll figure out how we're going to do that, but I'm getting out of the airplane. I want to know, once I'm out of the treaty, what are we going to do?" Very George Bush-like.

So we started talking about the kinds of missile-defense program we ought to come up with. I was invited to one, maybe two more of those sessions, but Condi started to institutionalize the Vulcans. We had conference calls fairly routinely. We got together once or twice at my law offices, then at Shea & Gardner law office on Mass Avenue at Dupont Circle. Condi had us out to Stanford one time. We developed a couple of initiatives for the President; one was on nuclear issues, missile defense.

We worked on the speech he gave at the Citadel, which was the defense policy speech at the Reagan Library, the foreign policy speech. At one point in all of that I thanked Paul for getting me involved in it in Condi's presence. Condi came up afterward and she said, "You're here not because of Paul, you're here because of me." So I said, "Thank you, ma'am, very much."

I had gotten to know Condi a little bit under the Bush 41 administration. I hadn't worked with her very closely, though. We did a couple of things on Russia together, but I really thought she was terrific.

**Riley:** You didn't have another dog in the fight in '98 or '99? You hadn't been tracking with another potential Republican candidate?

**Hadley:** I had. For a time, my view was that if somebody wants to call me up and ask my advice, great. Lamar Alexander's people, of all folks, called me. So for a while I had a meeting or two with Lamar Alexander, who when I subsequently ran into him a year later, had no recollection whatsoever of my having had any part of his short and ill-fated effort to be President. So I didn't make much of an impact on him.

**Riley:** Best forgotten all the way around.

**Hadley:** That didn't last very long. I wasn't particularly looking. But Condi put together a great group. It was Condi and Paul and Rich Armitage and Bob Blackwill and Dov Zackheim and Bob Zoellick.

**Brown:** Was Richard Haass ever a part of that group?

**Hadley:** I don't think he was. I'm missing about two people.

**Perry:** Richard Perle.

**Hadley:** Richard Perle. Yes, these were a good group of people. They were very able folks.

**Riley:** Had you met George W. Bush before that meeting in Austin?

**Hadley:** No. But this is an example of what I told you before. Those are all people I had met in that period of time from '72 to '77 when I was at the Pentagon at the NSC. These were people that I had known off and on for 25 years, so they were a known group of people.

**Perry:** So you felt more tied to them and felt good about being on that team.

**Hadley:** Right.

**Perry:** As long as that team was backing this individual you felt good about the individual.

**Hadley:** Right. I felt good about the individual because of the team, and once I met the individual I felt good about the individual because I felt good about the individual. I listened to him at that missile-defense meeting. He was untutored on these things; he was Governor of Texas; he didn't have to do too much about missile defense. But I really liked how he handled himself; I liked the questions he asked. I liked his instincts.

I'm not a very forward person but I remember going up to him after that meeting and thanking him for having me down. I remember saying to him, "If I could have the temerity to give you one piece of advice it would be, you've got good instincts on this stuff and you ought not to be afraid to follow them." Because he did.

The other thing I remember from that period is that in meeting with him we had to develop what became the Citadel speech on defense. He wanted to talk about transforming the military. He said, for example, "Maybe we don't need more tanks, maybe we need to have something other than tanks. What should we say about that?" I, being a conservative and cautious person, said, "Mr. President, you've got to be careful about that because if you say something about, we need an alternative to the tank, something like X, Y and Z, there are a hundred people inside the Beltway who are prepared to fill the airways and the editorial pages by saying that this proves this guy knows nothing about defense because everybody knows—and then dispute whatever you have to say about the tanks. So, Mr. President, I think you have to stay at a pretty good level of generality."

He said, "Well, let me answer that for a minute. Let me tell you how I think about elections. If I run for President of the United States and don't say anything about how I want to transform the Defense Department and I become President, and I then meet with the Joint Chiefs and say, 'By the way, I want to transform how we do defense business in this country,' they'll think, hmm, this is this guy who may only be here for four years. He's got his opinions, but his opinions are his opinions, and maybe as an institution we're going to be here long after he leaves office."

Then he said, “On the other hand, if I make that a campaign issue and I campaign across the land and say we need to transform how we do the business of defense, and I get elected President, and I go to the Joint Chiefs and say, ‘I have a mandate from the American people to transform how we do defense,’ they’re going to have a different attitude toward me. I think they’ll have a different attitude toward what I ask. So I intend to campaign on the basis of what I’m going to do and I intend to do what I campaign on.”

Josh Bolten, who was head of the policy operation of the campaign and who became Deputy Chief of staff for policy, kept book. He had a list of all the campaign promises and initiatives the President made. We kept book on how many we satisfied. We met all but two of them. One was on climate change stuff, and the President changed his mind after he got in office. There was one other we didn’t meet.

That’s an interesting contrast between what I was told by some people who were briefing President Obama on the terrorism issues. I’m told by someone who was in the meeting that there was a meeting where he had his senior foreign policy people and national security people around and they were to get a briefing on the terrorist threat and the various tools that the intelligence community had, a lot of which President Bush gave to them to deal with the terrorist problem. President Obama said, “There’s one thing I want to get clear, the campaign was one thing, governing is different, and we’re going to do what’s right without regard to what we said in the campaign.”

If that’s true, and I believe it is because I believe the person who told me, it’s a very interesting difference in mindset between the attitude President Bush had and how you think about campaigning, and what role the campaign is supposed to play in our political system between President Bush and President Obama. Now, on the one hand I don’t complain about President Obama because what really happened was he got in office, he saw the intelligence, he had the burden of defending the country that was now on his shoulders, and it looked a lot different to him.

As we know, they have retained almost everything the Bush administration did, and in some sense they’ve ramped it up. I think we got criticized in ways for waterboarding three terrorists who, among them, killed lots of Americans, and the press tells us the Obama administration is running a Predator program that is killing fairly low-level terrorists as well as civilians. You know, they escape. The *New York Times*, the media are scathing. But they’re going to get called to account on that at some point. I say that with no relish, I think it’s the right thing to do but I think the problem is, in that transition from Bush to Obama, once again, we have not really had a no-kidding debate in this country about what it takes in the post-9/11 age to defend it, and the tough trade-offs that any President has to make. It’s not just about waterboarding, it’s about Predators. There’s a whole series of them, and we’ve not really had a serious, grown-up debate about what are the guidelines. So we’ve had this kind of faux argument that has been highly personalized about Bush bad/Obama good rather than saying any President has very tough choices to make and let’s be sophisticated and let’s have a public discussion with lowered voice about how hard those choices are.

**Brown:** We actually had one about ten days ago in Dallas, at the Tower Center for Political Studies, on national security and civil liberties, in which we had speakers from various points of

view. In fact, John Yoo was there debating against some local civil liberties guys. It was a serious dialogue that went on for a whole day.

**Hadley:** It has finally started. I was out at one with the Aspen Strategy Group, the Aspen Security Forum, and it was the same thing. We had Anthony Romero, the head of the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], John Yoo, and Al Gonzales. We're finally far enough away from it that I think we're going to have some of these kinds of conversations we need. Good for you.

**Brown:** Back to your meetings with George Bush in Austin. You indicated that he was enthusiastic about transformation, but who was feeding him those kinds of ideas? Rumsfeld was not yet part of the group, was he?

**Hadley:** He was not.

**Brown:** So who was he talking to? Andy Marshall and the Department of Defense, or who was giving him all of these ideas about the revolution in military affairs?

**Hadley:** Well, we were and other people who had been brought down to talk to him about some of these issues. He reads, he thinks, he talks to a lot of people. You know, it's the most remarkable thing: Presidents actually have their own ideas that bubble up from the back of their own heads. It's more than the sum of what has been put in them by these experts. But I've never said to him, "Mr. President, how did you first decide that you wanted to transform the military?"

Remember, he had been in the Reserves. There was a lot of discussion at the time in terms of more mobile, more lethal, more flexible. It was kind of in the ether. Richard Perle had been a big advocate of that. I think Richard went too far and didn't understand that, for some of the things, ground forces are about territory and territory is density in forces. And high-tech notwithstanding, there are some things you just need people to do.

But there was a debate in that time that I think the President was aware of. One of the things we did as Vulcans was try to bring that to his attention.

**Riley:** You said that you found his instincts to be good and you encouraged him to trust his instincts. Did you detect when you were dealing with him any blind spots or any areas where you felt some discomfort, either politically or in the policy area?

**Hadley:** He decided early on that he—we had a session to talk about China and he said, "I don't see us as strategic partners or strategic collaborators with China, I see us as strategic competitors." Before long he put that out in speeches. I thought it was a little provocative to put out in a campaign something you think you might do once you become President, but I thought it was a little provocative to do in a campaign. And if you add the EP-3 [Navy EP-3 ARIES II signals intelligence aircraft] incident to the thing I talked about yesterday, about his saying if China attacks Taiwan, will we defend Taiwan? Absolutely. You put those three things together and I think the Chinese thought they were going to be dealing with a very difficult character in terms of George W. Bush.

It actually worked very well for us to have a hard line on China going into the discussion with the Chinese, and then building the relationship from there. One, because I think China is a country that does admire toughness and it gets their attention. Two, when you turn out not to be as bad as they thought, there's always a certain amount of relief that contributes to building positive relationships. So I'm not sure at the end of the day it didn't work out rather well for him to have struck that tough line. I thought that was a little hasty to do. But as Dan Bartlett has said of this President and this President has said of himself, he's a gut player. He goes with his instincts and he's very comfortable doing that. Sometimes it takes your breath away. You think, that's a little too quick.

**Riley:** Sure.

**Hadley:** But that's who he is. I think one of the problems we have with the Obama administration is they're too slow and he's too analytical. At some point you've got to go with your gut because there are opportunities that you miss. I think, for example, Iran in 2009 was an opportunity that we missed. We were late to the party on Egypt. I think we could have done Libya without having to do the NATO mission if we had moved very quickly when [Muammar] Gaddafi was reeling in Tripoli and had a real creative diplomatic program to push him. I think we could have gotten rid of him in days and avoided nine months of carnage. So he is a gut player.

**Perry:** Can we go back—

**Riley:** I'm going to preempt this, Barbara, because I feel compelled to ask this because it's on the table. He's a gut player. I'll go back and ask you, in retrospect, when was his gut wrong? Where were instances where—nobody bats a thousand from their instincts.

**Hadley:** You're not going to know; it's too soon. It's the old Kissinger/Zhou Enlai, what do you think of the French Revolution? Zhou Enlai says, "Too soon to tell." So the issues people are going to look at, they're going to ask was he right to insist on going forward with elections in the Palestinian territories in 2005 when Hamas wins, because Fatah loses because they conduct a dumb election having multiple candidates against Hamas candidates, splitting the vote and all the rest. People are going to ask the question whether that was right. That was his instinct and he pushed it very hard.

People are going to ask the question was he right to support Sharon for the Gaza disengagement? Conventional wisdom now is that Gaza disengagement was a mistake. It was unilateral withdrawal in the face of terror and that's what has gotten you—in the same way that the withdrawal from Lebanon empowered Hezbollah, the withdrawal from Gaza empowered Hamas, and what Israel has gotten is rocket launches from Hamas.

I think those were decisions that he made. People are going to ask was he right to go to the Beijing Olympics? So I think there are a series of calls that he made that were partly gut, partly reflection of his values and his convictions, his sense of politics that people are going to look at in retrospect and ask did he get it right? But it's way too soon; we just don't know.

**Perry:** This just follows up with a specific example of the gut feeling, his statements in the debate in 2000 about not wanting to do nation building. In a way he almost said that that was

coming from his gut because of his views of government, and that our government shouldn't be in the business of telling other cultures and other peoples how to live, and what kinds of government they should have. That part I think certainly was coming from his gut. Is the nation-building part coming from his gut or is that something that had been talked about in your team discussion with him or debate prep? Did you work on debate prep with him?

**Hadley:** I don't recall a discussion on nation building in our group. Second, there was a lot of discussion within the Republican Party that nation building was something we didn't want to do, it was contrary to conservative principles. Three, at that point I don't think we had a view of what it was. People thought dimly about nation building in Bosnia, which didn't seem to be going particularly well. Nobody had in mind 9/11, nobody had in mind that we were going to go into Afghanistan. Nobody really, at that point, knew and thought through what we were going to do if we went into Iraq.

So I think it was, in some sense, policy in a vacuum, without too much imagination. Condi rationalizes it—I think it's a little bit of rationalization to say—well, what we didn't want was to have Special Forces conducting old ladies across the street. That's not quite nation building either. But the truth is, we were right to be skeptical; the Republican Party was skeptical. They are certainly skeptical today. You hear this resurgence in the Republicans. We shouldn't be doing nation building; we're not going to do that anymore. But I think in some sense we ended up doing what we had to do, faced with the situations we faced.

Some people say that the allergy to nation building led us to wait too long in terms of Afghanistan and Iraq, to begin engaging in nation building, which we had to do if we were to lead successfully. I don't recall that as something that caused us to hang back. It's what I said yesterday. You're faced with a concrete situation, and a lot of the ideology falls away when you think about how are we going to get oil production and how are we going to get security to these areas? How are we going to get schools built? Necessity is the mother of invention. I guess we ended up in nation building, but what we were really trying to do was deal with a postconflict situation that was pretty daunting and needed to be addressed.

You asked me one other thing.

**Riley:** About debate prep.

**Hadley:** I didn't do debate prep for the President. I did debate prep for the Vice President.

**Riley:** Two questions or two issue areas for you to reflect back on. Do you recall any discussions during the Vulcan period? I don't know whether your involvement intensified as the election got closer or not, or whether you were integrated with any discussion about terrorism? Was that on anybody's radar in this period?

**Hadley:** There was some but I think the view all of us had about terrorism was that it was a problem we were going to have to manage. I think that was the attitude. It's pretty interesting that Al Gore, who at that point had been Vice President eight years, and George W. Bush, then a Governor in Texas and had immigration problems but not terrorism problems, running for President of the United States and terrorism doesn't come up in the campaign.



Al Gore doesn't say, "What are you going to do about terrorism, George W. Bush? I've been here for eight years and I can tell you the country faces a great threat." There was none of that. You could have thought this is really money to be made. This is the veteran against the rookie. "What about terrorism? What do you know about al-Qaeda, George W. Bush?" Interesting, it doesn't come up. It's not brought up in the debates, it's not brought up by the questioners in the debates, and Al Gore does not make it part of his campaign.

So I think everybody is in the mindset that we have this terrorism problem, we have this al-Qaeda problem, and we're going to have to manage it.

**Riley:** But beyond that, there wasn't a lot of proactive thinking.

**Hadley:** Not a lot of proactive thinking. Now, two things happen. We come in and early on we get a briefing by Dick Clarke that is all about al-Qaeda, which Condi and I both take. Secondly, Sandy [Samuel] Berger says, "You guys have been out for eight years and I'm going to tell you that one of the things that's going to be different is that you're going to spend a lot more time on terrorism than you ever imagined." We took that to heart. So that's a priority and we're going to have to develop what our strategy is about dealing with terrorism.

Our approach was to say to Dick Clarke, we heard his briefing, we heard what his strategy was to deal with the terrorism problem, and quite frankly, we thought it was very tactical. He wanted \$10 million, \$20 million to go to [Ahmad Shah] Massoud in the Northern Alliance. He wanted Predators. He wanted one or two other things, and our view was that's a tactical approach to terrorism, and we need to do something more strategic.

We need to change the table. We need to get the Taliban to throw out al-Qaeda. In order to get the Taliban to throw out al-Qaeda, we've got to get Pakistan to pressure the Taliban. In order to get Pakistan to pressure the Taliban, we have to restore and get our relationship with Pakistan back on track because we had sanctioned them into almost isolation, as far as we were concerned. In order to do that we've also got to get our relationship with India right, because we don't want to do Pakistan at the expense of India because we want to have a strategic relationship with India, something the President talked about in the campaign.

So our view was to say to Dick Clarke, you keep your staff, you stay on. You keep doing everything you've been doing for President Clinton. You just keep doing that. Meanwhile we're going to go over here in this other box and we're going to develop what we consider a more strategic approach to dealing with al-Qaeda. We thought we had time to do that. Dick was doing everything he thought he needed to be doing to fight the terrorism problem.

We were going to see if we could change the chessboard in a pretty dramatic way. In order to do that we had to move all the pieces I just described. Of course, we figured that out and had it together, as irony of ironies, and had a document for the President to sign off on, which was submitted to the President on September 11, 2001.

**Brown:** Was anything like Operation Iraqi Freedom discussed among the Vulcans?

**Riley:** That gets to the other issue area I wanted to raise. The Iraqi Freedom Act passes in '98 with support of some people who were involved in the Vulcans. So the question is, is Iraq itself a topic of discussion and consideration during this period?

**Hadley:** Not with the Vulcans. I remember that Paul Wolfowitz in this period had had an idea that we ought to recognize a provisional Iraqi government in some portion of the country. We had no-fly zones in the south and the north. So we would create a safe haven in which freedom-loving Iraqis could go and be protected by air power. That would begin to rally people in the country and they would begin to build forces. He wrote this in some articles that he had out there.

That was an idea that Paul pushed at this time. I don't remember much conversation about it among the Vulcans when we came in office. One of the things we did was we said, "We have to develop an Iraq strategy," and so Zal Khalilzad, who you could interview and you ought to interview for this oral history because he's a key actor in a lot of this. Zal does the transition for Don Rumsfeld over at the Pentagon and then Don Rumsfeld decides not to hire him, not to give him a position in the Pentagon, which is very interesting.

So I hear about this. I worked with Zal under Cheney under Bush 41, because Zal had worked for Scooter [I. Lewis Libby] and had had the kind of policy planning at the DoD [Department of Defense] and I thought Zal was a very smart guy. So I went to Condi and said, "Don isn't going to take Zal, let's bring him over to the NSC." Condi says, of course, great. So Zal comes over to the NSC. He's spurned by Rumsfeld, who subsequently decides that Zal is the best thing he has ever seen because he sees Zal in Afghanistan and Iraq. Zal completely wins over Don, and Don becomes Zal's biggest champion. But at the time in terms of transition, they didn't hit it off.

So we brought over Zal and told him we need a strategy for Iraq. He develops one in the summer of 2001, under the deputies. There are documents that have this strategy. It doesn't really get to the principals for much of a discussion. I'm not sure it ever really got to the President of the United States, but it's a very long-term strategy of trying to create and then exploit fissures in the regime, to try and build up over time an opposition in the country to Saddam [Hussein] as a way of achieving regime change.

There are proposals to do covert action activities. There are also proposals to do covert training in the country of an opposition force, and training of a force explicitly outside the country. The genius of Afghanistan was that with less than 1,000 Special Forces soldiers and CIA covert officers in Afghanistan, we overthrew the Taliban because the ground forces are Afghans. Great model: ground forces, Afghans; enablers, small cadre of Americans with high-technology precision weapons.

We thought it would be nice if we could make the ground forces in Iraq opposition forces so it doesn't need to be us, or at least doesn't need to be so much of us, recognizing that overthrowing Saddam is going to be a lot bigger deal than overthrowing the Taliban.

So we develop a strategy that will take years to achieve, which I've described. That's what we think we ought to be doing. Then, of course, 9/11 happens. As the President says in his book, 9/11 changes everything about how we view the problem of Saddam, and not just Iraq but also

Iran and North Korea, places where there are regimes that both support terrorism and pursue weapons of mass destruction. That raises the risk that those weapons of mass destruction will get into the hands of terrorists and that we'll have a 9/11 that won't kill just 3,000 Americans but will kill 300,000 Americans.

Then that slow, incremental strategy about dealing with Iraq no longer does it. At that point the President says, "I'm not going to sit by and wallow while threats gather." So it clearly changes how President Bush views Iraq, and he talks about it in his book. At that point we're in a different place in terms of a strategy for dealing with Iraq and the kind of strategy we developed in the summer of 2001.

**Riley:** Steve, let me ask two questions about things we've already touched on. I want to go back and pick up two loose ends before we get into this because I have a clock-management problem. One is the USS *Cole* bombing that occurs I think in October of 2000. Does that have the effect of getting anybody's attention, or does it create within the network a renewed sense that this could be an issue?

**Hadley:** It's of a piece, it's another attack. We've had the bombing of the World Trade Center in '94. We've had the East Africa attacks of '98. We've had in there this very shadowy attack in Saudi Arabia that Louis Freeh thinks the Iranians are behind. So it's another attack that kills a couple of dozen sailors. Our reaction is, this shows the need for a different strategy because the reactions we've had in the past to attacks like that clearly have not deterred attacks in the future. If we respond to the *Cole* with what's an off-the-shelf response, the kind of responses we've done in the past, it won't do any good and it will suggest that this administration is going to continue the same policies that have not worked in terms of deterring al-Qaeda in the past administration.

So if anything, it reinforced the notion that we need a different approach because what we're now doing isn't working; we need something that is more strategic rather than responding tit for tat, which is how we viewed pinprick, cruise missile attacks. We need to do something much more strategic. I think that was the reaction people had to the *Cole* event. Not that it didn't get our attention, not that it wasn't serious, but it confirmed the notion that what we were doing wasn't working, and therefore we needed to do something different, we needed a different strategy.

**Riley:** OK, the other loose end was on Richard Clarke. There was a change in organizational structure. You were saying he needed to keep doing what he was doing, but what he was doing, as I recall, had him engaged with the principals, right? During the Clinton administration there was a decision taken fairly early in your term where he wouldn't be a part of that structure. I wonder if you could talk about why the decision was taken. It looks from the outside almost as though he is being demoted.

**Hadley:** He tried to suggest it that way. He was doing personal emails with the President of the United States, a lot of emails that Bill Clinton sent to him directly. That's not how President Bush wanted to organize his NSC. He wasn't going to deal with it. He was not going to be Dick Clarke's action officer. He wanted it to go through a structure. Therefore, we put Dick into the structure we had with everybody. He had access to Condi, he had access to me. He came to the

deputies' meetings. I think Condi had him at the principals' meetings when we talked about the issues. But it was a little different. It wasn't a demotion of him as much as the fact that President Bush had a different way of organizing the NSC staff and interacting with his officials.

Dick wanted to be the National Security Advisor for Terrorism, which is what he had been under President Clinton, as far as I could tell. That's not how we wanted to do it. In some sense, for me, having been through Iran-Contra, it had a little bit of echoes of Ollie North. Remember, Ollie North very interestingly had both the functional responsibility for the Contras and the geographic responsibility for Latin America. He got it so that he had a reporting channel exclusively to Poindexter and cut out, for example, the Executive Secretary whose name was—he was a Navy admiral, very nice guy; he's now over at SAIC [Science Applications International Corporation]. It got him into trouble because there were no oversights, no checks.

Our view was that Dick Clarke is a very confident guy, knows he knows the right answer, and he needs some checks and balances. So the notion that he would continue to be National Security Advisor for Terrorism, reporting directly to the President of the United States, that's a disaster waiting to happen, as it had been in the Iran-Contra affair. So part of it was my own sense that, from that experience, you've got to be careful with these very operational personalities who want to try to run operations out of the NSC staff with a reporting channel direct and exclusively to the National Security Advisor and maybe direct and exclusively to the President of the United States. We learned from the Iran-Contra affair that is a very dangerous way to run the NSC.

**Riley:** Were you considered for any other positions other than Deputy National Security Advisor? Was that the job that you wanted or expected coming in?

**Hadley:** I did not. I wasn't looking for a job actually. I had young children at home and a working spouse, but I did want to get George W. Bush elected President of the United States. I thought he would be good and I think he was. So I was not looking for a job. My wife said, "If they offer you a job, you can do it but the one thing I don't want you to do is work in the White House." [laughter]

She said that because she'd been in this town. She was born and raised in Washington. White Houses are dangerous places. If you think about National Security Advisors, one was indicted and sent to prison; he was pardoned so he didn't have to go to prison, but he was sentenced to prison time. [Robert] Bud McFarlane was pressed to the point of attempted suicide. Dick Allen was publicly disgraced for having Japanese watches in his safe.

Investigations get launched, people get indicted, it's a dangerous—there's a public humiliation problem and a legal risk problem. You can control some of it but not all of it. Stuff hits you when you weren't even looking. You didn't even know you needed to be looking.

**Riley:** And you're not making a fortune.

**Hadley:** But public service is service. The compensation is that you get to represent this great country of ours on really important things that affect the world. That's your compensation. The compensation for service is you get to serve this great country. I mean that, it's really a thrill.

So Colin Powell said, “Why don’t you come and be Under Secretary for Political Affairs?” which I thought would be pretty peachy. But Condi said that she wanted me to be her deputy. Then she, of course, did what you’d expect her to do. So I got the phone call from the President of the United States. “Condi tells me she’s asked you to be her deputy. You’re going to accept, right?” So the negotiations—He says, “Do it for 18 months and then we’ll find some other place for you. Just do it for 18 months; get her off to start.” So I said, “Great, I’ll do that.”

So 18 months goes, and three years into it Dina Powell says, “There’s an opening at the United Nations. I think you would be a great UN Ambassador. Can I float your name for UN Ambassador?”

I talked to Ann [Hadley] about that and she’s very enthusiastic because the UN Ambassador gets an apartment—I’m being facetious—gets an apartment in the Waldorf Astoria and there’s apparently a box at the Metropolitan Opera that goes with the apartment. So my wife thinks this sounds fantastic. I’m kidding, but that would have been a fun job. So I said yes to Dina, that she could put my name into that. So she puts my name in and it comes to the President of the United States and the President says, “No way.” She says he’s very nice. He says, “I want Hadley as close to me as I can get him for the duration of my administration.” So that ends any discussion about my taking other jobs.

On the other hand, if you look at my career, the NSC jobs were in some sense the jobs I had been trained for over my entire professional career. It’s a glorified staff job. It isn’t operational, it isn’t line management. It’s a glorified staff job but you do both strategy and you do detail. As a lawyer you learn to play both, and that’s really what the job takes to do it right. You’ve got to be able to talk to the President about grand strategy and world view and all the rest, and at the same time when he turns to you and he says, “I’m about to sign this thing. Have you read it and are you comfortable with it?” Or, “I’m about to approve this operation. Have you vetted it and are you confident this is going to work?” You need to be able to get into the details. The legal training and the foreign policy training I had gave me as good a set of preparations for the job as you could get. So in some sense it was the right job for me.

The President, as I said, was very good about assessing people, assessing their strengths and weaknesses and putting them in a job that maximizes the strengths and minimizes the weaknesses. He figured the NSC was a good place for me, and he probably was right.

**Riley:** Did you have a nickname or did he just call you Hadley all the time?

**Hadley:** Dan Bartlett had a nickname for me that he articulated in the presence of the President, and I said, “Mr. President, you can call me anything but that.” That, of course, meant that for the next year the President called me only that, and I can’t even remember what it was. So mostly I was Hadley.

**Riley:** Mostly you were Hadley, OK. The run-up before 9/11, retrospectively what does that look like? What are you spending most of your time on? There’s the issue with the aircraft going down in China. Evidently you were involved in it as there are a couple of hits on the timeline.

**Hadley:** One, we’re getting the NSC staff organized and staffed. Two, we’re waiting for deputies. I’m supposed to chair a Deputies Committee and I don’t have any deputies. I’m not

sure if we talked about it, but one of the experiences I had under Bush 41 was that Brent started out with the Henry Kissinger model. You come in on January 20th, you issue a number of study requests. So he issued a request to do a review of strategic forces, do a review of conventional forces. So I am designated, designated not confirmed, to be ISP [Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy]. Paul is designated, not confirmed, to be Under Secretary for Policy, but he is still our Ambassador to Indonesia.

So he takes off. I'm left to run these studies, Presidentially directed, on strategic forces and conventional forces. There are no political appointees in the Department of Defense in January, February, and March of 1989. So I'm running these big, supposedly reviews for the new President, to set the policies for the new President, to operationalize his vision for the new team. I've not worked with the President. I had barely met the President and I'm dealing with professional civil service folks at the office director level, or maybe Deputy Assistant Secretary level, who have only worked under the prior administration. It's nuts.

We came up with a pretty good strategic forces study and a lousy conventional study. I also didn't get the Secretary of Defense buy-in; I did it as a staff exercise. I realized when I briefed him on it that I had not brought the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense along. It was a real fiasco. But it showed the problem of doing these major strategy reviews early in an administration because you don't have any people in place. So part of the thing you're doing is waiting for your deputies to show up, and that doesn't start happening until April, May, and June.

So when people say, "Well, you had nine months to get an alternative strategy on al-Qaeda," no, you didn't. Once people got up and got in their jobs you had about four months, and those come right into summer. So it's a bad situation. But we're getting the NSC staffed. We're trying to figure out what our priorities are going to be, some of which we did during the transition. We had a pretty good idea of what those would be. We had the EP-3 incident so you're doing crisis management.

We're doing the missile defense, which is one of the things from the campaign that we've got to get started and that we do. We're developing our strategy on Iraq, which we talked about, and we're developing our strategic approach to dealing with al-Qaeda. Then you're dealing with all the other cats and dogs that come up. Those are the things that I recall being the principal focus. Remember that in this time frame we're doing missile defense, get out of the ABM treaty, but also pretty quickly we're doing strategic arms reductions with the Russians, which comes six months after the President announces we're withdrawing from the ABM treaty, therefore giving the lie to the conventional wisdom, which has been conventional wisdom since the ABM treaty and the interim agreement, that you had to constrain defenses in order to bring down strategic force levels. That was the article of faith among the strategic priesthood.

The President flips it on its head by saying the Cold War is over, your strategic forces don't threaten us, ours don't threaten you, and we both have a problem of nuclear weapons from third countries. Let's get out of the ABM treaty, cooperate on that, and by the way, since our strategic forces don't threaten each other, let's lower them. He's able to both break out of the ABM treaty and invite the Russians to cooperate in missile defense. It's clear he is going to do missile

defense one way or another and get the Russians at the same time to agree to dramatic reductions in strategic nuclear forces, something that the priesthood said that you couldn't do, and he did.

We tried to break the link between strategic forces and defenses, something that unfortunately in the ratification of this new START agreement, the current administration has relinked, just the way the priesthood thinks they ought to be linked. Too bad.

**Riley:** Did you find Sandy Berger's warning to be true?

**Hadley:** Certainly did after 9/11.

**Riley:** Before 9/11?

**Hadley:** Sure, because one of our major initiatives was to find an alternative to—I was doing two things. One, I was trying to help Dick Clarke to move his agenda, which meant an awful lot of time trying to get the Predator ready to go. I'm new to the job and the issue is how hard do you push the CIA? How hard do you push the Air Force? We're not operational. They are the ones with the people and the resources and the programs. I think it was frustrating for Dick. So the things I was doing were to try to be supportive of Dick Clarke, and there was also running the process and developing an overall strategy. So yes, that was stuff I spent no time doing under Bush 41.

**Riley:** This is sort of a dual question. One is, how difficult is it for you to get—schooled up is not exactly the right word but it's close to what I'm getting at. You've had a kind of channeled experience in the government, doing a lot of arms control. You've written on that issue. You had the experience in the Defense Department. You're coming into a position for which that is important but it's only one aspect of the job. How steep a learning curve are you confronting on this entire range of other issues when you come in?

**Hadley:** Big learning curve. Everybody does. Brent, when he became National Security Advisor, if you think about it—under Ford he gets it because he's a military officer who just happens to be made deputy and he moves up when Kissinger loses his other hat. But in the period between Ford and Bush 41, Brent is basically an arms control expert, if you look at his writings and what he was talking about at that time. So you can decide what you think "big" was. If you think about Henry Kissinger, Henry had written a book about nuclear weapons. I think for any National Security Advisor or deputy, it's a huge learning curve because you have the spectrum all across the issues. But that, of course, is one of the things that's fun about it because there are not too many jobs in Washington, if you think about it, certainly none below a Deputy Secretary level, where you actually have responsibility for the full range of issues.

So once you get to that Deputy Secretary level, by definition it's a big learning curve for anybody because it's the first level in the government where you're responsible for the full range of issues. So it's a big learning curve for everybody.

But as a lawyer, all the time, you get a client who comes in and while the subject matter of the law is familiar, its application into different industries is very different. So as a lawyer you're always coming in with a new client having to learn a new industry. So the notion that you get in there, you figure it out, you upload the information you need, you do what you need to do with it,

and then you send it to storage and go to the next problem, where you take more information, organize it, upload it, deal with it, solve your problem, and then off you go to the next one. That's what lawyers do. In a way, that's kind of what academics do. So I felt that was not unfamiliar.

**Riley:** How are you learning to deal with the increased level of chatter that's getting reported to you about terrorist threats before 9/11? You go through the briefing materials, Clarke and I'm trying to recall who else, I guess [George] Tenet had come in at some point during the summer, to say we're getting signs that something is about to happen here. Is it hard to know how to calibrate the veracity of what's coming to you at that point?

**Hadley:** This is probably the thing that has been written about, analyzed, and documented more than anything else in this period running up to 9/11. It's in the 9/11 Commission Report, it's in Condi's testimony before the Congress, it's in the President's book, it's in Condi's book. My shorthand of it is that it's still probably not penetrated the public consciousness, because you still have people pull out that August 6th, 2001, PDB [President's daily brief], which we declassified. There is clearly increased chatter and we are getting that in the intelligence.

The chatter is about an attack overseas. So the first set of things that are done is turn up your ears, get more intelligence, and start thinking about buttoning up our embassies and military facilities overseas because they are potentially the targets. Then it's not Dick Clarke, it's Condi who calls Dick in and says, "We'd better make sure that we have things buttoned up at home, so why don't you bring the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and agencies and make sure that we're doing everything we should be doing at home." It's Condi who brings that suggestion to Dick, which he does.

Again, I think it's in Condi's testimony to the Congress, there are a number of things that are done to raise alert levels here at home, including circulars issued by the FAA [Federal Aviation Agency] having to deal with aircraft. So our view is, we've done everything that we could do against what is the following threat situation. Osama bin Laden continues to want to strike the United States. This is not news. What do you do with that?

Second, to the extent that there is anything specific that suggests the attack is overseas, even then you don't have actionable intelligence, who is going to do what, when, and where? That's what you need—who, what, when, where. There's none of that. Well, absent that, it's very tough to do anything. I think one of the things that's going on that we don't realize at the time, and it really comes out when Sandy Berger gets into his trouble at the National Archives in the wake of the millennium plot, which was a homeland threat, Dick Clarke has sent Sandy Berger a long list of things that ought to be done to organize ourselves better domestically to deal with the terrorist threat. We scrubbed it.

That memo, which comes out in the post-9/11 period, is never given to us. In fact, it's never acted upon by Sandy, and that's the memo he's trying to get all copies of and shove in his socks. So one of the things we don't realize at the time is that, at least maybe in Dick's head, there's this problem that they've actually generated a list of things to do to better organize ourselves to deal with the homeland threat that never get implemented.



**Riley:** And he thinks that you've seen this?

**Hadley:** He never mentions it to us and it's not anything that was in the materials he gave us at the transition.

**Riley:** OK.

**Hadley:** So what we find in that is we're not really well organized on the domestic side because, the '94 attack on the World Trade Center notwithstanding, the terrorist threat is still viewed mostly as an overseas threat. The NSC is great about getting the right people to talk about things overseas. But when you talk about the homeland, you start talking about the Department of Transportation and local law enforcement and the Coast Guard and all those other things; they're not members of the National Security Council. They don't come to NSC meetings.

So when Condi finally says to Dick that we've got a domestic aspect of this, why don't you bring the domestic agencies together and make sure that we're doing all we can, in a way it points out the problem that after 9/11 is so clear, that we're not organized to deal with a terrorist threat at home, which is why you get a Homeland Security Advisor and why you get a Homeland Security Council and why you get finally a Department of Homeland Security.

Finally, you get a combatant commander charged with defending the homeland, which before 9/11 we did not have. We have combatant commanders all over the world with jurisdiction all over the world, except for a combatant commander responsible for defending the United States of America. Pretty interesting. That's what's fixed after 9/11 with NORTHCON [U.S. Northern Command]. Somebody is given the task that you've got to defend the United States. So we were all caught and we paid a price. The country paid a price.

**Perry:** You were in Crawford that August prior to 9/11? Is that the first time?

**Hadley:** I think so.

**Perry:** That's according to our timeline; I think it says that you're there. So what is your job when you're on the road with the President, you're on vacation with him? I presume you're not on vacation; your work goes on and you're having to continue to brief him. And is Condi Rice there as well?

**Hadley:** No, either Condi or I would be with the President. Sometimes we were both with him, but that was rare. Who goes would depend on what the President was doing. I might be down there and if there was an NSC meeting or something she might fly in for the day. Your job is to staff the President. So you sit with him during the morning intel briefing and you're there to bring to the President's attention and to brief him on things that he needs to know over the course of the day while he's working or running or mountain biking or clearing brush. Also, if there are head-of-state calls, business that needs to be done, you're there to help the President do it. If you're the deputy you're also running the staff from there and you're doing the Deputies Committee. So you're working all day. Some days early on I would go out and clear brush, sort of solidarity with the team, solidarity with the President. But you're pretty much working.

I don't remember if I was with him when he gets that August 6th memo. That's interesting. No one has asked me that question so far as I know.

**Perry:** Were you there for the whole month of August? So would you have been in Crawford on August 6th?

**Hadley:** I don't know. It's available from my diary but I don't have access to my diary. I know I remember talking to Tenet about it in September, I think after 9/11. He's worried about what that thing meant. The interesting thing is, when he talks to the 9/11 Commission, he talks about coming to Condi and briefing Condi, and it's no big deal. He so testifies before the 9/11 Commission. Then he gets out of the CIA and he writes his book. By the time his book comes out there are red lights flashing, all this kind of stuff.

As Condi says in her book, that's not what he—and if this PDB is so important, Tenet is on vacation and it's briefed to the President by his briefer. So if it's all hands on deck, red lights flashing, why is Tenet on vacation?

**Perry:** You mentioned a diary; you mean just your daily calendar?

**Hadley:** Yes.

**Perry:** Not a narrative?

**Hadley:** I don't have a narrative, I took no notes—I mean, I took notes but they're all in the Presidential Library. There are no secret Hadley diaries anywhere.

**Riley:** Have you told your story of 9/11 elsewhere, where you were and what you did?

**Hadley:** I remember very little about it, oddly enough. I was in the Sit Room with Condi and the staff when the second plane hits. Condi talks about it in her book. She then goes to the PEOC [Presidential Emergency Operations Center] to join the Vice President; I stay in the Sit Room to help run the operation there. Dick Clarke has stood up his working group in one of the conference rooms.

**Perry:** Had you gone initially to the Sit Room when you heard that the first plane hit?

**Hadley:** No, I was there—

**Perry:** You were there for a regularly scheduled meeting?

**Hadley:** Right. I remember Frank Miller being there. Dick Clarke comes up and says, "There are rumors that there is another plane heading for Washington and it could be, probably likely is, headed for the White House, which means all the people here are vulnerable. Do you think we ought to send them home?"

I said that I thought the President and the Vice President needed the Sit Room to be available to manage this crisis and we had to stay at our posts and run the risk. I asked, are you guys

comfortable with that? I remember Dick was there and Frank was there, maybe a couple of others. They said yes, that's exactly what we should do.

So we're there. Twenty minutes later Condi calls and says, "You need to come down to the PEOC, I need you down here." I said, "Condi, I think I'm needed here in the Sit Room." I had this macho thing: We're going to take the risk. She says, "Well, I need you down here. They can take care of themselves. Frank is there and Dick is there; you come on down here." So I then leave to the safety to the PEOC. I felt a little bad about that. But thanks to those heroic people who died on the field in Pennsylvania, the airplane that was coming to Washington didn't get here and a lot of people are alive today because of them.

So I go to the PEOC and I am kibitzing, but mostly I establish an open line, because I don't trust our ability to get communications through, I have an open line to Tenet, and I keep the phone there and I pick it up from time to time and we chat. I pass information to the Vice President. I also have an open line to the operations center at the Joint Chiefs of Staff so we can communicate with them. We can't get Don Rumsfeld initially on that line, so I'm dealing with the military directly. The Vice President is relaying directions from the President about taking out airplanes that are unidentified, that whole sequence, and I'm passing those instructions to the Pentagon, which is not a comfortable position to be in.

One of the reasons is because the Secretary of Defense is in the chain and he's not on the phone. So one of the things we're trying to do is get Don into the conversation. That happens, and Dick Cheney writes about that in his book. That's what I remember doing, but I'm—in those days I was an inveterate notetaker and I realized a couple of months after 9/11, when we were getting ready for inquiries and stuff, I have not a single note from that day, which I think is an indication of how preoccupied we all were with what we were doing. But as a consequence, I don't really have any records of what I was doing. That's my recollection.

I remember being in on when the President was beamed in and we would have conversations between the Vice President and the President. Again, kibitzing and talking to Condi.

**Brown:** Can you remember anything about how you reacted to the recognition that an order had been given that, if necessary, they were going to shoot down a civilian airliner? Did anything hit you at that time, or did you just pass it on?

**Hadley:** No, it's huge. There's nothing more serious than that moment. One of the things I testified to the 9/11 Commission person who was really looking into that and did an almost ticktock of that event, and I don't know whether that is in the public 9/11 Commission Report or not. If it is, it's interesting reading. It's not in Cheney's book and I haven't said this and I can't recall it specifically, but I am uncomfortable with the way Cheney has given the order because I think it's too open-ended. I think the pilot needs to be told that there has to be some determination made by the pilot of threat and some effort to force down before shoot-down.

I remember going back to the Vice President and saying, "Mr. Vice President, I think what you really mean to be saying is thus and so." In my recollection he says, "That's exactly right." Then I go back and I revise the order to build in some of these procedural safeguards, if you will. I

can't recall the specifics, but I think I did at the time I gave the interview to the 9/11 Commission. It may be in their records if you care about it.

**Riley:** Sure.

**Hadley:** So this is a huge burden. As the Vice President says in his book, when we get news that an airplane has gone down in Pennsylvania, the first thing that goes through his mind and the first thing that goes through my mind is, *My God, we've shot down an airplane and we've killed a bunch of people*. You're praying that that isn't what happened, and our prayers were answered and it was not what happened, quite the contrary. Some brave people took down that airplane. But that's the kind of place you don't want to be.

**Riley:** Sure. Did you talk to your family that morning?

**Hadley:** I don't have any recollection of it. Ann tells me that I called in the afternoon about 3 o'clock and simply said, "Are you OK?" She said, "Yes, I'm OK. I'll talk to you when I can talk to you." But there are a million stories. Ann's story is, she's at work and she learns that there have been the attacks. She learns somehow, whether it's over the radio or someone comes in and tells her that there's a report that there's a plane headed toward the White House. Heading to Washington and it may be headed to the White House. What she does is she leaves her job, goes down, gets in the car to go pick up our two daughters, one who's at, I think, I have to work the dates, but I think they're at two different schools. Maybe they're both at St. Patrick's or maybe one is at St. Patrick's and one is at Holton-Arms. She says if the White House is going to be hit and the girls' father is going to be killed, I don't want them to hear about it at school in a room full of children; I want them to hear about it at home with me.

**Perry:** She's working at the Justice Department, right?

**Hadley:** She's at the Justice Department; she's an assistant U.S. attorney. So she just, without thinking, gets in the car, goes and picks up the girls, and takes them home. No big deal. There are people who lost their lives that day, but everybody is coping. It's a traumatic day for everybody.

**Riley:** When do you get home?

**Hadley:** I don't really remember. Condi got her time records for her book, although I don't think it's in her book. In her view, we didn't get home very much in the next few weeks, but I think late that night. I just don't remember.

**Riley:** OK.

**Hadley:** You're working. You're focused.

**Riley:** So do you have many recollections of that week? You end up at the War Cabinet meeting at Camp David. I think that's on Saturday or Sunday; 9/11 is on a Tuesday. Do you have any recollections about what you were doing in that interval? What are the issues that are presenting themselves to you and—

**Brown:** With that, can you hone in a bit on the discussion about Iraq? How early does that come into your discussions? I know there has been a lot written about it, but the question is, how do you recall that?

**Hadley:** That's probably the most overdone piece of the story. What I remember that we're doing between there and Camp David is we've got to put in place the policies we need to wage this war. So one of the things we do is we get a Presidential, a policy document—I've now forgotten what we called it—that sets the policy parameters of the war against al-Qaeda. The other thing we need to do is we need to put in place a covert action finding that sets the guidelines for the intelligence community.

**Perry:** Do you mean the AUMF [Authorization for Use of Military Force]?

**Hadley:** No.

**Perry:** This is prior to—

**Hadley:** Policy guidance. This would be a Presidential decision memorandum, that's what we called them, where the President gives guidance. So one of the things I'm doing is pulling the deputies together and drafting those two documents. I remember there's a meeting the next day in the morning where we scope out that document. The President gives us direction; he says he wants to review the policy document in the afternoon. So one of the things I'm doing is trying to get those drafted. One of the things I remember is an interesting discussion of what should be our objective.

People say, "We know our objective; it's defeat al-Qaeda." Is it defeat al-Qaeda? Well, it's eliminate al-Qaeda. Eliminate al-Qaeda? You mean you think we're going to eliminate every al-Qaeda? The President actually gets engaged in this conversation and where we decide—These things matter. You don't really realize when you're doing them how much they're going to matter in retrospect. One of the things I would give is—the statement of the objective is probably the most important thing you do. Everybody goes to the how, the tools, but the statement of objective is really terribly important.

The answer was, well it's not eliminate al-Qaeda. What we want to do, though, is we want to eliminate al-Qaeda as a threat to our way of life. That is to say, we're not going to eliminate all al-Qaeda, but if we can get it to the point where it doesn't change how we live, the openness of our society, our protection of human rights, all these other things, that's what we want to do. Even if al-Qaeda is going to be around, it doesn't threaten our way of life. Then the question is, well what about our allies? Don't we have an obligation to them? This is going to be a global struggle. Eliminate al-Qaeda as a threat to our way of life and to that of our allies.

Well, that's a pretty interesting statement. If you think about where we are now in al-Qaeda and think about what [Leon] Panetta is saying or what John McLaughlin said at the Aspen Security Conference, they're saying basically we can anticipate the elimination of al-Qaeda as a threat to our way of life; that is to say, they're really not going to be able to do it. And we've done all of that even though we've paid an enormous cost in terms of dollars and in terms of establishing bureaucracy. Yes, it's aggravating to go through airports, though I actually think it's rather amusing, contrary to some alarmists. It hasn't changed our society; we are open and it has not

resulted in the abridgment of human rights and civil and political liberties that people thought. So I think we actually got the objective right. Ten years after, I think it's still the right objective and we are maybe close to achieving it.

The other big issue is, if it's a Global War on Terror or a War on Terrorism globally, then is it just al-Qaeda? How about the Basque separatists in Spain? How about the FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] down in Colombia? That was a view of some people, let's go after them all. That's a pretty big order. So the other thing we decide is, this is really about al-Qaeda and other organizations of global reach, the ones who can threaten our way of life.

So we basically say, and I have to be careful because I can't remember whether this is the policy finding, which I feel comfortable about, or the covert action finding, but in any event we decide that we're going to basically go after those organizations of global reach and we're going to list them and make a decision. Is this an organization that is of global reach and therefore it's under the policy and potentially it's something that could be covered by the covert action finding?

These are the things that I remember we were working over in those first few days, to set up the discussion at Camp David, which is, OK, if we've got our policy in place, what is the strategy we're going to follow to achieve the objectives of that policy?

One of the things the President does early on, and I can remember going over to [Robert] Mueller and [John] Ashcroft on the margins of that meeting at Camp David and saying, "You know, as the President has said—" because the President did say it very early, and it's in the President's book and I think it's in Condi's book, to Mueller and Ashcroft, "You guys have a new mission, it's not just law enforcement. When a crime occurs, figuring out who did it, putting them through the criminal system and punishing them to deter other criminals. We don't want to be attacked in the first place, so you now have a new mission, which is a preventive mission, which is to get the intelligence that allows us to disrupt plots before they occur."

Interestingly enough, the President said very clearly, "And if in order to do that, you compromise the evidence that you would need to prosecute them and put them in jail, that's OK. It's more important that we prevent the initial attack than we are able to throw people in jail." Now, we weren't at the point about indefinite detention and all the rest, but what's interesting about it is the President's instinct was—and it's the notion of "at war"—and if you're at war, one of the things you want to do is prevent attacks, not simply hold people to account after they've done the attack. That gives you some deterrence, but we're not in deterrence mode, we're in an even stronger mode of protection and prevention.

So Mueller and Ashcroft have a new mission and it results in reorganization, the creation in both organizations of a National Security Division charged with getting the intelligence that allows those agencies to act before the fact to prevent attacks. It's a whole different mindset and the President—this is what's interesting about it—is leading people's thinking. He is better and faster than anybody around him at figuring out what the consequences are of this new world that we're in. So it's the President who comes up with, "We're going to make it clear that if you harbor terrorists you're going to be treated as a terrorist." That's the President.

The new mission for the CIA and the FBI, that's the President. The decision when he hears the options from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to say that those options for dealing with Afghanistan do not reflect the seriousness that we need to convey about our willingness to prosecute the War on Terror and eliminate al-Qaeda as a threat to our way of life and to that of our allies. I want to see options for boots on the ground. Because his—you asked about the *Cole*. His view is we have a problem after the '94 attack on the World Trade Center, in '98 in terms of East Africa, and then the *Cole*. We're doing tit for tat. I want to send the message that the war is on and we're going to win, and we're prepared to put lives at risk in order to win.

It's very clear from the records that Osama bin Laden is astonished by the President's response and is caught off guard. He assumed it would be more tit for tat. It's also why I never considered, Richard Haass notwithstanding, Iraq to be a war of choice—because I think it was a war of last resort, having gone through 12 years, 17 UN Security Council resolutions, no-fly zones in the north, no-fly zones in the south, cruise missile attacks in Iraq, a policy of regime change, three different inspection regimes, a couple of different versions of smart sanctions and then smarter sanctions. We were out of arrows. So I consider Iraq a war of last resort, and I do not consider Afghanistan a war of necessity, as Richard does, because I consider it a war of choice.

Was an American President going to have to respond after 9/11? Of course. Did an American President have to respond the way George W. Bush did, putting boots on the ground, and after giving the Taliban an opportunity to turn over the al-Qaeda leadership and close training camps, which they spurned? Having basically put boots on the ground not just to punish the regime but to overturn the regime; that was a decision of choice that the President made for the reasons I described. I think it was right.

It's interesting, we're all doing our tasks and the President is—it's very important for the President. He has freed himself in a way from the detail and taken upon himself the burden of thinking the big picture and the grand strategy, and he's leading everybody on how to think about this thing. It's really quite impressive in this period.

In that context, during the meeting—and this has been written about—Don, prompted by Paul Wolfowitz, says, “Well, if it's a Global War on Terrorism we shouldn't just respond against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, we should go after some other terrorists to make clear it's terrorists everywhere who threaten our way of life. So, how about Saddam Hussein?” Colin talks about it and it's in the Vice President's book. Basically, Colin says, “Mr. President, the American people won't understand if we're hit from Afghanistan and we strike Iraq.” The Vice President is in the same camp.

The President says, “We'll get to Iraq at the appropriate time. What the American people are looking for now and what they will understand is a response against the people who brought us 9/11.” Contrary to what is also out there, nobody at that table thought Saddam Hussein brought us 9/11. So this is not about Iraq, this is Afghanistan. Debate over.

**Perry:** I'm unclear, then, as to why that is viewed as a war of choice and not necessity?

**Hadley:** What?

**Perry:** Afghanistan.

**Hadley:** Because of the way the President fought it, doing it with ground forces.

**Perry:** That part was the choice?

**Hadley:** That's correct. Any President would have had to have responded to 9/11, but it didn't have to be a war. Remember, Clinton responds in 1998 with cruise missile attacks into Iraq. We could have responded with cruise missile attacks into Afghanistan, some of which Clinton had done. It's a warlike act, it's attack; it does not provoke a war in Afghanistan. The President's option, which is why I call it a war of choice, was we are going to go to war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. We are going to root out al-Qaeda, and in order to do that we are going to overturn the regime and we're going to rout it. That was a war as opposed to a tit-for-tat attack, and it was a war of choice because the President probably could have gotten away politically with less, but he chose to take that course.

**Riley:** Were there any internal discussions about whether the characterization of war was the proper characterization at this time? The President fairly quickly called it an act of war. You got lawyers and others—was that ever a point of debate in the early stages?

**Hadley:** You know, when someone attacks you out of the blue and kills more Americans in a single day than the attack on Pearl Harbor, it's pretty hard not to view it as a war. Secondly, another way to do it as a war is because you want to show seriousness of the American people. If your goal is to eliminate al-Qaeda as a threat to our way of life, it's going to take a long time.

Third, the President wanted the freedom to act under the laws of war, which give him some authorities that he would not have under a law enforcement model. So nobody thought it wasn't an act of war. People thought it was serious enough that we had to respond with a comparable level of seriousness. It's that point where people start saying—actually al-Qaeda has been at war with us since the late '90s, we just didn't realize it. It's time for us to be at war too. So A, everybody thought it was war; B, everybody wanted to show and dramatize to the American people what we were in; and C, there were things we wanted to do under the laws of war consistent with what we thought was required in order to deal with this problem.

**Riley:** Steve, let me ask you a follow-on question to that, which isn't restricted just to the immediate period but it's about the relationship with our allies in the aftermath of this period. Could you talk a little bit about the sense of whether the response needed to be a multilateral response, or the extent to which we viewed this as a U.S. problem and it was going to be dealt with as a U.S. problem?

**Hadley:** If you go back and examine the statements of Presidents going back, certainly to World War II, I think you will find, because I seem to recall it, every President has used publicly a formulation that we will defend the vital interests of the United States with others if possible, alone if necessary. This is what we've said and we've done throughout our history. This notion that somehow the Bush administration was a departure from that is just not true. A lot of it is, as Condi says in her book, because of the Kyoto Protocol, which everybody knew in terms of U.S. government adoption, was dead on arrival with the Senate having voted unanimously against it. Even Bill Clinton didn't like it, and then signed it on the way out the door. I said the Clinton administration left us about three or four mines and we stepped on all of them. It's the damndest



thing, and one of them was the Kyoto Protocol. So the President had said in the campaign that he thought it was no big deal. He said all through the campaign, we're not going to do the Kyoto Protocol; it would wreck our economy, sacrifice jobs, the Senate won't ratify it. Who are we kidding? We're not going to do it.

So the President gets in office and says, "Oh, by the way, we're not going to do the Kyoto Protocol" and the whole world—and the President is thinking, *I said this in the campaign; wasn't anybody listening?* Of course we violated the great—and Condi talks about it in her book. It was this wonderful crystalline structure that the Europeans had come up with. The President just sort of, like an unruly schoolboy, knocked it over and broke it and didn't even say he was sorry.

What we should have done, one of the things we took from it—if you're going to dissent from one of these cherished multilateral regimes, you've got to have an alternative way of solving the problem, and we didn't. We kicked it over and didn't offer an alternative, and we paid for that in a way forever because it allowed people to say unilaterally the Bush administration—So were we going to handle a problem when we are the only country that's attacked, and does it mean we're sort of first in line to respond? Absolutely.

But nobody remembers that we went to Afghanistan with other countries. And that NATO did deploy AWACS [Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems] over the United States to give air cover for a period of months after they adopted Article 5. Should we have been a little more gracious about that? Should we have been a little more public about Article 5? Yes, probably. But we had a few things to do to get ready.

**Riley:** Of course.

**Hadley:** Nobody campaigned, as I said, to some Afghans who were complaining about what a bad job we'd done in Afghanistan. I said, "George Bush did not campaign to say if you elect me as President I'm going to go to Afghanistan and remake the Afghan regime." It was really not what we wanted to do. But we were attacked and we had to get a response. Was it multilateral? Yes. Did we have a lot of countries with us? Yes, almost from the get-go in terms of Special Forces. Of course, very quickly it becomes an ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] mission and then ISAF takes over the whole country. So not everybody knows that it was multilateral from the beginning.

**Brown:** But complaints by Rumsfeld about the multilateral constraints, the mission should determine the—

**Hadley:** But that's right. That's right and that's actually a lesson that Cheney and Powell learned from the Gulf War, which is the mission should determine the coalition, the coalition should not determine the mission. So it wasn't you all come; it was, if you're willing to see terrorism for what it was and to join us in a serious effort, we'd love to have you. But coalitions are difficult to manage. They take a lot of time and attention.

**Riley:** This thought process is present as early as the Camp David meeting?

**Hadley:** Yes, it's a notion. Yes, we should have a coalition, but let's not let the coalition get in the way of our achieving the mission. Let's find a way to make it an aid to the mission. And remember, there's this notion of—we had, I recall a discussion, at least I was involved, I'm not sure whether the President was. But there was a view, and it came particularly in terms of Iraq, that you need international approval to give you legitimacy.

Well, international approval is one way to get legitimacy. But we, I at least thought, maybe foolishly, that in Iraq there are other ways of getting legitimacy, and one way to get legitimacy is to free people from authoritarians and give them a chance to build a democratic future. That gives you some legitimacy too. So there are debates about how important is the international approval. There are debates about, be careful that the coalition doesn't become a burden, that the mission should define the coalition, not the coalition the mission.

There is the recollection that allies can be pesky. Colin talks about how he had to find something for the to do French in the Gulf War, so he put them off on a desert island out of the way because they were a pain in the neck. But it's multilateral from the get-go. Remember, the 9/11 attack is done by people from the Middle East, 13 of 17 are Saudis. They are trained in Afghanistan, they plan it in Germany and some other places, they fund it from the Saudis. It's an attack on the United States that kills 3,000 people from over 80 countries. This is a global event and everybody understands that if we're going to deal with terrorism we're going to need cooperation from intelligence services around the world.

Very quickly we are putting together a global coalition against terrorism, which is over 90 countries. Fairly quickly, in the year or two after 9/11, we have terrorist plots that come to fruition in Madrid, in the UK [United Kingdom], in Germany. So this becomes pretty quickly a global war against global terrorism, if you will.

**Riley:** Sure. In the early stage are there questions raised about the quality of intelligence that you're getting? This is a sneak attack. Were there people in your shop who were asking questions very early on about whether there should have been more advance notice from the intelligence communities about this attack?

**Hadley:** One of the things the President says very early is, "Be careful about this looking backward and asking the intelligence community what did you know and when did you know it?" The history of intelligence over the preceding 30-plus years is that the intelligence communities every ten years or so get hung out to dry by a White House. The [Otis] Pike Committee, remember that? I've forgotten the Senator—

**Riley:** [Frank] Church.

**Hadley:** The Church Committee. What we have now, with the movie out about Bill Colby, the disclosures that he voluntarily makes in '75 of all the problems in the Agency and its failures. The Agency gets hung out to dry, and administrations that have used it as a tool do not defend it when it gets in trouble. The Agency understands this and is therefore one of the most self-protective organizations there is. Every conversation that we had with the CIA people—it took me a while to realize this—and particularly George, results in a memorandum that is prepared in

the Agency of their version of who said what, which is available to them when they want to say, “No, we didn’t do this; the White House told us.”

So it’s very self-protective. The President gets it and his answer is, “Fine. You don’t want to be looking back and savaging the Agency and asking all these questions about what you knew and when you knew it and getting them all tied up trying to defend themselves. I need the CIA to prosecute the war and make sure that we’re not subject to the next attack. That’s where I’ve got to keep them focused. I need these people.”

So we’re not in this looking back. It’s one of the reservations we have about the 9/11 Commission. Be careful, the country needs these people. We’re at war and they’re one of our principal tools for prosecuting the war. But I think it becomes pretty clear that we don’t know, Dick Clarke’s briefing when we come into the White House notwithstanding, near enough about this organization, about its plots, about its organization, about its structure. We don’t know nearly enough of what we need to know, which leads you to the terrorist surveillance program authorizing the one-party wiretaps when somebody in the United States is in conversation with somebody in al-Qaeda involving a potential plot. It also leads us to the interrogation program, which is another discussion.

CIA Directors have testified that in the period of 2001 to 2004, the terrorist surveillance, the interrogation program, is the result of 50 percent of all of the intelligence reports that are produced on al-Qaeda, and the kinds of stuff we got from Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and others is essential for us to figure out who this enemy is, where they come from, how they’re organized, and how they do business, because there’s a huge intelligence deficit that needs to be filled.

Tenet comes in at some point and says we have a huge intelligence deficit and the best way to fill it is on the information we can get from these high-level detainees that we picked up. That influences the President to do what I say to the folks is the President’s view, which was I want to stay within the law. The liberal view is that the President had all these lawyers look at it because he was looking for a lawyer who would justify something the President knew was illegal. The President’s view is just the opposite. I wanted to do everything I could to defend the country within the law. If that’s your standard, you’ve got to know where the law is, so you’ve got to get your lawyers to say where is the line, because the President’s view is I want to do everything up to the line with one caveat, to protect the country.

So the President basically says, I want to stay within the line—and these are my words not his—within that line there’s always a balance between what you do to defend the country and the respect for civil and human rights, and what Americans will be comfortable with. I say to people that what I think we did is, because of the intelligence deficit after 9/11, because of our need to get smart on al-Qaeda and because the CIA was saying the best source was these detainees, he moved the needle a little bit in favor of defending the country and maybe compromising a little bit what Americans would be comfortable with once it became public.

I think he would say, “I didn’t compromise the rights of American citizens. I said we should stay within the law.” But I think we did shift the needle a little bit. Now, as has been talked about, the President talks about some of the techniques, even within that framework, and even though the President was told that they were lawful, there were a couple of techniques that he just felt the

American people would be uncomfortable with and he took off the table, even though the lawyers said they were lawful. But the rest, we were prepared to do to get the information we did.

One of the things that happens in the second term is that the legislative framework changes for the interrogation problem. We get the Detainee Treatment Act, which I negotiate with Senator McCain. We get the Military Commissions Act, which provides further adjustments of the legal structure. We get a couple of Supreme Court opinions, like the [Salim Ahmed] Hamdan opinion. But in addition to that, by 2005, 2006, we know a lot about al-Qaeda. We have taken the fight to them overseas. We've hardened things at home. We can be a lot more comfortable where we are, and at that point my view is, and the President agrees and Mike Hayden agrees—he's now head of the CIA—we can readjust that balance within the law between what we need to do to defend the country and the kind of programs Americans will be comfortable with.

As Mike Hayden has talked about publicly, the number of techniques that are available for the interrogation program is reduced fairly dramatically. They are techniques that I think people are comfortable with. Even when they are briefed to President Obama, I'm told his reaction was, is that it? Is that what all the fuss was about? And we didn't need the program so much so that when it was reauthorized, I think in 2007, maybe early 2008, we only put two people in the program, and by the time we left office there was no one in the program. So in a way there was nothing to shut down.

But we would have said to President Obama, don't take it off the table. You might need this program at some point in the future if you get a detainee who you have reason to believe knows there is a nuclear weapon somewhere in New York City that is liable to go off in the next 36 hours; you may want to have these techniques available. So don't take it off the table. But President Obama decided to take it off the table with an Executive order that got rid of the program.

**Riley:** Right.

**Hadley:** But interestingly enough, it's only an Executive order and the President can change it with a stroke of a pen. No effort has been made in the Congress of the United States to take that Executive order and enshrine it in law. Pretty interesting. Anyway, that's my long peroration on that.

**Riley:** Let me ask, you said earlier that contrary to some accounts there was an acknowledgment very early on that Iraq didn't have anything to do with 9/11, but when you move ahead there are noises coming out of the administration, reports that yes, there are ties there.

**Hadley:** That's different. You have to distinguish between two things. Did Saddam Hussein direct the 9/11 attack? No. I don't believe that anyone in the administration, contrary to press reports, ever said that. Were there ties between Saddam Hussein and the people who brought us 9/11, namely al-Qaeda? Yes. It's true to this day, even the documents that people cite to say this was the Vice President's hobby horse and they overstated the connections between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda and [Ibn al-Shaykh] al-Libi, who is one of the people who now says that he fabricated his reports about ties between Saddam and Al-Qaeda.

There still is a body of evidence that the intelligence community stood behind that said there were ties between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. You can decide what you think about it. Remember, there was a group that was affiliated with al-Qaeda that Zarqawi was part of in Kermel, up in northeastern Iraq, that was the source of poison threats that were operationalized in Europe and that we were able to disrupt. One of the questions, and one of the things the Joint Chiefs recommended to the President before we went to war with Saddam, was that we bomb the facility in Kermel to prevent them from conducting these poison plots in Europe.

So were there al-Qaeda affiliates in Iraq before we invaded? Yes. Was the principal architect of al-Qaeda's strategy in Iraq in Iraq before we invaded? Yes, he was. Were there ties between the Saddam regime and other al-Qaeda people? Yes. So you have to distinguish between, is Saddam responsible for 9/11? Clearly, no, we never said he was. And did Saddam have ties to the people who brought us 9/11, namely al-Qaeda? Yes, he did. You can decide how serious they were, how they stood up, whether the Vice President overstated them. There are all those debates. But I think what I said is unarguable.

**Brown:** But it wasn't sufficient to move the President to say, "Let's invade Iraq." In other words, those ties were not sufficient.

**Hadley:** What the President says when he goes to the UN is that there are four reasons, and everybody focuses on the WMD.

**Brown:** Right.

**Hadley:** But he says there are four reasons: Saddam invades his neighbors, pursues WMD, supports terror, and oppresses his people.

**Brown:** Obviously, if you're building support for it and if you're doing something, you want to bring in as many reasons as possible.

**Hadley:** No, actually just the opposite.

**Brown:** Really?

**Hadley:** One of the mistakes we made is, while we thought all four of those were important—and if you look at the 16 UN Security Council resolutions, they address all four of those things. We, Condi and I, argued that the 17th resolution we sought should embrace all four of the grounds against al-Qaeda. Colin and Rich Armitage said, "No, no, no," like you, "you go with your best argument and the best argument is WMD."

We said, "We're not comfortable with it." They said, "Let's have the first resolution be about WMD and then we'll do a second resolution about support for terror, invading neighbors, and oppressing their people." Of course, the second resolution never gets done. Colin goes and gives his intelligence case. We say it should have four parts and should go over two days and Colin says, "Oh, no, much too long. I want to do it in a morning and I really want to focus on WMD," and he submits, in his testimony, very brief discussions of support of terrorism—

**Brown:** I understand that. I'm asking about what really moved the President. Suppose you didn't have the WMD case? Suppose what we found out later we found out earlier? Would the other three reasons have been sufficient to go ahead and do an invasion?

**Hadley:** Good question. On the President, if he were standing right here and you said to him, "Mr. President, why was Saddam Hussein a bad guy and why is the world safer now that he's gone?" I would bet you \$100 he would give you all four reasons. But it's the question my daughter asked me, "Daddy, if you knew before you decided to go to war that in fact Saddam had destroyed all the stocks in WMD, would you have still gone to war?" It's a real interesting question. My answer, which you'll think is cop-out, is, "I don't think the President could have."

I think if it had been known that there weren't stocks of WMD, I think those people who would have said try another way, play this out longer, see if there is another way to get this done, would probably have won out politically. I think it would have been very hard for the President to do it. Would that have been the right course? I think it's very dangerous because our view was that the French and the Russians for various reasons were clearly getting ready to get rid of the sanctions. Because Saddam had basically won the public relations argument and convinced everybody that sanctions were what was impoverishing the Iraqi people, when it was in fact his decisions about how to allocate the money.

I think he would have been out from under the sanctions and I think he would have been back in the business of making weapons of mass destruction, particularly once it became clear that the Iranians were in the business of getting a nuclear weapon. The idea that Iran would be allowed to pursue its nuclear weapons and Saddam Hussein would not be developing a companion piece I think is implausible, particularly since Saddam said that the reason he didn't tell us he didn't have any WMDs is he was worried about the Iranians. Can you imagine what he would be doing, given [Ali] Khamenei and [Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad and their nuclear program? We'd be in a nuclear arms race between Iran and Iraq.

So I'm not sure that would have been a good result, oddly enough. But the truth is, I think had it been known, it would have been very hard for the President to go to war.

**Brown:** In that sense the President is the President of all the people; he is the President of the United States. So his reluctance would be understandable.

**Hadley:** Absolutely, he would be right to be reluctant. It's a different set of facts.

**Perry:** Could I ask at this point in the discussion chronologically about Iraq, is there a discussion about what removing Saddam Hussein will do to the balance between Iraq and Iran? Will it disrupt some rough balance? That's number one. Number two, is there a discussion about moving from Afghanistan, turning attention to Iraq? Would people say, to this day, "Oh, if we had only kept our eye on Afghanistan solely we wouldn't have had the problems that we have now"? Was there a discussion going on at that time in the chronology leading up to the invasion of Iraq?

**Hadley:** There was discussion because the Saudis in this time frame are saying that Saddam Hussein has been a barrier to Iranian influence in the Middle East.

**Perry:** You mentioned that yesterday.

**Hadley:** If you get rid of Saddam Hussein, Iraq would become an avenue for Iranian influence rather than a barrier. And as I said yesterday—and that's because the Saudis of Sunni Iraq would become a Shi'a-led government in their view that all Shi'as are puppets of Iran and therefore Iraq would have been a vehicle for Iranian influence. Our view was, as I said yesterday, that Iraqi nationalism would triumph and trump Iraqi Shiism, and I think that largely has been borne out, even though the Iranians are putting enormous pressure on the Iraqis.

So there was a discussion and that was the judgment. Also, there was a companion argument that actually the emergence of a post-Saddam Iraq could be part of a strategy for putting real pressure on Iran because we, of course, would have tens of thousands of troops on each side of Iran now, Iraq and Afghanistan. Those troops would be helping those two regimes build democratic regimes. Iraqis and Afghans in Iran actually were voting in elections in Afghanistan and Iraq that were free and fair. We thought the Iranians at some point would start asking themselves, why can't we, the Iranian people, have elections that are free and fair if, as they do, the Arab people and the Afghan people can have elections that are free and fair?

We also thought that the reemergence of Najaf as a center of Shiism that actually has a tradition more esteemed than Kuum and the emergence then of [Ali al-] Sistani as a major voice and quietism, the quietest school in Shiism is a counterbalance to Khamenei, who as you know his religious credentials are not strong and who has a, whatever it is [Indecipherable] kind of interpretation of Shiism, that that would also be a constraint on Iran. So our view was in some sense that the post-Saddam Iraq, rather than being a vehicle or a triumph for the Iranians, could in fact be a source of real pressure on them. So that's our thoughts about that.

Secondly, if you'd asked the President—and I got a little bit mad at Mike Mullen and Bob Gates about this. Mike Mullen gave some testimony in 2009 by saying Afghanistan was always an economy of force operation because Iraq was always the priority. Now that we're reducing our footprint in Iraq, we finally have an opportunity to give attention to Afghanistan, the attention that was their due.

This really angered me. If you had asked President Bush, "Did you turn your attention from Afghanistan to Iraq, and did you pull resources from Afghanistan to put them in Iraq?" he would have said no. So I called up Mike Mullen and I said, "Mike, you're out there saying this stuff and let me ask you this question: Did you ever come to the President of the United States in this period and say, 'Mr. President, we're losing in Afghanistan. I need more troops in Afghanistan.'?" He said, "No, I never did." I said, "Well, Mike, if you had gone to this President, George W. Bush, and said, 'Mr. President we're losing Afghanistan; I need another 20,000 troops,' what do you think he would have said?" Mike said, "He would have told me to find 20,000 more troops."

You're wincing. My point is that the President thought that he had in Afghanistan what he needed to succeed in Afghanistan. Remember too, we forget the lessons of Afghanistan. Why did we have a different faith than the Russians and the British in terms of support from the Afghanistan people? Because we had a light footprint. We toppled the Taliban with less than a thousand people. We enabled the tribes and the Afghans themselves to throw off the Taliban.

We were different. We were not greeted as occupiers. We were, to coin a phrase, greeted as liberators in Afghanistan. To my astonishment, ten years after this in a country that we know has allergies to foreign presence, there's still an amazing amount of support for the coalition, despite all the mistakes that we made, and we made a lot of mistakes.

So the President's view would be, "I didn't turn my attention to Iraq, I didn't pull resources from Afghanistan." We thought until about 2005 that we were doing pretty well in Afghanistan. We had a series of elections, we had a constitution, we had a Karzai government. If you look at indications like children in schools, women, all that stuff, there's a lot of progress. But what happens in 2005, 2006? I would say the narrative is two things.

In 2005 Musharraf gets the idea he's going to have a counterinsurgency strategy in the FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Areas], in the tribal areas. He does a series of deals with the tribes and they basically say, "We'll pull our troops back, we'll put in reconstruction and development assistance," which the United States agreed to fund at the rate of a billion and a half dollars a year, "and you tribes will agree that you'll kick out al-Qaeda, you'll send the foreigners home and you won't let the Taliban conduct operations in Afghanistan." That's the deal. It is, oddly enough, a counterinsurgency strategy and we're very skeptical that it's going to work.

The President, remember, has that meeting, it's in your calendar, with Karzai and Musharraf in Washington and the dinner, and it's all about Karzai and our reservations about these deals in the tribal areas. Musharraf says, "I think it will work, give me a chance, but if it doesn't work I'll send the troops back in." We think—and I'm going to get the time wrong, I have a little card that has these but you can check it—about six to nine months later Musharraf is ready to do that, but then I think in the spring of 2007 he gets into it with the Chief Justice.

Like so many authoritarian leaders he kind of loses his sense of the people and he misplays it by the numbers. He touches off this political crisis that goes for the next 18 months. It stews throughout 2007. There's this issue about Benazir Bhutto coming back. Condi talks in her book about trying to negotiate a peace between Musharraf and Benazir so Benazir can come back and begin to lead the transition to democracy, something that looks like it has come together, and then she's killed in December of '07.

The President, as I said yesterday, then walks Musharraf through the series of steps so that in the spring we actually have a democratic election. We get a Parliament and in August of '08 Musharraf leaves office. So Pakistan is in a huge political crisis and we're trying to manage that crisis. Then of course in 2008 we also have a terrorist attack from Pakistan in India and we have the risk of Pakistan and India going to war. We make a lot of effort to try to prevent that, that's the Mumbai attack.

So in that great saga with the Pakistanis, what is happening in Afghanistan? Well, I'll tell you what's happening. As Bob Gates says publicly at one point, the al-Qaeda—and the Taliban and everybody else, as Condi said—have a four-lane highway into Afghanistan unmolested, because Pakistan is otherwise occupied. The second thing is that the problems of the Karzai regime begin to surface. The cronyism, the closed character, the impunity. He narrows his political base instead of expanding it, and the failure of government is the biggest recruiting tool for the



Taliban. The problems within the Afghan government and with Karzai emerge. The situation in Afghanistan goes south and the problem is—and we started it.

Our response is to put in more troops and put in more money. It's understandable, we probably had to do it, but we lost the lessons of the first four years in Afghanistan, which were keep a light footprint and empower the Afghans so that they could do it, not us doing it for them. Now we're starting to put in tens and tens of thousands of troops.

The second thing is, when we started doing assistance programs for Afghanistan, I remember Zal Khalilzad had one, you can ask him, called Accelerating Success in Afghanistan, that we wanted to give to him when he went back out there as Ambassador. One of the questions we always asked is, how much can this very backward economy absorb without causing, hello, corruption and inflation? What do we have now, a lot more money causing a lot of corruption and inflation? Of course, the third thing is the drugs, which the Taliban got a handle on. In 2000 they took drug production to zero. I think it was 2000 or maybe 1999, amazing.

We got it down so that drug production at one point in our tenure was down to three provinces. Now, it was a huge amount of drugs, it was [Indecipherable] and it was still enough to get 90 percent of the drugs in Europe. Now I think half of the 36 provinces are into narcotics production. So there is a deterioration there that I think is the result of three things. One, the bad governance of Karzai and all the things we've talked about; two, the inattention of Pakistan, and Pakistan becomes a safe haven, big time, and the military is playing its double game; and three, the effect of narcotics.

We tried to respond with a revision of strategy, which we implemented, a second strategy review, which we gave to the new administration. We started the troop buildup that Obama then dramatically scaled up and we started putting more money in. But we had been behind the power curve probably ever since 2006. If you go back and say, what would you have—I don't have the silver bullet. Iraq has been off their screen and the Obama administration has been focusing a lot of resource and attention on it, and you can decide whether you think it's better today than it was in January of 2009. I'm not sure.

This is a *really* hard problem. I thought Iraq was hard. I just was over there for eight days a couple of weeks ago. John Podesta and I are trying to come up with some policy options for the administration. This is a really hard problem.

**Perry:** You were in Afghanistan?

**Hadley:** Yes, four days in Kabul and four days in Islamabad.

**Riley:** I think we have overshot your time. You have been very generous with your time, thank you.