**GEORGE H. W. BUSH PRESIDENTIAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**TRANSCRIPT**

**INTERVIEW #2 WITH BRENT SCOWCROFT**

August 10–11, 2000
Washington, D.C.

**Participants**

*University of Virginia*
Philip Zelikow

*Bush Presidential Library Foundation*
James H. McCall

Audiotape: Miller Center
Transcription: Peter B. Sugarman
Transcript copyedited by Jane Rafal Wilson
Final edit by Gail Hyder Wiley

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**Zelikow:** Brent, what I'd like to do is to start today in November of 1988. We'll try to avoid, as I mentioned to you earlier, going over the same things we went over in the first session. Except where we think we might have to fill out some additional details. One point I want to start with in November '88, is the transition.

Let me just tell you your story thus far. Your story is that you were contacted by President-elect Bush around Thanksgiving, that he invited you fairly directly to be National Security Advisor. That you had not expected this, that you had thought about the possibility of being Secretary of Defense. Question. What kind of vetting was done before a public announcement could be made that you wished to accept the President-elect's offer? In other words, did they need to go through any legal, financial, or security clearance vetting before a public announcement could be made?

**Scowcroft:** Well, if they did, they didn't do it. No, I think there was no vetting prior to an announcement, that I am aware of.

**Zelikow:** Which would then explain how this came out of the blue. Nobody told you you were on a short list?

**Scowcroft:** No. And I don't think I was on a short list.

**McCall:** Or else a very short one, indeed.

**Zelikow:** You said you spent a lot of time, really the bulk of your time in the transition, up through the month of December of '88, on personnel issues. On first selecting a deputy, and then other personnel issues. I'd like to just talk a bit about your method in doing that. You described having a legal pad and outlining the people. I just want to take that a bit further. When you thought about people, how did you—you described how you got the names to put on the piece of paper to start with. How did you go about narrowing the list to a short list? What takes a whole month? Help someone understand how it can take a whole month to pick a dozen people.

**Scowcroft:** Well, let me back up a little, because you can't separate the people from the organization. My basic thought was that the NSC [National Security Council] staff had gotten too large. That the staff had to be small enough so that there was a sense not only of collegiality, but there was not the need for a bureaucracy to manage the staff. In other words, that I would have direct access pretty much to everyone. My theory was that there should be a director in each geographic and functional area—and probably one additional, maybe more in some of the heavier trafficked areas. And that the job of the NSC staff was not to replicate, or to take over,

the functions of the executive departments—but to have enough knowledge, background, to know what they were doing—to analyze it. In a sense, to keep them honest, that's not the right term. And I wanted to separate the kinds of policy-making that the NSC did with basically the kind of policy-making that went on in the departments. And especially the execution of the departments.

So I wanted people to watch that. I also wanted the outgoing cables to be, not screened, but observed because, policy-making, in fact, is the cables going out telling the people in the field what to do. Sometimes they bear only slight relationship to the decisions the President has, in fact, made. So that's where I started.

I wanted to cut the staff. So I looked at the areas I felt we needed a director.

**Zelikow:** You mean the formal title would be "Senior Director"?

**Scowcroft:** "Senior Director," yes. "Senior Director" like Europe, Asia, Middle East, arms control, or defense. Things like that—both functional and geographical. There were a number of others that had had senior directors before, but I thought it could really be done in a group in order to cut down the overall size.

Then, having that, I put down the headings of the different areas and started to fill in names. My objective was twofold. The first to get people who were really good. I didn't start out "really good Republican," but "really good." I didn't care much what the political label was—the cast of mind was important, so they were compatible with me. And second, I sought a group that I thought would work together, would have enough executive experience to be able to manage in the way the NSC has to manage, which is, in itself, a difficult job. The senior directors, the NSC are not senior to the people they are dealing with in the executive departments. They have the authority of the NSC behind them, but they also have to have a lot of people skills in order to get the cooperation that they need out of the departments. If they go about it the wrong way, the department Secretary will just shut down the communications channels—making it very difficult to work.

So those were the criteria that I sought. First, I put down people that I knew well—and I was pretty certain they fit all those. Then I talked to friends, acquaintances—around—I looked at some lists and gradually, under each category, developed a list of names. When I had a pretty good list, then I would look at the list and, first of all, see if there was a Senior Director in there. I found that fairly simple in the areas I was most familiar with, that is in Europe, defense issues, Asia. I had problems in Latin America, because I wasn't that familiar with people working in that area. Well, not so much Africa. That was very time consuming. In a number of cases, I would make informal inquiries into the interest and availability of people.

**Zelikow:** How would you do that?

**Scowcroft:** If I was pretty sure, I would do it personally. If I wasn't quite so certain about the receptivity, or I had some questions to ask, I would—if I knew someone who knew them well—use them as a kind of vetting process.

**Zelikow:** Were you doing this all by yourself, or were you doing this with [Robert] Gates?

**Scowcroft:** My first decision had to be a deputy.

**Zelikow:** Was that decision pretty much solo?

**Scowcroft:** That was solo, with the President. He said the staff was my problem. But I had to have a deputy with whom I thought the President would be comfortable.

**Zelikow:** Then you talked to Bob, and Bob agreed. In your previous interview, you recounted some of the particular issues in the selection of Bob Gates. After that was done, was the process you described the process where you and Bob Gates would get together and work these names?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. I had already been working on a list before I got Bob on board—or agreed to come on board. Then I asked him to do the same thing, or to add names to the list. Then we discussed each and every person together. Some of them I discussed with the President as well.

**Zelikow:** Was there anyone else at the core of this process? You describe this pretty much as you and Bob Gates sitting at a table working this.

**Scowcroft:** That was pretty much it.

**Zelikow:** If you wanted to sound somebody out on their interest, plans, whether or not they could do it, could make the move, whether or not they'd been approached yet by—in some cases, you're competing with the executive departments. How did you handle that? Say someone like Condi [Condoleezza Rice], for instance.

**Scowcroft:** Condi was a specific case where she had already been approached by the State Department.

**Zelikow:** Did she then let you know she had been approached?

**Scowcroft:** No, she did not. But Condi was one of the early ones I approached, because I really wanted somebody first rate in the Soviet position. The Soviet position was, at that time, simply a part of Europe. I thought it needed to be singled out, more than it had been in the Reagan administration. The relationship in the Reagan administration is a separate issue.

I called Condi. She said that she had been approached by the State Department with an attractive offer. I don't remember what it was. I told her about the relative advantages of the two agencies and she wisely chose the NSC.

**Zelikow:** In other cases, when you would take soundings through intermediaries, was Gates often the person to do that for you, or would it vary from case to case?

**Scowcroft:** It would vary. It was very particular. Bob Blackwill is another case. Bob had been a Foreign Service officer. I didn't know exactly what his status was. I wanted to find out both what his status and his interest was. I knew he was leaving the Foreign Service. I didn't know exactly whether he was on leave—I didn't know. I can't remember how I found out—I did not do that directly.

Another thing I wanted, if possible, was to have people that I didn't have to pay for.

**Zelikow:** Detailees.

**Scowcroft:** Detailees. As it turned out, I was able to stop the process with Bob Blackwill, to the point where I could make him a detailee. That was just a bit of desiderata—what I wanted to do. It was not definitive in any case.

**Zelikow:** Did you have a vetting process? For any of them to run any legal, any conflict of interest, financial, or security clearance traps before appointments became known?

**Scowcroft:** No, I didn't. The process, at that time, was pretty fully in place—but it was more informal than it became later. I didn't worry about that. In almost every case, I knew the people. That didn't mean there couldn't be a problem, but I didn't anticipate any problems. Several of them were already in the government.

**Zelikow:** You assumed they'd already been checked out and had done the forms and already had valid clearances. So that means that you did not have to slow down your decision waiting for some kind of interview to take place. No one needed to go to them and work through, "Do you have any skeletons?" sort of questions.

**Scowcroft:** No, those came later when there were delays in security clearance and financial reports and so on and so forth, to get them fully at work. But I did not wait in asking them to join the NSC for that process.

**Zelikow:** Did you make a conscious decision to have one deputy or two deputies? Also, if you could roll into that the issue of how you conceptualized the role of the NSC Executive Secretary. As you know, practice is varied on these questions.

**Scowcroft:** I pretty much followed the [Henry] Kissinger model on the Executive Secretary—that it was a nonsubstantive position. It did vary. By statute, the Executive Secretary runs the NSC.

**Zelikow:** By "runs the NSC," you mean the formal NSC, the actual National—

**Scowcroft:** The NSC staff. The job of National Security Advisor—technically Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs—is nowhere in the statute. It was an artifact that was developed to allow a substantive position not in any way accountable to the Congress. The Executive Secretary presents the budget to the Congress, and so on and so forth.

**Zelikow:** And testifies? I don't recall Philip Hughes having to testify.

**Scowcroft:** No, but it was done informally. He could have been called to testify. But the National Security Advisor cannot. So that was an informal separation between the two. I wanted the Executive Secretary to run the machinery and not the substance.

As to more than one deputy, it became an issue only in one respect. That is, how to handle economics? I thought then, and I still believe, that in the executive branch, we don't have a good

way to handle economic affairs generally—and specifically international economics. A number of agencies feel that they have a role to play in it. Each President has developed some ad hoc way of coordinating and combining it. It's rarely worked very well.

So I toyed seriously with the idea of getting a very senior person as Senior Director or, perhaps, a deputy in the economic section to shift a greater economic load from Treasury, State, Commerce, and the other economic agencies to the NSC. It didn't work. Partly because I couldn't find anyone I thought fit the bill. Had I found someone, it very likely could have resulted in the naming of an additional deputy. But other than that, no. Part of the reason was I wanted direct contact with everybody. I didn't want to deal through an additional individual. And Bob was an alter ego in virtually every sense. We did too much together, as a matter of fact. But he was not a pathway, other than informal, between me and the other senior directors.

**Zelikow:** If you had it to do over again, leaving aside the personal virtues of Bob Gates, which I'm sure are formidable, would you look for a deputy that had different and complementary skills? For instance, if you wanted to stick with one deputy, you might want a person who had more economic knowledge. One of the disadvantages I can see of multiple deputies is—if you say to the second deputy, "You do the economic stuff," economic stuff is so intertwined with other things that it's almost a recipe for constant friction and overlapping responsibilities. Better if you can just combine the talents in one person. Since the National Security Advisor may not have them all, the National Security Advisor's alter ego can try to fill out the package.

**Scowcroft:** There's a cost however you try to do this. I felt I needed someone who, in fact, could operate fully in my name across the full range. If I was traveling with the President, if I was doing something else, I wanted to have somebody who could act fully. Therefore, I looked for somebody with comparable skills. Maybe not with all the experience, but with comparable skills.

Multiple deputies would change the character of the NSC. I wouldn't rule it out, because it may be necessary. I can see, for example, again—an economic deputy. You know, this administration has gone to the National Economic Council as a way to solve the problem of coordination of economics.

**Zelikow:** This administration also has a second deputy on the NSC. Or someone who is styled as the second deputy, who is a military officer.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, that was, I believe, set up by Tony Lake, for a particular person. It turned out it was another step between the paperwork of the Executive Secretary and coming up to the front office. I never understood exactly what it was, but it seemed to me another review position.

**Zelikow:** They also redefined the role of the Executive Secretary at first.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, at first.

**Zelikow:** They brought it back to a more substantive role that had substantive paper review powers. I'm not sure they found that experience entirely successful.

**Scowcroft:** I think they abandoned it after a time.

**Zelikow:** Looking back on it—I've heard Bob Kimmitt make a strong case for a different conception for the NSC Executive Secretary from his own experience. In the hands of someone like Kimmitt, it sounds like it might actually work. I was wondering if you had any further reflections on the Executive Secretary's role. Whether to integrate the fact—here's the guy that is supervising not only the NSC's record management, but also the Sit Room. Who is helping to watch the paper flow? There's an asset there, and the question is, are you getting enough out of that asset? Are you getting enough payoff for that asset for the effort you have to put into creating that person and managing him?

**Scowcroft:** One of the benefits of the NSC staff system is that it is not written in concrete. Different National Security Advisors can tailor it to the way they like to work. The system needs a chief administrative officer badly. That person is also given the administrative requirements in very intimate contacts with each of the directorates. Therefore, you can use them for something more than that, and they do vet the papers for grammar and syntax and so on and so forth. The Executive Secretary did, and did not, supervise the Sit Room. Administratively yes—substantively no.

**Zelikow:** Who did?

**Scowcroft:** I did.

**Zelikow:** I want to pursue this now, because the functioning of managing the White House Situation Room is virtually unknown as an institution.

**Scowcroft:** I know, and that's a very separate thing. When I say, "I did," I didn't do it on a day-to-day basis. The Sit Room, to me, was heavily administrative—had to be substantive in a sense, because frequently, they were the only ones there and had to act and so on. It's that kind of never-never land, if you will, of any emergency staff. That is, you have to have substantive capability—but only to recognize the nature of a problem and who's the person to refer it.

**Zelikow:** It's a triage function.

**Scowcroft:** Absolutely. That takes a special kind of person.

**Zelikow:** Which are almost all detailees from the intelligence or military communities.

**Scowcroft:** Nearly always from the military or intelligence. With that kind of experience.

**McCall:** Why don't you take a moment and explain what the purpose of the Sit Room is—and the functions, so on and so forth. Otherwise, we're going to get a little bit arcane here.

**Scowcroft:** The Sit Room is the Situation Room—it's called. It's the nerve center of the NSC. They are in touch with the command centers of all the agencies directly, 24 hours a day. It's manned 24 hours a day. Their job is to monitor what is going on in the world and make sure that the relevant people are made aware of breaking events. It's the chief message center. It's crisis management center of the NSC. It, of course, bonds to the Command Center of the Pentagon.

**Zelikow:** The National Military Command Center.

**Scowcroft:** What's it called in the State Department?

**Zelikow:** It's called the Operations Center.

**Scowcroft:** The Operations Center. And a similar one for CIA [Central Intelligence Agency].

**Zelikow:** Looking back on the personnel process—are there things that you felt you learned from that that you'd do differently if you were giving advice to future generations of people involved in this? Let me leave it as an open-ended question.

**Scowcroft:** I think so. I'm very pleased with the way it worked out. I think I had as good a staff as any that the system has had—back as far as one goes. But I could have used more help. It was very much a personal project.

**Zelikow:** When you say more help, you mean more help in personnel selection?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, in personnel selection. In bringing to me names that didn't come readily to my mind—or that maybe I didn't know—and would have been very suitable candidates. I did it in a very personal way. Casting the net more broadly, I think, is more desirable in the abstract.

**Zelikow:** Did you feel that you had the staff ready to come on board as quickly as you would have liked?

**Scowcroft:** No, in many cases it took too long.

**Zelikow:** Condi and I started on February 1st.

**Scowcroft:** It took way too long.

**Zelikow:** I don't know how much advance warning she had, and that means when people begin to think about the issues—the substantive agenda.

**Scowcroft:** It's very difficult, because you're calling people, almost all of whom are busy at something. They have jobs, they have responsibilities. This is a wrench in their personal lives that, in many cases, is unforeseen. There's a certain amount of tension in it. You have to wrap up one job. Sometimes you have to move. You have all of the personal kinds of decisions to make in a very short period of time.

Ideally, the NSC ought to be up and running on the 20th of January. That did not happen and we paid a price for it.

**Zelikow:** Well, in part because a lot of the agenda setting function was being worked through after the President had been inaugurated and was already in office. This created other spin-offs, although short-lived ones. Looking back, do you wish that you had been able to get started earlier? Is there a transition process that you would have wanted to put in place, albeit quietly, at an earlier stage? So that you could have gotten ducks in a row faster? Or is that unrealistic?

**Scowcroft:** That question gets back to one of the major issues that I dealt with. Was the Bush administration a new administration in the sense that it would have been had its predecessor been Democratic? Or was it a continuation of the Reagan administration, in that it was Reagan's Vice President and the same party was in office? I treated it as a new administration. Friendly takeover, but a new administration. I told Colin Powell, who was my predecessor, that he ought to tell his staff—the NSC staff—that they should not anticipate that any of them would be kept on. Some might be, but they shouldn't anticipate it. I wanted, if I could, to find people inside the government to fill a lot of the jobs. And I did, a number of them.

But I also wanted a significant number from outside the government. I didn't mind government experience, but I wanted the leavening experience of people who had been outside, doing other kinds of things. They would bring a new kind of thought process compared to ones that were already inside the bureaucracy. So I probably made my job harder than otherwise it would have been.

**Zelikow:** Just to make that explicit—you had the option of using the carryovers and making your changes more incremental. You did not choose that option.

**Scowcroft:** I did not choose that option. I could have gone more heavily within the government to select people. And most of my senior people were not in the government.

**Zelikow:** One of the remarkable things about this account, to me, is the absence of any discussion of the traditional and cumbersome vetting processes that usually slow down the appointment procedures every place else in the government. You've talked a little bit about how you tried to overcome that by getting people that you knew had already been vetted or already held security clearances. But you also alluded, obliquely, to having more problems with that later. I was wondering if you could comment—again going back to the issues of timing and getting a running start, on vetting. Including the whole vetting process that had been set up for all the other personnel appointments, and which every administration creates.

**Scowcroft:** The problems came because, in many cases, I had people on board who did not yet have their security clearances. That becomes an almost impossible situation within the NSC, where virtually everything has some kind of classification. So that was an enormous problem. My guess is that it has gotten worse. It's a mindless problem, one of the things I was determined to change and was unsuccessful. I got corporate clearances changed to make sense. For example, in early November, I had just completed an updating of my security clearances as a defense consultant. And the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] started all over again. I mean, this was a brand-new clearance, and they started all over again as if I never had a clearance. That kind of process continues and it really slows down the process of government.

**Zelikow:** Although you had a valid, current clearance, you could get the defense clearance transferred—

**Scowcroft:** It didn't inhibit my working at all, but it's an example of the process.

**Zelikow:** You had to nevertheless have another—

**Scowcroft:** Another background investigation, the whole thing. But since I had a current clearance, I was able to do the things. If you had a National Security Advisor who didn't happen to have a clearance, like a Bob Rubin for example, it would be very, very difficult. Because the tone needs to be set in an administration. The President's tone needs to be set early. It is hard to do that directly with the departments. It's much better to do that in a general sense, through the NSC.

**Zelikow:** You've also made no reference in your account to any "transition team." Perhaps that's because the President announced your appointment reasonably early, so the transition team became, in effect, whatever Brent wants to do. That's the transition team for the NSC. Is there something more to that story that you haven't discussed? I don't want to make any presumptions.

**Scowcroft:** No, The NSC, unless I'm wrong, at the NSC there was no transition team.

**Zelikow:** Was there a larger White House transition team, for White House staff roles with which you had an interaction? Was the interaction so modest that you can't even remember?

**Scowcroft:** I'll be honest, I don't remember. I believe there were transition teams for Defense and State. But that's another aspect of this friendly transfer that the kinds of transition teams that a change of party elicits didn't really take place, I don't think.

**McCall:** My impression was, your selections just went through the normal process with Boyden [Gray] and Chase [Untermeyer] for that kind of process, so that it didn't seem like there was any kind of pressure from out there, from anywhere else in other departments—for you to select people from the campaigns or anything like that. It was totally given over to you.

**Scowcroft:** Well, I wouldn't—of course, everybody has friends. There was a lot of that, but I was able to resist the pressure in all areas that really mattered.

**McCall:** But there was some?

**Scowcroft:** Oh, sure. You know, there are campaign teams, campaign people who need to be taken care of, and so on and so forth. That was an annoyance, but not a big problem. But a transition team is different. It's a formal group of people who are in partly to do personnel, partly to do policy and so on. There was no such thing in my case.

**Zelikow:** Which is interesting. I'm about to move off of transition personnel issues unless there is something else you'd like to say.

**Scowcroft:** I think you've squeezed most everything there was to talk about.

**Zelikow:** Now I want to talk about institutional transition issues. I was trying to make an inventory of what those are. Immediately, they are—you've got to figure out what the interagency process should look like. You've got to write what became "NSD-1" [National Security Directive] and think about the contents of that. Connected to that, you've got to think about paper flow—and the desired paper flow. Can you talk a little bit about when and how you made those decisions—about the institutional transition?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, this was kind of a flow. The modern NSC structure was set forth in the [Richard] Nixon administration. It turned out to be an amalgam of the [Dwight] Eisenhower NSC staff, which was really quite formal and large, and the [John] Kennedy-[Lyndon] Johnson NSC staff, which was very tiny. Nixon blended the two together and it has been more or less the same ever since. I had some ideas, coming from my experience in the Ford administration, which I had refined during the period out of office.

I also had, in 1986, '87, been a member of the [John] Tower Board investigating the Iran-Contra issue. We went heavily into the structure and operation of the NSC staff in that case. That gave me another opportunity to review and refine my thinking. I communicated that to both [Frank] Carlucci and to [Colin] Powell, who were running the NSC then. A lot of the changes that I thought needed to be made to the [John] Poindexter NSC were already in place—because of my conversations with Carlucci and Powell—when I came into office. So all I did was tweak the system a little, as I say, the organizational boxes.

And as to NSD-1, I made one significant change. That is to insert a Principals Committee, which was the NSC without the President. That had not been active—or not been in existence—in the Reagan administration, partly because Secretary [George] Shultz said that he would attend no meeting chaired by anybody but the President. If it were not he, himself, as the number one Cabinet officer. I thought it important that the principals—minus the President—especially in cases where there were serious problems on issues, be able to meet under my chairmanship, as the putatively most neutral member, to try to resolve issues and hopefully save the President some time. Or at least clarify the differences so that they could be dealt with more expeditiously by the President.

Jim Baker did not have Shultz's problem with it. So that was the major change we made. It turned out to be an extremely useful device.

**Zelikow:** At the Assistant Secretary level—the level below the Deputies Committee, which I believe are now called Interagency Working Groups and in the Bush era were called, PCCs, Policy Coordinating Committees. NSD-1—those were usually chaired by the relevant State Department official—usually at the Assistant Secretary level, but had an NSC staffer designated as the Executive Secretary of those committees. Do you recall that as an innovation, or just a continuation of prior practice?

**Scowcroft:** It had gone back and forth. Sometimes those committees had been chaired by the NSC member and sometimes not. I wanted them chaired by the relative agency—whether it was State, Defense—principally involved, because I wanted them to feel that they had a stake in the NSC process. It was not simply the NSC running everything and dictating what the solution should be.

The results were mixed. In some cases, the chairman used them to obfuscate the issues—or not to deal with the issues. In some cases, I in fact made the NSC member the chairman. So it's not a perfect system. It is symptomatic of the relationship of the NSC to the executive departments of the government. It is an informal relationship. One has to try to make it work by devices which hopefully coopt the executive department people—rather than dictate to them. The friction that

recalcitrant Cabinet officers can put into the system could paralyze it—and have, in fact, in different cases.

So making State and Defense the chairmen of the interagency committees was a mixed blessing. It diluted my control over the way it worked—and the substance of the way they worked. But I didn't see any other way to get it done.

**Zelikow:** Would you do it differently if you had to do it again? For the major regional topics, leaving aside the functional issues?

**Scowcroft:** I might try to give the NSC member a little more authority. But I don't know exactly how to do that. It's a difficult issue. I'm not sure I would do it differently, because you really want the talent that exists out there in the executive agencies working willingly, whole-heartedly in the production of what in effect will be the government's policies.

**Zelikow:** Internal paper flow within the NSC—or within the White House—you commented earlier about your arrangement with [John] Sununu on paper flow with the President. What about paper flow coming to you? Including management of incoming cables and so forth, and how things get routed to the President, incoming paper and so on. Could you comment a little bit about—as a manager—what you were trying to do in managing the paper flow? If nothing stands out, I don't want to make you invent something.

**Scowcroft:** Nothing stands out in particular. I let the Situation Room people know what my preferences were, but they were free to manage it. In other words, routine things I wanted to go to the senior directors first, and let them bring it up with me. Urgent issues I wanted to come to me. Now, what is the line between what is routine and what is not? They exercised their judgment. The duty officer of the Situation Room—or the senior in the Situation Room—used to brief me every morning. They would resolve that by sometimes mentioning things that they had sent to the senior directors that I ought to be aware of. That's the way I managed that.

**Zelikow:** Who would brief you in the morning?

**Scowcroft:** The senior watch officer of the Situation Room.

**Zelikow:** This would be before your meeting with the President?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, usually.

**Zelikow:** So you'd get in—and in the five or ten minutes before you went in to see the President—

**Scowcroft:** I'd get a little rundown of what happened overnight, maybe with some cables if they were important.

**Zelikow:** With Gates maybe sitting in—if he's there?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, almost always. With the President, there was almost nothing that I wanted to go directly to the President in raw form. Although, in some cases, if I were unavailable—and it was

something fairly cosmic, the duty officer in the Situation Room could call the President and tell him. Ordinarily, I wanted the paper flow to go through me to the President. I would usually give Sununu a copy, or let him know what was happening—but it did not go through him.

**Zelikow:** Would you go through the Staff Secretary? Would you go through [James] Cicconi?

**Scowcroft:** It depends—routine paperwork, yes.

**Zelikow:** In handling the Vice President's office—more of an administrative issue? CC them on certain things, but not everything?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. I left it pretty much up to the Vice President's national security person—to make sure he was staffed. He got his own separate CIA briefing in the morning.

**Zelikow:** I'd like to tick off a few specific issues that have to do with interagency management and the way you designed the process. Well-known trouble spots—let's start with international economics. You've already commented on choices that you made in setting up the NSC and international economics. You basically created an international economic structure that was just like the functional directorates you had for other things—with a policy coordinating committee for that. Did you think that would work? Were there any things you tried to do to get beyond that? How did you tinker with that process as the administration went on? Now we're just on international economics.

**Scowcroft:** I did have a different system in mind. As I say, I was unable to find anyone that I thought could run it. I had difficulty staffing the economic directorate, especially in the beginning. I thought the system, which was a committee system chaired by the Secretary of the Treasury, was extremely cumbersome, poorly run, and ill-served the President. I talked with the President about it several times. He even suggested that the NSC run that. I didn't feel that I could do it myself. And, as I say, I was unable to find a Bob Rubin type whom I felt could do it. So nothing much came of it—it was a constant source of frustration.

**Zelikow:** What did you do to help keep the Treasury Department in the U.S. government?

**Scowcroft:** I did my best. Nick Brady was a personal friend of mine. I was on him constantly—starting out with Latin American debt. At the beginning, I must have called him every day a couple of months before the Brady Plan was ever developed. He was a wonderful guy, but very conservative—very conservative in taking bold measures. It was a great source of frustration to me.

**Zelikow:** Did you feel like you had enough analytic information coming to you about interest rates, currency, various macro-economic policy issues that are ordinarily handled by Treasury and the Fed? Not necessarily to you personally, but to the NSC staff. That you could at least get access to the information that you needed to have about what Treasury and the Fed were doing or contemplating. Or did they successfully fend you off with the story that, "This is too confidential, it's too sensitive"?

**Scowcroft:** No, I never got really fended off. Treasury, State, and I used to have periodic meetings, breakfast meetings, in which we would work on issues together. They didn't work

particularly well because, of course, the Secretary of State had been the Secretary of the Treasury before. So there was underlying tension there. Treasury is a unique culture inside the government. You hinted at it, in your questions. They, in a sense, do not know what coordination and cooperation is—except if they're doing it. And they don't do it well.

It is I think one of the biggest problems that we have in our system, how to manage economics. I don't have a good answer to it. Let's take international economics—although it's very hard to separate domestic and international economics.

**Zelikow:** Which, then, means you have so many more players—

**Scowcroft:** Everyone thinks they have a role to play. The NSC system works very well, but it works well partly because there are only a few agencies involved in it, and they all have a relatively common outlook. But the outlook of all the agencies having economic responsibilities is widely diverse. It is very difficult to manage it. I think putting it under the NSC would not work because it would so change the character of the NSC. You would have to have a separate person running it. I guess you could theoretically do it, but we don't do it right.

**Zelikow:** I'm going to try to carry the process point forward. I was trying to think of two stories that might seem like success stories and ask you what worked about them, try to be more positive about this. Because NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] clearly works to some extent, in that the administration does fashion, at least, a coherent agenda—and acts purposefully on that agenda—regardless of one's view on NAFTA on the merits. Also, very difficult efforts on the Uruguay Round, in the second half of the administration. But again, though, the administration ultimately did come up with a coherent agenda, and implement that agenda in an interagency context.

Looking at those episodes, both of which get going after the administration is underway—are there some lessons that can be learned, or insights you gained about what works?

**Scowcroft:** There are. Both of those cases worked, in part, because they were very high-level issues. And they were dealt with by the principals. When you have the principals engaged, you can get things done. It is the things that follow the routine processes that most often get hung up.

There's another factor in the two that you mentioned—NAFTA and the Uruguay Round—and that is the involvement of the Special Trade Representative. That is both helpful and further confusing. Helpful in the sense that that STR is, in some senses, an interagency group. But it also is the fact that Congress thinks the STR works for the Congress. NAFTA, for example, Carla Hills didn't want to start NAFTA. The President really had to tell her, "Yes, we really want a—" She wanted another bilateral. We had a bilateral agreement with Canada. She wanted a bilateral agreement with Mexico. She did not want the Canadians involved. It was complicated. So it was over her objections.

In the Uruguay Round, I will never forget a meeting with Carla Hills. The President was there, I was there, the Secretary of State was there. The Secretary of the Treasury was there. I can't remember who else. And the STR, Carla, was being extremely difficult with the Europeans on Uruguay Round issues. She was heartily disliked in Europe. Chancellor [Helmut] Kohl called her, "The Iron Lady." Anyway, she was utterly inflexible, so the President called her in—on the

carpet, so to speak, in the Oval Office, with all the other senior people there. And she beat us all, hands down. It's a very personal story—but it is true.

**Zelikow:** How did she do that?

**Scowcroft:** Well, we wanted her to change her negotiations and give way here and there, and she just didn't do it.

**Zelikow:** She didn't do it because she convinced you she was right on the merits? Didn't do it because she had a political base in Congress and didn't have to take orders from these little potentates in the Oval Office?

**Scowcroft:** No, didn't do it because the only way it could have been done was for the President to step out in a way very uncharacteristic of him—and order her to do it. And since she is the negotiator, even if you order her to do it, how do you know it's being done? It was a very difficult situation. I'm overdramatizing it—but the fact is that we all climbed all over her and nothing changed.

**Zelikow:** Well, sounds like the kind of person you want to have negotiating agreements.

**Scowcroft:** Yes and no. One of the problems, one of the congenital problems with the STR, is most of them, I would say, act more like litigators than they do conciliators or negotiators. In other words, they want to win. They don't want something that is minimally acceptable to everyone—they want to win. It makes it very difficult to negotiate. I think with a little different approach, we could have completed the Uruguay Round in the Bush administration.

**Zelikow:** Well, looking back on it—staying on the economics point a little more, because this is a good way to cut into it—eventually, the Bush administration did articulate an economic strategy. Where did it come from? Maybe I'm exaggerating it, but it seemed like there was a clear agenda on trade, anyway, that began to emerge. Partly through issues like NAFTA and the Uruguay Round, with a clear notion that there might be multilateral initiatives beyond that. There was a debt plan, but the debt plan had older antecedents. The Brady Plan had older antecedents—what Baker had been working on at Treasury before. Eventually the administration did begin to speak with a clear voice on what it wanted on the international economy. I'm just trying to get, at the big level, where did that come from? What's the root of that? Was that Treasury, or was that because State was able to articulate it?

**Scowcroft:** It was because—on those big issues of economic policy all of the principals had roughly similar views. That made it somewhat easier. As I say, the Brady Plan was an agony getting out and getting done. Was it done through any process? No, it was done by individuals—me, Brady, Baker to some extent. It was mostly informal when it worked. The formal interagency process—well, I was going to say produced very little, but that's an exaggeration. But it was an extremely cumbersome process.

**Zelikow:** On something like NAFTA, though, which was a new idea—the bureaucracy doesn't routinely produce a high-level meeting on that. Somebody's got to tee that up.

**Scowcroft:** I don't remember how it started.

**Zelikow:** Let me turn from economics to intelligence. Going back to the transition period—you knew a lot about this, Bob Gates knew even more. What were some of the issues that you had to be briefed on—without going into particular details that are sensitive? To future generations, what advice would you give about how to think through intelligence issues in a transition for the White House? What are the things that you have to know about? What are the things you have to think about, from the White House perspective?

**Scowcroft:** The principal issue on intelligence—leaving out the substance—was how the intelligence agencies worked together and cooperated. And that was pretty spotty. I had had some experience with it, back in the Ford administration—and it continued. The principal problem is that the DCI, the Director of Central Intelligence, is two-hatted. He is the head of CIA, but he's also Director of Central Intelligence. He was set up purposefully as the coordinator and the majordomo, if you will, of intelligence.

The problem is that many of the collection systems are highly technical. They are, in fact, run by Defense. That creates an automatic, bureaucratic problem. That is, the Secretary of Defense says, "These things are in my budget. I have to defend that budget, and therefore I can control it." The DCI says, "I'm the one who is responsible for these elements, and therefore I have to control how they work." It's a huge problem. It has shifted somewhat, back and forth, depending on the personalities in the different offices.

I think there needs to be some amendment in the intelligence community—to give the DCI more actual authority. Not to put him in charge of the overall Defense budget, but to give him a veto on any particular item. In other words, the ability to force anything he wants to the President. There have been proposals, for example, to give the DCI his own collection system. In other words, transfer from Defense the aircraft, the satellites and so on and so forth. That seems to me a duplication of expense. Defense knows how to do these things. They know how to operate them; they know how to maintain them. It seems to make no sense at all, to me, to have them transferred to an agency that doesn't know how to do that. But the DCI needs to control—the DCI is, in a sense, like the NSC—an advisor. He is a relatively impartial person in a system where everybody else has an ax to grind. Defense is interested in the character of intelligence because it impinges heavily on what kinds of systems it will build and operate. How many aircraft and how many ships—all that kind of stuff. The State, similarly.

Therefore, the idea is to have a DCI who's concerned only in providing intelligence to the President objectively—and therefore should have no particular interest in what the intelligence says. I believe we need to strengthen his ability to do just that. Instead, in recent years, we have weakened it.

**Zelikow:** Were you involved in the decision as to who would be the DCI in the Bush administration? Or was that decision a fait accompli when you came on board?

**Scowcroft:** Well, it was pretty much a fait accompli. The President had, I think, already made up his mind that he wanted to keep Bill Webster in the job. That was for two reasons. First, because there had been a lot of turmoil, but secondly, the President was a firm believer that the DCI should not be a political appointment. Therefore, his term of office should not be coterminous with that of the President. So he was pretty set to leave Webster in the job. The place where it got

complicated was—and I may have mentioned this in the previous interview—was that Webster—there was an informal agreement with the Intelligence Committees in the Congress when they accepted Webster as DCI, that Gates would be his deputy. I had a little trouble—not overwhelming—a little trouble talking the chairman and the minority leader—especially the Senate Intelligence Committee—into letting me have Bob Gates, because they thought that Bob brought the substance that the director didn't have to Intelligence. Therefore, when they agreed to Webster moving from FBI to CIA, they felt he needed some substantive support, which Bob Gates gave him.

**Zelikow:** Were you involved in the selection of Bob Gates' replacement as the new DDCI?

**Scowcroft:** Not involved. I asked Bill Webster what he would do. He was not happy to lose Bob, either. What he would do, and that what he did was important to the Intelligence Committees in terms of their comfort with this change. So in that sense, he told me what he would do—and it was a fine selection. But I wasn't involved in the process of who he selected, nor did I claim to have a veto over it.

**Zelikow:** Putting aside the issue of Ambassadors, the impression I get—correct me if this is wrong—is that you were not deeply involved in making personnel choices for senior jobs in the other executive departments. You were concentrating on staffing your own shop. And there's the Ambassador issue.

**Scowcroft:** Yes and no. Ambassadors are a separate issue.

**Zelikow:** You talked about that last time.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, but there were periodic meetings with the President during the transition—the President-elect—on major Cabinet positions. Some on Defense, State, on a number of them. So yes, I did participate in that—especially on Defense.

**Zelikow:** Back on the intelligence issue. Again, thinking about the transition and how you prepared yourself for your job—did you make a systematic effort to be sure you were briefed on ongoing, clandestine operations that could get on the President's agenda with little notice, so to speak? Things that could blow up.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I did. Colin Powell and I had a very easy transition. He told me all the things he thought I ought to know about. I asked him about all the things I suspected were going on and didn't know about. It worked fairly well. In fact, I think it worked quite well. We were in the middle of a very difficult issue with the Congress on covert activity and the notification of covert activity. It had come out of Iran-Contra and a whole—well, problems in the Reagan administration with the Congress and the DCI—I can't think of his name right now—Reagan's DCI.

**Zelikow:** [William] Casey?

**Scowcroft:** Casey. Casey, who was a unique case. So there was a lot of sensitivity in notification. What it meant, when it had to be done, and so on. I had some lengthy negotiations with the Intelligence Committees on that, and that was ongoing. So yes, I was briefed on all

those kinds of things. Now, would I have known to be briefed if I had not been National Security Advisor before? That's an interesting question.

**Zelikow:** But you felt that folks gave you the information that you needed? You didn't have problems finding out what was going on?

**Scowcroft:** No, I didn't have any problem at all—but, again, I knew what I needed to know. That made it very easy.

**Zelikow:** What was your assessment of the role of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board? How did you try to use that organization, if at all?

**Scowcroft:** The President hated it. He was a former DCI. He had had a big Advisory Board, which he considered meddlesome. He wanted to abolish it. We went for—oh, I don't know—at least a year, maybe closer to two years, and he wouldn't talk to me about it.

**Zelikow:** Which I guess implies that he wasn't meeting regularly with it.

**Scowcroft:** Oh, no. they all submitted their resignations, because there was a change of administration—and he simply didn't appoint a new PFIAB [President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board].

**Zelikow:** So PFIAB was still on the books.

**Scowcroft:** No, there were the parts of the PFIAB—ancillary to the PFIAB. That is, there was a legal committee, an oversight committee for infractions and so forth that kept operating. But the PFIAB itself didn't exist. The idea wasn't to abolish the PFIAB, but it didn't have any people in it. I finally got him to agree to a PFIAB that was five people. The PFIAB is probably 40 people now. It's usually big and it was partly useful and partly a payoff to people.

**Zelikow:** It was a place to park people.

**Scowcroft:** Absolutely. Absolutely—stroke people who were important. So I got him to agree to a PFIAB that was five people—four of whom were highly technical to oversee the technical intelligence aspects. I convinced him that the PFIAB back in the early '70s had had people on it like [Edwin] Land, who had developed the cameras and so on and so forth.

**Zelikow:** Land of Polaroid.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, Polaroid. People like that. Bob Galvin of Motorola and people like that brought an innovative aspect to it, and we really needed them. He didn't mind that, because they wouldn't meddle so much. So there was a PFIAB. It was a highly specialized PFIAB.

**Zelikow:** Who was the chair? Do you remember?

**Scowcroft:** Admiral—he was a guy who was nominated to be Secretary of Defense. Bobby Inman.

**Zelikow:** So the President was comfortable with that. Why did you fight to save it? Why did you care?

**Scowcroft:** Because I thought it was a useful body and that it was not a bad idea to have a group of knowledgeable people—just sitting, watching the intelligence community—saying, "Hey, why are you doing this this way? Why don't you do that? Why don't you do the other?" I just thought it was a useful—

**Zelikow:** Well, you have an intelligence directorate on the NSC staff. Why not let them do that job?

**Scowcroft:** It's very tiny and the intelligence directorate served a very different function. It was my window into the CIA. It was staffed by a man from the clandestine services. It was my way to get into the operations. It was not an oversight function, at all, but my way to be inside the CIA.

**Zelikow:** Let me move from that to a more general question about the White House's relationship to the intelligence community. Basically, were you being served? Now, that's such a global question, it's hard to give a very good answer to it. So I think of illustrations like, "Did the intelligence community do what you wanted, give you what you felt you needed on things like Panama? Breaking developments in Europe. Breaking developments in the Soviet Union. Gulf War stuff. Balkans." We could go into all those stories, but talk about the intelligence/policy relationship.

**Scowcroft:** It's a difficult question to deal with, because people ordinarily want intelligence to do what it can't do. First of all, a policy maker doesn't know what intelligence he needs until he needs it. So it's the job of intelligence to anticipate what the President will need, which is sometimes tough. The nature of most intelligence also makes it difficult, because for every sort of intelligence estimate that such-and-such is the situation, there's somebody who says, "No, it isn't, it's this way." And so I think intelligence is most useful about facts—that such a thing is happening. It's quite useful on facts and analysis of the facts. It is least useful on estimates, especially the kinds of estimates about what is likely to happen somewhere. Most Presidents I've seen take that as just another view. For the President, the intelligence simply gives him a little more confidence—narrows the range of uncertainty about the decision he has to make.

**Zelikow:** Another thing intelligence can do is suggest questions that you might wish to ask—or areas to which you might need to give attention—that are not otherwise getting it—without necessarily stating what the answers to those questions might be. But, to attain that—I'd like you to comment whether you thought it helped that way. Also, to attain that, they basically need you to help them a lot in understanding what people are wrestling with—and what questions you're asking, so they can help you ask better ones. So I'd like you to comment on whether you thought there was a good two-way street in that regard.

**Scowcroft:** There was, but it depended heavily on the President and his background and interest in the intelligence—having been DCI. The morning intelligence briefing did frequently point out things which were going on, of seminal importance but not at the top of any agenda. It was very useful in that sense. But both the President and I used the briefing to ask, "Why didn't you do

this? Why didn't you say this? You left this out," and so forth. It was very much an iterative process. The President enjoyed talking with the briefer about what he would have liked more in it, what he found useful. So it was, I thought, a process that resulted in considerable improvement of the product over the four years of the President's term. It was an engagement that I'd never seen any other President use.

**Zelikow:** What about for you, personally—as opposed to thinking about President Bush—were you also pleased with that engagement?

**Scowcroft:** Oh, very much—because I thought it was pretty much a mixed bag. Some of the items were not particularly helpful and I would always point out when I didn't think they were helpful. When they simply regurgitated, in a way, what one had already seen in the *New York Times* or something like that. So yes, I frequently would point those out. I had a weekly meeting with the DCI and his deputy.

**Zelikow:** Weekly?

**Scowcroft:** Weekly. Every week. They'd come in and we'd talk about everything.

**Zelikow:** Half an hour? An hour?

**Scowcroft:** As long as it took. I'd set aside an hour—it didn't always take an hour.

**McCall:** Did the daily briefing become refined through these iterations?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. It improved considerably. The President had a hand in that. In the Reagan administration, the briefing used to come down to the White House and then it would go into the Xerox machine and everybody would get copies of it. President Bush stopped that the first day. He said, "The briefing books"—there were maybe four or five of them—the President's, the Vice President's, the Secretary of State's, the Secretary of Defense. Anyway, they'd always be accompanied by a person from CIA—and they never would be out of his control. No Xeroxes, no one other than the people authorized would be allowed to read it. Therefore, the Agency was prepared to put things in it that they had just stopped putting in.

**Zelikow:** You may find it interesting to know that George Tenet has recently asserted that the PDB (the President's Daily Brief) should be exempt from declassification, even when it is 30, or 35, years old. We don't really want to reveal what we really told the President.

**Scowcroft:** Well, that's a good point.

**Zelikow:** That's a shadow of the current sensitivity. I'm not making so much a comment on the merits of Tenet's claim—which, actually, I strongly disagree with—as a sign of the neuralgia with which CIA now regards the sensitivity of this document. Perhaps, in part, as a result of the reform you just described.

**Scowcroft:** It could be, because it is important, I think, that the President have the sense that there's nothing being held back. That to the best of their ability, they're giving him everything that can be useful.

**McCall:** Let me follow up about that, from a content point of view. You spoke about the security and distribution aspects of the PDB. You also said, with these iterations, you'd tell the CIA individuals what was helpful and what was not helpful. Was there a substantive, or qualitative, change beyond simply how, for instance, the detail—or things that the President liked to know more about?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I think it improved both in content, in revealing, for example, the source of some of the comments that were made—exactly where they came from. So that the President could evaluate whether this was maybe some nut who had said it, or what the source was and so on. And also their selection of what they decided to cover, and what they didn't. It got much more, in my mind, systematic than haphazard. Always there are some things that you wonder why did they decide to include that. Yes, it was definitely better.

**McCall:** There were criticisms later on about where the emphasis of Agency assets went from intelligence gathering, in terms of weaknesses, HUMINT [human intelligence], or whatever. Did these sorts of things become apparent in the PDB? Were there clues there that there were holes?

**Scowcroft:** I think that intelligence is always better technically, than in terms of HUMINT. That's not surprising. It's where we're good, and the other is much harder and frequently much more vague.

**McCall:** While we're on this, why don't we take one example. Early on, while this is still being refined. Panama's early on and the crisis around Panama develops in the May time frame through December. Did you all feel well briefed in that period, from an intelligence perspective?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I think so. I don't recall any surprises about Panama. I think that the degree of unrest in the country about [Manuel] Noriega, the loyalty of different military units—those things, I think, came about pretty well. Even down to the details of a CIA operative that Noriega had in jail—down to the cell, that we dropped a team

**Zelikow:** This is Kurt Muze.

**Scowcroft:** Yes. We dropped a team on the prison. It was exactly—exactly—we got him out, no problem. They were quite good. Their estimates as to which Panamanian units would be loyal and support Noriega, and which ones wouldn't, were quite good. I think it was good intelligence.

**McCall:** Would you feel that it's also partly a function of our relationship with Panama—in our existing presence?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, partly, it was. The place where it was not so good was especially in the coup of October. What we found later, in inquiring what went wrong, was some apprehension on the part of the team down there of being accused of being involved in assassination—which is inherent in any coup attempt. So we tried to clarify the Executive order, to give some relief to that. That was a specific problem there. They simply didn't seem to—hadn't penetrated—didn't know the players and what was happening. But generally, it was quite good.

**Zelikow:** Let me move again, and take on another problem of managing the interagency process that's related to intelligence. Which is what is sometimes colloquially referred to as "drugs and

thugs." That whole basket of issues that involves intelligence, law enforcement, terrorism, narcotics and so forth. It's a pretty mixed-up area as far as the interagency process goes, but is now getting a lot more attention than it used to. It got a lot of attention in the '80s—was subsiding some during your period—and is getting a lot again. As you know, the administration has dramatically reorganized how the government is set and has actually put the NSC role way up there. I'd like to hear your reflections on how you tried to organize these issues and how it worked—including your relations with Justice and FBI.

**Scowcroft:** The drug thing we had a particular organizational issue. That is that the Congress, late in the Reagan administration, had passed a law—setting up a Drug Czar. That was made active with the Bush administration. It turned out that the Czar had an office, but he didn't have anything else. So I went to him and said, "Look, I would be happy to provide to you—"

**Zelikow:** This is a conversation with Bill Bennett?

**Scowcroft:** Bill Bennett. "—provide to you the facilities of the NSC system—to help you get things done." Well, it didn't work very well. It turns out that, frankly, Bill Bennett was a terrible manager. It simply didn't work, didn't work too well. So we did not play the role in drugs—although I did get heavily involved—that otherwise we might have played. In broader terms, in policy terms, we were very heavily involved in trying to bring order out of the numbers of agencies who were involved in the drug business. I remember, shortly before the administration started—a picture in the paper of DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency] agents, armed with submachine guns, marching through the jungles down somewhere. I was appalled by the notion that we had Armed Forces under God only knows what kind of authority.

So I worked hard to try to bring some order out of it. It was very hard to do. The agencies involved were not particularly cooperative. FBI and CIA notoriously don't work well together. Defense was getting involved. The President believed they should. I did. They didn't much like it. It was a very complicated operation. I think we helped some. I think we helped mobilize the Latin Americans to be more cooperative than they were, by making it a joint effort rather than, "You people stand aside and let us go in and clean out the drugs." I think we made some progress, but it was one of the more difficult areas to deal with.

**Zelikow:** How do you correct this—in managing the interagency process? Do you like, or are you encouraged, by current White House organization of this issue? Although that doesn't really address the drug problem. Do you empower the Latin American guy—try to back him up in exerting more authority over FBI and DoD [Department of Defense] and other agency activities?

**Scowcroft:** This is one of those—you know you're hitting all of these questions at the confluence of different agencies and different authorities. It is the process that the NSC is designed to deal with. But it is, at the same time, the most difficult area because authority is dispersed. Theoretically, you can fall back on the President's authority, but you can't invoke the President on every issue. It becomes a very difficult process.

One of the things found out early on in dealing with terrorism and hijacking—that is that the FBI and the CIA had fundamentally different approaches to dealing with terrorists. My philosophy—and I thought it was that of the government—was that you don't negotiate with terrorists.

Because, if it looks like there's any profit in, especially, hostage seizing—you proliferate it by cooperating. That was not the FBI's position. Their experience stemmed from kidnapping and so on, where you bet you negotiate. There was a fundamentally different policy within the U.S. government on how you deal with hijackers.

It's a never-ending problem. It's a bigger problem now. The thing I don't like about the current arrangement is that I think it's important that the NSC staff bend over backward not to become operational. I think that that line is very blurred in the kind of Homeland Defense sort of thing. It's a natural evolution—especially where authority is diffused. But I think if the NSC gets operational—it destroys its utility, in my mind.

**Zelikow:** Circling back to paper flow again, in your paper flow—here's something that troubles me. You were working 80, 90 hours a week—by my rough calculation. You've described a lot of different things that you were attending to. Your desk is covered in paper. As you know, it was a running joke about how paper moved in and off your desk. Aside from the personality side, this is a bit worrying. You get the sense that all this paper is coming in—nobody could work any harder than you're working—and as hard as you're working, you're not processing that paper as rapidly as you would like. You can't ask somebody to work harder. So this to me as a manager, this is a symptom that something in the system is not working right.

**Scowcroft:** I honestly don't think so. What I practiced is sort of a triage system. There is not time enough in the day to deal with every subject that everybody wants to bring to you. So you have to decide. The first thing you have to decide is, "What, of all these issues, is important enough to take to the President?" Because there's nothing more valuable than the President's time. The second is, "What is important enough that I have to deal with in a timely fashion?" The third is, "What is it that probably needs to be dealt with, but not in any particular time frame?" The last one is, "Use the squeaky wheel syndrome." You know, the paper comes up. It sits on my desk. It doesn't appear to me that it needs something. If it's obviously not, I send it back and say, "Handle it yourself." Wait and see what happens. If it turns out that it's not going to get resolved, then somebody will come up and tell me.

It's an imperfect system and I must admit I probably was not the best manager. You remember I tried the red dot system. Papers that were urgent got red dots. Well, it soon got that there were three and four red dots on the paper. I don't know that anything major fell through the cracks because I also relied on my principals to come up and say, "Hey, you've got to do something about this paper." They have their own responsibilities to get things done. So yes, it's a mess. One person can't do it. Just like the President can't do everything that people want him to do. So you've got to decide what you're going to do, what you're going to ignore, and what you're going to say, "You guys can handle it."

**Zelikow:** But the President has a Chief of Staff to help him handle this problem. You've got—and this is interesting—basically no personal staff in a traditional sense. I mean, you have Florence [Gantt], you don't have staff aides—and you've got Bob Gates.

**Scowcroft:** I also have an executive secretary, whom I used to instruct sometimes about the kinds of things that I needed to see and the kinds of things that I didn't need to see.

**Zelikow:** How did you use Bob Gates in this—in paper flow? Did everything route through Gates? How did you both clue him in, and use him, in this?

**Scowcroft:** He usually looked at everything that came to me.

**Zelikow:** Not in a formal process of a review. He would just wander on your desk—

**Scowcroft:** Just to see what it was. Frequently, I would give things to Bob to do.

**Zelikow:** So you could hand things off to him?

**Scowcroft:** Absolutely.

**Zelikow:** So in a way, your in-box and his in-box could almost become identical. Without having to formally have to copy everything to him—he felt that he had an open entree to your desk? Is that fair?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, and indeed Florence would probably pass most everything through him. Not to slow it down, and he didn't slow things down, but to look at so he would know what I was up to.

**Zelikow:** Let me move now to—we've been talking about personnel. We've talked about agenda setting to some extent in an involuntary way. How did you map out all the minefields—like ongoing intelligence activities? At the time you took office, there weren't any ongoing big-time military operations that would concern you. How you did the institutional transition. Let me segue from that into the substantive agenda of the administration. We talked about some of this last time. But I want to focus on one area of the budget, which is always an early topic. In particular, the Defense budget—as a way to open up the discussion of the White House/DoD relations, a little more than we have before. We did not, last time, discuss the Defense budget issues at all.

I had an interview session with Dick Darman last month and spent some time, and I'll tell you, Defense budget issues were very important to him. He has a pretty substantial discussion of Defense budget issues in 1989, in which you play a big part. And have to play a big part, from very early on. How did you prepare yourself, before Inauguration Day, to come to grips with whatever you thought your role was, with respect to the national security budget?

**Scowcroft:** That's very hazy.

**Zelikow:** My question is hazy?

**Scowcroft:** No, what I did was hazy. I had some general ideas about the budget. Specifics, no. I did not get deeply into the Defense budget. It was on particular issues. It was tough for the NSC to engage in budget discussions because—partly because of the way OMB [Office of Management and Budget] handled them. We were always a part of the President's review of the budget—but not a part of the internal OMB deliberations on budget issues—unless we engaged ourselves.

By the time you get to the President's review, it's hard to change things. It has to be big issues. I mean this is the last step in the process. It would have been much better to have had an earlier entree.

**Zelikow:** Well, there are a couple of ways I want to pursue this. Let me start with one—the big picture. Darman is very frustrated about how he's going to keep the President's promise on taxes—if he can keep it at all. A critical variable was what was going to be the real growth in defense spending. He's very anxious to tackle that as a way of making the numbers add up. In his account of this, the way people talked about this, it was going to be zero, zero, one—that kind of discussion as to what the net should be. He described some very difficult discussions, in which you basically found yourself playing the role of defender of the DoD budget in this process. To him, this is an enormous source of frustration because, in effect, it's a black box and you won't let him crack into it. Now, I'm personalizing—I'm not implying that he's personalized quite as much as that. But then that creates a lot of other problems for the President's budget agenda. So I'd be curious about your recollections of this.

**Scowcroft:** That's fascinating, because I had the same impression about Darman, that he was a master at bureaucratic maneuvering and played things in such a way that it was almost impossible to find out what really was going on. We did have big arguments over the five years—plus 1 percent, minus 1 percent, and how it went out. I felt very strongly that we were in a period of great danger. That comments that Reagan and Shultz had both made near the end of the administration—that the Cold War was pretty much over—would, at the moment when we might actually see victory, we would collapse our efforts like the Defense budget. And whatever pressures there were on the Soviet Union to, in fact, moderate their behavior would disappear, because they would feel they didn't have to. So I felt very strongly about that issue.

Did I try to compare that with the issue of the President's tax policy? No, I didn't. But I did live within the requirement that this was a zero-sum budget. If you wanted a new program and new spending, you had to find somewhere else where you could cut the budget. As you well know, on Eastern Europe, it just gave us fits.

**Zelikow:** Including the President—because if the President wanted to do something—

**Scowcroft:** That's right. And trying to find a few odd millions of dollars—it was embarrassing. But we did live within those budget guidelines. That was a narrow issue. I thought the basic issue of the kinds of signals we sent to the Soviet Union was of such overriding importance that we couldn't make a mistake on it. So that's the really macro involvement in the budget, not what I was talking about before—the budget review on specific items.

**Zelikow:** That's now the angle I want to press with this question. How does the President of the United States go about shaping the defense strategy of the United States? Start from the premise that a President might want to influence American defense strategy—being Commander in Chief and all. You follow that with the further premise that I think you know that a lot of American defense strategy, just in the way we've designed our government, is driven by procurement decisions and budget decisions. What flows from those two premises is a question about how does the White House engage, proactively, the big Defense budget choices and procurement choices. My memory of the process is that the Defense directorate at the NSC, while certainly

staying busy and active on important things, had more and more been defined, really, as an arms control directorate with a little Defense spillover, which did not engage meaningfully either on military operations or on the Defense budget. In other words, was disengaged from Defense strategy. This is a long question. The result, then, is the White House in effect does not engage—or if it does engage, it has to engage at your level, which is then very hard.

**Scowcroft:** I think it's a very unsatisfactory process from the President's point of view. It is hard for him to engage until very late in the day. It's hard for him to understand the issues and, unless they are clarified—as they are in a few cases—by the debate between, for example, the Secretary of Defense and the Director of OMB, he has great difficulty. And he has almost no way of relating the particular issue where there may be a fight between DoD and OMB to larger issues. They're all dealt with in isolation by the technique of—

**Zelikow:** Not strategically.

**Scowcroft:** Not strategically, no. The President had a mindset, though, when he came in. What he said was that he wanted to take the initiative on changes in our military posture. That [Mikhail] Gorbachev had been running around Europe promising this, promising that. He was the darling of Europe, and we looked like we were mired in the Cold War. He wanted to innovate—to get out with some proposals. Now, not directly budget-related, necessarily—but it was very hard to do. He succeeded, but only with as much effort as he put into anything.

**Zelikow:** We're now talking about the CFE [Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe] move of spring '89.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, spring '89—and a similar one in '90.

**Zelikow:** Early in January 1990.

**Scowcroft:** Those are the kinds of things he kept saying over and over again. "The world is changing; why can't we change? Why can't we get out in front?" Getting some innovative thinking in the system was very difficult.

**Zelikow:** It's interesting, though, what I'm hearing and inferring is that it was hard for you to engage in Defense strategy except through the vehicle of intervening in arms control.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, very hard.

**Zelikow:** Remember, we all were taught that arms control ought to flow out of Defense strategy. You're describing a White House process that is just the opposite.

**Scowcroft:** Pretty much.

**Zelikow:** Is this a problem you tried to address in the way you set up the interagency process? The relation between the civilian control of Defense policy at the White House and your engagement—and the President's engagement—in Defense strategy? Did you try to tackle that?

**Scowcroft:** Not head on, not head on. I sort of rode with the system on that. If I were to do it again, I would try to bring OMB—not under the supervision of the NSC, although I think that would be a good idea—but force it to engage in the strategic discussion of the budget. Because my sense is—and I'm sure Defense does that—but Defense is a huge agency and different parts of the budget are defended by different people. At the same time, it's hard for them to have a big picture until it gets to the Secretary. I think OMB's a tough customer. To be forced to integrate its analysis of the budget early on with the NSC would be a helpful process.

**Zelikow:** Do you feel you made any progress in getting at that objective informally, as the administration went on?

**Scowcroft:** No.

**Zelikow:** So when the [Richard] Cheney/Powell base force initiative emerged—which did have some important budgetary implications—that was a DoD initiative. How did you engage that? That was a major strategic development.

**Scowcroft:** I'll tell you exactly how that happened. When it became apparent that we were going to reduce the Defense budget—if we didn't take the initiative, Congress would do it, they were determined. We set out a program for cuts in terms of what kinds of levels of spending. I spoke to Cheney and said, "Look, we're going to reduce the budget. Now, why don't we try to do something else with it?" Whatever you think of the organization of the Department of Defense, it didn't proceed from any rational analysis. It grew up accidentally—here and there—in response to pressures. "Now, why don't we take a blank piece of paper and say, 'If we were to start from scratch, here's the way we'd like the Defense Department to look'? And as we cut back, to cut back to get us closer to that model—not revolutionary, but evolutionary." He said, "It's just too tough, I'm not going to take that on." So the cuts were one-third, one-third, one-third to the services.

**Zelikow:** There was some restructuring—in the notion of commands, and the responsibilities of the commands.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, there was. But, interestingly enough, that came primarily from the Congress. The [Barry] Goldwater/[William] Nichols effort, which I worked at when I was out of the government, was primarily in the Congress, and Defense was brought along on that kicking and screaming.

**Zelikow:** Interestingly, the picture you describe might well serve as the description of the picture today. It's just been continuing to adjust incrementally from the base force of 1990/91.

**Scowcroft:** It has indeed, and by the principle by which they size the force now, that is, two major contingencies, by accident, it also results in a force configured in a certain way—for those two contingencies. Now, they're only supposed to be models for how much force you really need, not tailoring the force, so there's even a distortion there. Fundamentally, we do not operate the Department of Defense the way we fight wars. It doesn't make any sense.

**Zelikow:** How can the White House do better—how can the National Security Advisor do better at serving the President in engaging in strategy? You've given an example of working with OMB

to engage the budget, and also a way to get a strategic vision integrated into budgetary planning. Did you feel that you had the right kind of communication that you needed with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff? So that you could address things before they were something just about done and now just being briefed to the President—leaving aside the Gulf War story.

**Scowcroft:** Depended on what it was. On many of the budget issues, no, I did not. Interestingly enough, Cheney was much less open, in giving NSC staffers access to their counterparts, than State was. Cheney wanted things to come through his office—which meant that much of the intelligence that I otherwise would have gotten, I didn't get.

**Zelikow:** Let's take the Gulf War illustration. I remember actually working on a couple of problems where we wanted to get some information about the status of military operations. Actually, folks made arrangements where I'd go over to the Pentagon and get briefings from Checkmate and so on. But this was pretty unusual. It certainly was not a routine function of the Defense directorate. I could informally cut deals with people like Mike Hayden and Don Pilling, who'd informally work out. But just in terms of basic things like the status of military operations on any given day—and the assessments of that—I have no doubt that information was being provided in some form to the President and to you. It seemed institutionally that this only worked in a very tight and narrow way, with this pretty thin stream of stuff coming in. Is that a false perception?

**Scowcroft:** No, Defense is a fairly autonomous organization. I could find out anything I wanted, but I had to know what I wanted to get it. My relations with Cheney were excellent, I don't fault them at all. But that's a very limited channel. What the system needs, I think, is relatively full exchange between the NSC staff people and the department staff people, which I think we had with the State Department. When that is absent, problems don't get identified early on. By the time they do come to my attention, or bubble up to the top, it's very difficult to change them. So it was not a very satisfactory relationship, and it was especially on budget issues. Strategic issues weren't the problem.

**McCall:** Why do you think you were more successful with State than Defense, then? Is it a personality issue—down the ranks?

**Scowcroft:** It has been different in different administrations. State's always been more open. Perhaps it's the characteristic—less discipline. Defense has always been relatively closed. It's much harder.

**Zelikow:** Let me pursue the issue of military strategy a little more. Strategy through arms control, there are the CFE stories which are already told well—both in the previous interview and the books. There is some material on START [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty] in your book, though not a lot. There's very little in the book on the Nuclear Posture Review—which does seem to be a highly purposeful effort to reexamine American nuclear strategy—in which you played a very active role, though I don't know the details of the role. We've talked to Cheney about this. He certainly acknowledges the significance of your role. This does seem to be a case of the White House taking a proactive role in shaping military strategy in an important respect. So I'd like you, if you would for a moment, reflect on the mixed issues of START,

missile defense, and then, the deterrent posture. Pick it up, maybe, in about 1990 or so. Talk about what you wanted to do here, and how that evolved.

**Scowcroft:** It's a good question. It illustrates back to an earlier question you asked and that is, "How do you get your work done?" When I took the effort to become full and consistently involved, I could get things done. But you can only do that on a few issues. I can't say the ones that I engaged on that way were necessarily the ones I should have, as opposed to the ones I liked or whatever. I remember pressuring Nick Brady to propose a new Bretton Woods to overhaul the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and the World Bank—that they were vestiges of a past system and so on. He didn't want to do it and I just didn't push it. Here, I did—I thought it was very important because it went to the heart of our relationship with the Soviet Union and deterrence of nuclear war.

I felt very strongly that arms control in the Reagan administration had been misguided in one fundamental respect. And that is, the emphasis was on reductions. To me, the emphasis ought to be on arms control—ought to be on improving the stability of the strategic balance, so that, in the event of a crisis, neither side would feel compelled to strike because of the characteristics of the force—that if they didn't go first, they'd be at a terrible disadvantage. That's partly the nature of the forces.

So my effort was to try to build forces on our side and, through arms control, get the Soviets to do the same thing—and that is, to develop forces which, by their character, were not inducive of a first strike in a crisis. That meant de-MIRVing [multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles] the forces, so that with one warhead you couldn't take out ten. Those sorts of things. So that's what I put my effort on. It was slow, and Defense resisted slowly, but START II eventually, I think, reflected—in considerable part—that kind of philosophy for strategic forces.

**Zelikow:** Well, in addition to START II, there was also a real Nuclear Posture Review. It was the real thing. You can criticize it—even Cheney today looks back on it as an unfinished project. He thinks there would have been another phase to that had the administration been returned to office. But it was a genuine review that did real things to the force posture. Some of that interacts with START II, which is an agenda you could work through the arms control negotiation. A lot of that—there were a lot of things going on there besides START II. I'd be grateful if you'd talk about how you tried to work with Cheney and Powell, to get them to take this on. Whether or not you had to back them—because it's a hard thing for Cheney to do within his building.

**Scowcroft:** Another aspect of nuclear strategy that I thought needed to be changed, for a variety of reasons, was our tactical nuclear weapons. They were increasingly troubling politically and—to me—increasingly meaningless militarily. We had three kinds of elements to them. First was in Europe, where the Germans, especially with German unification coming up, were not just aggressive, but were really recalcitrant about nuclear weapons that would go off inside any part of Germany—including East Germany. In Korea, there was a momentary thaw and both Koreas seemed to want the elimination of U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea. At sea, there was a general acknowledgment that, especially in ASW [antisubmarine warfare], that nuclear weapons were not the way to go.

So the President's saying, "Initiative, let's change—let's not keep the same posture." So I went to Cheney and said, "Why don't we propose getting rid of tactical nuclear weapons—other than aircraft carried weapons in Europe?"

**Zelikow:** Do you remember when you talked about this with him?

**Scowcroft:** I think it was early '91.

**Zelikow:** Because we had already—the previous year—taken out the follow-on-to-Lance [MGM-52 Lance short-range missile] thorn.

**Scowcroft:** We had done that for narrower reasons.

**Zelikow:** There was already bureaucratic momentum in this direction, but let's ratchet this up and take on the whole thing.

**Scowcroft:** Cheney's initial reaction was, "Absolutely not." But I patiently pointed out to him—in terms of military utility—that these things really were more of a problem. The additional Navy problem, of course, not only ASW—but the notion that as they sail into a port, they would neither confirm nor deny that they had nuclear weapons on board. That was really getting very complicated.

So I said, "Look at it. Look at it." He finally came back and said, "OK, you're right—the military utility is gone." So we did it in a way—if we had just pulled our nuclear weapons out of South Korea, it would have sent a bad signal that somehow we were withdrawing from Korea. By making it a part of a worldwide change, there were no adverse signals, and we got a force that was much more controllable. We didn't have nuclear storage facilities out around everywhere—we still have some, but—

So it worked fine—and that we did unilaterally.

**Zelikow:** Did you also push hard for the targeting review as part of a reevaluation of—I don't know—we would have called it the SIOP [Single Integrated Operational Plan]. I'm not sure the SIOP is an adequately descriptive term for what we had then.

**Scowcroft:** That was more like pushing on an open door than these others. Everybody recognized that things had changed. The status of Eastern Europe, the status of China, the whole way we would conduct nuclear operations—so that was a cooperative venture. That was not an antagonistic effort. The way I recall it, Defense was friendly.

**Zelikow:** It was not so friendly everywhere in the Defense Department.

**Scowcroft:** Oh, no, within the department it was not. But there was not the built in resistance that there was—

**Zelikow:** Were you able to deploy the needed White House clout, or did you need to enlist the President to get these things done in '91—the way you had enlisted the President, say, in '89—in the CFE initiative?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I enlisted the President.

**Zelikow:** You said the President's determination was at least as great as your own, if possibly less specific.

**Scowcroft:** The President, on this one, just said, "Look, I want to get out in front. I don't want to hurt our defense or anything, but the Soviet Union is changing their force structure, all of these things are changing—you can't tell me that we have to keep things the way they were." He just kept on—on that. Underneath that, I would make proposals which, partly, Cheney would agree to—as a way to respond to the President—because he had to respond to the President. The President was very determined in this area. As I say, not specific—he was just frustrated that he was being—partly because he was being accused and partly because he felt, himself, that we ought to—our force posture ought to reflect the realities of a changing world.

**Zelikow:** That's a very good place to stop for lunch.

[BREAK]

**Zelikow:** OK, what I'd like to talk about with you is another, more general issue—not bound up in a specific policy story. It's a little related to what we've been talking about—the press. In our last oral history session, you did talk about speechwriting and communications, but you didn't really talk about the press. You referred to the fact that you would have regular background sessions with reporters but other than that—no. And the phenomenon of leaks—and how to avoid them. I was just noticing in today's paper—every week the *New York Times* runs a story that reports the latest National Intelligence Estimate. There was one last week by Judy Miller and Jim Risen on India and Pakistan. There's another one today.

Tell me about when you came in, did you have a view on how to deal with the press, or did you make it up as you went along?

**Scowcroft:** No, I had a view—because one of the things I thought I had done wrong in the Ford administration was to underestimate what my role should be with the press and with the Congress. So I set about to change that, and I think I did. I had weekly background meetings with the press. I made myself accessible to them for phone calls. I went on talk shows much more frequently and so on.

**Zelikow:** Direct calls, or calls that went through Roman Popadiuk?

**Scowcroft:** They would call Roman and say they would like to talk to me.

**Zelikow:** So there was a way of screening calls—deciding which reporters you wished to talk to?

**Scowcroft:** Oh, yes, I didn't talk to everybody, not by any means—the responsible ones, and so on. I did a lot more discussion. The theory being that, whatever the administration, in fact, does, plans, and so on—the American people become aware of mostly through the intermediary of the press. While we can't control it, the best thing we can do is get the story out in a way that presents it in, at least, a fair light. That was the reason I changed my behavior toward the press.

**Zelikow:** Was Roman your liaison with [Marlin] Fitzwater's operation?

**Scowcroft:** Roman wore dual hats. He was my press person and he was Marlin's deputy—so he worked for both of us. I didn't think that would work. Surprisingly, it worked very well.

**Zelikow:** Did you create that job or did you inherit it?

**Scowcroft:** I inherited it. I told Marlin at the beginning, "I can't imagine that it will work, but I'm prepared to try it for a while." Partly because of Roman's personality, it worked very well—and Marlin's personality, too. We had no serious problems. I thought the press operation—I was very pleased with the way it went.

**Zelikow:** Did Roman sit in on your backgrounders?

**Scowcroft:** Almost always.

**Zelikow:** So the reporters would perceive Roman as someone who was authoritative, in the way they perceived Marlin as authoritative?

**Scowcroft:** Yes.

**Zelikow:** So Roman had a right to sit in on your meetings that was a little analogous—but not the same as the rights that Marlin had to sit in on your meetings.

**Scowcroft:** That's right, but Roman did not sit in substantively. I thought you meant my meetings for the press. Roman did not sit in on many substantive meetings.

**Zelikow:** Not the way Marlin did.

**Scowcroft:** No.

**Zelikow:** In dealing with the press, differentiate between how you viewed print reporters, TV reporters—how you decided whom to talk to.

**Scowcroft:** I was usually more sympathetic to talking to print reporters than TV because I thought they would give the problem—give whatever the issue was—more attention and more time than it was likely to be accorded on TV. I did not do too many TV interviews, other than standard TV talk shows. When I would do it, you know, you find it cut down to 20 or 30 seconds or something like that—especially if you tape it. So I preferred the print media. I think their reporters, by and large, are more knowledgeable than the TV. How did I decide who to talk to? In the beginning, when I didn't know too many of them, I would rely heavily on Roman and

Marlin as to who I ought to talk to. Then, as I got to know them and how they handled the material, I would have my own preferences.

**Zelikow:** What about interviews on the record, or appearances on the Sunday talk shows, or other shows? What was your view of that?

**Scowcroft:** I was initially uneasy about speaking to print media on the record. I thought I could explain issues better if I had the freedom not to worry about how each sentence might look—separated from other sentences—if they didn't carry it all. But after I got used to it, I was relatively indifferent about whether or not it was on the record. The President preferred things on the record. I'm not sure why, but he did.

**Zelikow:** Did you do a lot of the Sunday talk shows?

**Scowcroft:** I did a lot of the Sunday talk shows. I had a discussion with Baker about it first. I had thought that one of the typical problems between the National Security Advisor and the Secretary of State is—who is the explicator of American foreign policy to the American people?

In the Kissinger/[William] Rogers feud, Kissinger sort of became that, or competed with Rogers for that. I thought that was bad. Other than the President, the person who explains American foreign policy, by and large, ought to be the Secretary of State. So I told Baker that I would only go on these talk shows—I would call him when I was asked to go on. If it was OK with him, I would do it. That happened for a while, and then he said, "You don't have to call me beforehand." So I didn't. Marlin's strategy for the press and the Sunday talk shows tended to be to blanket them all. I'm not sure I agreed with that, but he tended to, so I went on more than I probably otherwise would have. He'd put someone on each of the talk shows to cover all of the networks.

**Zelikow:** What about leaks? You've served in administrations that spent a lot of time worrying about leaks. I think I know that President Bush doesn't like leaks.

**Scowcroft:** He hates them. Maybe not quite as paranoid about them as Nixon, but he hates them.

**Zelikow:** So tell me how you tried to contain that, deal with it, your attitude toward it—and what was your press guidance for the rest of the NSC? What were your guidelines that you would give Roman on who gets to talk to reporters—unless they want to do it clandestinely?

**Scowcroft:** My guidance to the rest of the staff was that I didn't mind them talking to the press. I wanted to know about it beforehand. I wanted to, unless there were unusual circumstances, for it to be on background. I didn't want the NSC staff in public, talking about policy.

**Zelikow:** When you would go on background, would that usually be as a "senior administration official"?

**Scowcroft:** Yes.

**Zelikow:** So when they went on background, it would merely be as an "administration official"?

**Scowcroft:** Something like that.

**Zelikow:** But you'd want that cleared with you and Roman beforehand?

**Scowcroft:** I think that helped the leaking somewhat.

**Zelikow:** People have commented that the administration was not plagued by leaks, and was remarkable for that. Although you may remember some leaks that bothered you so much that it seems you were constantly vexed by them. The administration actually was able to keep some secrets.

**Scowcroft:** Not many. And the President would strongly disagree with you.

**Zelikow:** He would think he was constantly dealing with leaks?

**Scowcroft:** In fact, one of the reasons that we abandoned formal NSC meetings and went to the Gang of Eight, or whatever you call it, was leaks. At the NSC meeting, each principal is allowed to bring an additional person. After an NSC meeting, they all go back to their departments and brief on the meeting. Well, with the Gang of Eight there was nobody else sitting in, and nobody went back to brief on the meeting—so that was the President's preferred venue. I guess it was mine too—because it was unstructured.

**Zelikow:** Were you involved with any investigations of leaks?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I think so. As I recall, we tried to nail a couple of people. The only time you can nail someone is on communications intelligence. There happens to be a statute on that. We never succeeded. But we tried for an opportunity to make an example of somebody. We never were able to.

**Zelikow:** Is there anything else you want to say about relations with the press, or with individual reporters, or any of the personalities involved—before we move off that subject?

**Scowcroft:** No. When we were at Kennebunkport, I would—usually once, maybe twice when we were up there in the summer—have dinner with the press and talk at length. More philosophically than in my weekly background meetings. Still on background, but would talk about what the administration was trying to do, what our plans were, why we were doing it this way and that way—much more philosophical. I think it worked well, because I think what it did—there was enough frankness in it that it gave the press the sense that we were telling them what was going on. They probably tended to give us a fairer shake because of that. I got in trouble a few times doing that.

**Zelikow:** What do you mean, "Got in trouble…"?

**Scowcroft:** Well, one of the questions I had one time was to compare Gorbachev and [Boris] Yeltsin. And I did—and Yeltsin came out on the short end of that comparison, which I think was accurate. It got turned into stories, imputed quite clearly to me, that I was anti-Yeltsin. At that time, Yeltsin was the darling—he was the Democrat. Gorbachev was the Communist and so on.

That we were tilting toward Gorbachev. It was accurate, but it was not helpful—the way it came out at the time.

**Zelikow:** I'd like to move into U.S./Soviet relations. Last time, in our last oral history session, we spent some time on the initial agenda of the administration—some of the discussions surrounding the reviews. James was, I think, wondering whether or not you'd return to your frustration of early 1989 with the reviews, and say a little more than you said then. I'd like to give you an opportunity to do that.

**Scowcroft:** To be honest, I don't remember what I said then. I think it was a good, worthwhile effort to do—but I wouldn't do it again, because it didn't work and it wasn't worth the effort. What I was trying to do was, first of all, to make it clear to everybody that this was a new administration. And therefore, we were sitting down with a review of U.S. foreign policy in all its areas and ramifications. What did we like, what didn't we like, and so on? This was not, "We accept the foreign policy as it is and we amend it as we go along." No, this was to say, "This is a new administration."

The second was to get the new people immersed right away in the intricacies of policy—so they understood the old policy, and thus could move from it. Thirdly, it was to involve the bureaucracy, to say, "We want your views. We want to know what you think the policy ought to be." I think it probably failed on all three counts—except maybe the second one. So I wouldn't do it again.

**Zelikow:** Did you lose much by it, though? There was a lot of commotion in the press talk.

**Scowcroft:** What hurt—and there was a little residual of it—even though we erased most of it with the first NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] Summit—pretty much erased all that—but there was still a little residual, "Well, Bush doesn't have any vision, he doesn't have any thoughts, he's just along for the ride." Some of that continued to stick. Of course, it took a long time for the reviews, and we didn't have the Secretary of Defense on board until the middle of March. So it suffered by all those things. The press got in the habit of writing, "The President's not going anywhere, he's presiding, he's not running things." That hurt.

**Zelikow:** You read this now, in all the accounts. It seems—somehow, looking back on it—so strangely disproportionate. After you'd been in office four months, you had completely reframed and put away Central America as an issue in the foreground of foreign policy. You'd had the CFE initiative. You offered a basic structure for the U.S./Soviet relations, et cetera. This is after four months—this is the "period of paralyzing inertia." Folks were really busy, and actually pretty productively so. There was also the initiative on Eastern Europe—the Hamtramck [speech]. Then everyone concedes that certainly by six months in, the President is taking his second big foreign trip. So if there was a pause, it seems more like a skip.

**Scowcroft:** What it really was—what it really did, though, is give the press an opportunity to start to frame the image of the administration—and it framed it in a do-nothing mode.

**Zelikow:** Which stuck.

**Scowcroft:** Which stuck.

**Zelikow:** That's interesting.

**McCall:** One of the complaints you had at the time—just thinking back to some of the paper that came across—was you were looking for big ideas. What was your feeling that these ideas might be? Did you have a notion where you wanted to go with that?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I did. I had notions of what our relationship with Europe ought to be. You could already see the signs of Maastricht coming up and so forth. How were we to think about relating to Europe? What could we do with the Soviet Union to change things? Now we did get that done, but we did it ourselves—it wasn't the administration. That is, change the focus from bilateral arms control to Eastern Europe. And the Soviet Union—those were the principal ones. We did one on the Middle East.

**Zelikow:** While we're on that—since you mentioned U.S./Europe, let's just take a couple of minutes on that. There was an important move there, in regard to the [François] Mitterrand visit. The President gave a speech in which he announced a distinctly more tolerant tone toward the advancing integration of the European Community. It was perceived as such in Europe—especially in London—where it was not welcomed. I wonder if you have any reflections on what went into that change. I mean, I have a little personal knowledge of it, but what did you and the President think was going on? But also, are you satisfied where you think it went?

**Scowcroft:** Well, partly. I think what really went into it was the feeling that Europe was changing and was going to change. We, the country—Ronald Reagan—had a pretty vitriolic relationship with the French—and Reagan and Mitterrand. That the German/French relationship was going to be crucial to the future of Europe—and that there was, at least, a chance that that relationship would be dominated by the French.

**Zelikow:** You really thought these things at the time?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. It was not that secret—there were writings.

**Zelikow:** Sure, but there are always writings.

**Scowcroft:** This was anticipatory—as to how Europe was developing. I had had a lot of conversations with Europeans before, and the year before the administration began. So I was thinking about how we relate to all this—about how the United States would continue to be a part of Europe, which I thought was of critical importance. One of the things that the President wanted to do—he thought that he maybe could establish a relationship with Mitterrand. When Mitterrand was first elected, he—Bush, the Vice President—was sent over there to establish a relationship and he was always intrigued by that. He was intrigued by Mitterrand saying, "Well, yes, I'm going to let a couple Communists in the government, but you'll see within two years—Communist strength in France will disappear." And it happened.

So the Mitterrand visit to Kennebunkport was the President's idea. I strongly supported the meeting. I didn't think that Kennebunkport was the place. Mitterrand, to me, was such a formal kind of a person that to go up there in an inherently informal setting wouldn't work right. It was a marvelous meeting. It fundamentally changed—didn't change the attitude between State and the Quai d'Orsay. But, at the talk, it changed it fundamentally. There was a bond between those

two which with very rare exceptions was always able to surmount the traditional U.S./French antagonisms. So I think that helped. With that, then I thought we could do better with an integrating France and Germany. I didn't, at that time, realize that Kohl's goal was to integrate Germany so closely into Europe.

With Germany, we went out of our way to make Germany feel good, feel a senior member—you know all this. To the point that Maggie Thatcher said that she thought the special relationship was being jeopardized. We didn't have that in mind at all. It was to kind of reestablish this Europe. I don't know how well it worked, actually.

**Zelikow:** Speak to me on the U.S. and the European Community and the European Union—whether you wanted to do more to engage the new European institutions than we did. Whether you thought that was not really ripe on either side of the Atlantic.

**Scowcroft:** The problem with that is it came at about the same time—when we should have been thinking more seriously about how to engage and how to include, it came about the same time as the French, in my judgment, made an attack on NATO. We got all embroiled in that. With the EU [European Union] and its development, it was primarily a frustration in dealing with them. If you went to the Europeans before there was an EU position—to discuss things with the different European countries—they would say, "We can't talk to you. We don't have an EU position." Well, once the EU had met, and had an EU position, you couldn't talk to them because they had an EU position and they couldn't change it. So that whole thing was awkward.

The President had a real distaste for the Commissioner, [Jacques] Delors. He thought Delors was pedantic, bureaucratic—didn't like the discussions with him, and so on. We didn't really pick up and try to engage the EU in a way that we probably should have. Would it have made a difference? I'm not sure that it would. But we got in a serious wrangle over NATO.

**Zelikow:** Well, let me pursue—since you raised it—there's an episode here that's not in the book and it's not been noticed. Do you remember in late 1990, we embarked on some at-the-time-sensitive conversations between the White House and the Elysée about France's relationship to NATO, in which they sent people to Washington and we actually began writing stuff and had what seemed like some productive sessions? This was stringing along in '90 and '91. Then I left the government and I don't know what happened to that. Nor did I fully understand the purposes that you and Jacques Lanxade had, or that the President and Mitterrand had in this dialogue, beyond the general guidance that I had in working with the French.

**Scowcroft:** My purpose was to try to break down the instinctive antagonism between the United States and France. Especially given the French complex for independence and for seeing the United States as dominating Europe. We were doing pretty well with Mitterrand, although I don't think we fundamentally changed his attitude there. Lanxade I had a lot of hope with. I thought there was an opportunity to really break through that hostility, which went clear back to [Charles] DeGaulle and NATO, and getting out of NATO and so forth, to the kind of cooperation which would help NATO over the bridge between an antagonism of the Soviet Union and what is the new mission. Which worried me a lot.

It didn't work. I think partly it didn't work because I overestimated the impact that Lanxade could have. Deep down, it probably cut across Mitterrand's view. I think Mitterrand's view, as I interpreted it, was not so much a DeGaulleist resentment as it was the feeling that the United States would not stay in Europe. That sooner or later, the Congress or the American people would say, "Why do we have troops over there? Why are we spending our money to help defend Europe?" And that we would withdraw. And that in anticipation of that, Mitterrand felt Europe had to organize itself to handle its own defense capabilities.

Now, that's my own—that may be too generous to Mitterrand, I don't know, but I think he believed the French view, but for other than simply national pride reasons. That was the attempt. In the meantime, there was this drift of France wanting NATO to keep to its original mission—no new roles for NATO; flirting around with CSCE [Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe], giving it a security role; the French/German Brigade—there were all these efforts that you know well to try to break the NATO umbilical. Now, it didn't work, but it was a very tense period for me.

**McCall:** Did German reunification and the whole notion of expanding a larger German role, so to speak, a united Germany in NATO—did that affect the French perspective? Also, do you think the U.S. relationship with the French through Desert Storm had any impact?

**Scowcroft:** I think it reinforced the French desire to push the EU—and to establish the French as a senior partner of the German/French entente, before a unified Germany overwhelmed France. I think that it made the situation, if anything, worse at the time.

On the German side, you had Helmut Kohl—whose goal was to have Germany so thoroughly embedded in Europe that never again could it escape. Therefore, he endured a lot at the hands of France—that ordinarily a German Chancellor would never do—and probably never will again. I think that, if anything, made the situation worse.

**McCall:** You were saying that you thought one of the reasons was the fear—the question of the U.S. commitment to Europe really was—

**Scowcroft:** That was Mitterrand, I think.

**McCall:** Did you feel that the U.S. role in ensuring Germany would remain in NATO, and ensuring that there would be a continued U.S. role therefore, also, in Europe—do you think that was any reassurance to Mitterrand at all?

**Scowcroft:** No. No. Because when we talked of new missions for NATO his refrain was, "NATO already has its hands full. It doesn't need any new missions." There was just a reluctance to do anything meaningful in that regard. So no, I don't think it affected him. Look, in the sense that he had faith in George Bush—absolutely! As a matter of fact, he said that: "And maybe even in your successor. And maybe even in your successor's successor." But maybe that was just a rationale for doing what France historically would want to do anyway.

**McCall:** I was going to ask one other question regarding what effect Desert Storm had on U.S./French relations from your perspective.

**Scowcroft:** I think it had two opposite effects. The first instinct of the French was, "We're with you wholeheartedly." Then there began, when the crisis was going to drag out, then the French started to play games. Even Mitterrand started to play a few games to try to assume an independent role. The French were difficult in command structures in the Gulf. I think that the actual operations opened the eyes of the French and they were dumbfounded at how far behind they were militarily. Partly because they weren't in NATO.

**Zelikow:** Weren't in NATO's military command.

**Scowcroft:** Weren't in NATO's military command, so they did not benefit from a lot of the developments that had taken place in the military sphere.

**McCall:** Was the fact that they weren't in the NATO military structure—the effects of that in terms of the operation—was it pretty evident that there was a disjoint there? The British and the Americans had worked together before in Europe.

**Scowcroft:** Pretty much. They put the French clear out on the flank, where they couldn't get in a lot of trouble.

**Zelikow:** They put them in 18 Airborne Corps on the far left, because also their forces were lightly armed. They couldn't get into tank battles with T-62s.

**Scowcroft:** They were very far behind in hardware. They were very far behind in the kinds of force organization and operation together that the rest of NATO did automatically.

**Zelikow:** Go ahead back to the subject of U.S./Soviet relations. Let me move forward to late 1989. Bob Gates has written about the then-secret formation of this crisis group in the fall of 1989 to contemplate possible radical changes in the Soviet Union. I presume that you were involved in the decision to create that group.

**Scowcroft:** [affirmative murmur]

**Zelikow:** What tipped you—was there anything that tipped you into thinking, *We really need to do some contingency planning*?

**Scowcroft:** Nothing specific. But it became clear, as 1989 rolled on, that Gorbachev was running out of steam, that resistance was growing to his reforms inside the Soviet Union. That we were making such progress in Eastern Europe and in very late '89 with the possibility of German unification, that the strains in the Soviet Union could get very strong as they saw a shift in the military balance in Europe, at least. Very, very sharp.

After all, East Germany was the jewel in the Soviet crown. It's what they pointed to as the result of World War II. Their position in Eastern Europe was crumbling. I thought the possibility of a reaction by the conservatives, with unknown consequences, was sufficiently enough to…. I don't think the group was my idea. I don't remember. It may have been Gates. But I thought the notion of people simply talking about what might happen, what the possibilities were, was a useful thing, so that we would not be surprised and simply floundering if one day we woke up and things were different.

**Zelikow:** Will a scholar, looking back, be able to reconstruct the sources of this concern from readily available materials? Did you have some special intelligence that you can recall, or special insights that you gained from intelligence that made you more concerned about the Soviet Union than you would have been just relying on the standard flow of information?

**Scowcroft:** I don't recall, in particular. There were constant reports in the intelligence community about gloom and doom about Gorbachev and his prospects, that he was not going to succeed. Gates was fully imbued with that notion. I think that if you read the intelligence analysis of the period, you will see them getting increasingly gloomy. Not necessarily forecasting a dramatic shift in the structure, but that Gorbachev's progress was slowing—and would probably stop.

[4.5-minute gap in tape]

**Zelikow:** The Malta meeting has been described so many places, including your own memoir, that I'm kind of reluctant to spend much time on it here. Unless you think there's some interesting backstory that no one has written up that you'd like to discuss.

**Scowcroft:** I think it's been amply dissected. It simply was a chance for the two leaders to sit down and talk in a relaxed atmosphere, take the measure of each other, see their various hopes and fears, and establish a kind of a rapport that helped as they went down this path. That's about all it was.

**Zelikow:** Let me move forward then to the Lithuanian crisis in the spring of 1990, which is very significant and which is discussed to some extent in the memoir. You can let me know if you think it's fully treated there and there's not much more to be said. But, increasingly—with retrospect, the Lithuanian crisis really does stand out as very important. It actually has not received sufficient scholarly attention yet, I think. What I'm struck by is thinking about the dilemmas the United States was wrestling with in deciding how to approach that crisis, and the way those dilemmas evolved. In March—just to help remind you—the Lithuanians had declared independence. The Soviets are contemplating the use of force. From the literature I've seen, we don't know the extent of those contemplations—but knew, obviously, that that idea was in the air.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, there was a new tone in their communications with us—a new edge to it that was ominous.

**Zelikow:** There was pressure in the United States to do something to confront the Russians—especially once they began placing economic sanctions on Lithuania. Now, in March, the President sends—I think it's the first big move the Americans make in this crisis—the pair of letters the President sends to Gorbachev and to the Lithuanian leader—I don't remember is if it's [Vytautas] Landsbergis or [Kazimiera] Prunskiene—

**Scowcroft:** I think it was Prunskiene at that time. One was the Prime Minister, the other was the President.

**Zelikow:** At this stage, I believe these were letters—the message to the Soviets was, 1) Don't use force. 2) Do a referendum. The message to the Lithuanians is not as clear to me. I'd like to hear your reflection on how you were trying to work through this dilemma. There were some arguments back here in Washington about how to proceed on this. If you could just talk through both the personalities at play in Washington and how the dilemma was reflected by those personalities.

**Scowcroft:** Lithuania was an extremely emotional issue in the United States. It was the issue which I think most Americans saw as the epitome of the evil of the Soviet Union.

**Zelikow:** I think most Americans thought that, outside of the ethnic communities.

**Scowcroft:** If you asked, Americans looked with pride on the fact that, during the interwar period, the Baltic States maintained their legations here. We never recognized their incorporation. They were heroic little people—that's what I mean. If the American people thought about it, it was of warm feelings toward the Baltic States, and negative feelings toward what the Soviet Union had done. So what it did is put us in a box. We had very little freedom of action. As far as the Baltic lobbies are concerned, they were very strong.

**Zelikow:** Let me press this for a moment. In 1968, the Soviets invaded a sovereign country—Czechoslovakia. We didn't put economic sanctions on them. Here, there's a possibility that the Soviets might use some level of force against an entity that was widely regarded to be part of the Soviet Union itself—in order to maintain its own national integrity. You're describing this huge public outpouring of emotion about this. A question that people might ask years in the future is, "Why is this so hard in March, '90, and in '68 people barely turned a hair?" I'm exaggerating, of course, because it got a lot of publicity—it hurt the Soviet reputation internationally and all that. Is this an elite issue?

**Scowcroft:** No, I don't think it's an elite issue. I think it's a romantic issue for the American people. Czechoslovakia, bad as it was in '68, Czechoslovakia was run by a Communist system. It was a liberal Communist, but it was a Communist system. Here are the poor Baltics—overrun by force, had it jammed down their throats, restive all the time—we maintained diplomatic relations with them and so on and so forth. There was an emotion to it that did obtain in the case of Czechoslovakia. That's what made it so delicate for us. Now, part of it was the Baltic lobby was very strong in some very key areas. Stronger than anything the Czechs had—or the Hungarians before—they're stronger now. On the Soviet side, it was probably the most sensitive issue, so that either side, it was a very emotional issue. The President, at Malta, had told Gorbachev, not in so many words but he made it quite clear that the use of force would be an enormous complication in our relations. "Don't use force," was basically his message. So here is Gorbachev, for whom Baltic nationalism is a disease, spreading to the rest of the Soviet Union—like Byelorussia, like Ukraine and elsewhere.

We, in a way, are seen as aiding and abetting it. It was explosive. The President could do almost nothing to understand the Soviets' position—or to take account of it. We had a summit coming

up. We thought that what Gorbachev was doing overall was quite positive, in terms of U.S. interests. We also saw that the Baltics were the possible occasion for an internal eruption inside the Soviet Union—if they were allowed to break free. That made it, for both sides, gave it a tenseness which is all out of proportion to its intrinsic importance to the United States.

**Zelikow:** What did you want to do in March in striking the balance? How did you want to strike the balance?

**Scowcroft:** I thought we had to move more sharply to defend, or to support, the Baltics. In my mind, while the actual words were ambiguous, Gorbachev had understood what the President had said, and was, by the nature of his actions—which were overt and belligerent—was ignoring it. To me, that was beyond the pale. We had to make clear to Gorbachev that we were really serious here. And that if we didn't make clear to him, it might change his whole impression about the President and what he could and could not do, in term of his relations with the President. I would have been tougher than, in fact, we were.

**Zelikow:** What did you advocate?

**Scowcroft:** In the end, we didn't advocate much, other than to stop. I would have threatened not to have a summit in June. We never got to that point. We did threaten—we did stop negotiations for a trade agreement with the Soviet Union—which Gorbachev wanted, more than anything else. As it turned out, they backed away just enough so that we didn't do anything dramatic. The President was criticized, as a matter of fact, Landsbergis called him a [Neville] Chamberlain. It never quite got—had the Soviets persisted, I think we probably would have canceled the summit. Much more than that, we couldn't do, which was another one of the dilemmas. We had no capability, in fact, to help the Baltics.

**Zelikow:** Were you prepared to see a disruption of ongoing negotiations on Germany and arms control as the price for such a rupture?

**Scowcroft:** I didn't like it, but I thought it was important enough that we couldn't let Gorbachev get away with it. If we did, we would lose our authority in dealing with him.

**Zelikow:** Who was on the other side of the argument?

**Scowcroft:** Baker, as I recall.

**Zelikow:** Where were Bob Gates and Condi, do you remember?

**Scowcroft:** I don't recall. The only one I recall is Baker, who was toying around with some ways out of it.

**Zelikow:** So would you say that the solution that the President adopted was a middle ground, or that he leaned more toward the approach that Baker had advocated?

**Scowcroft:** It was the middle ground, middle ground. He had a meeting with the non-NSC members, senior members, of his government—Commerce, Treasury, STR. They all brushed aside the arguments in favor of the Baltics.

**Zelikow:** They wanted to go ahead with the trade agreement?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. They were not at all interested in the Baltics.

**Zelikow:** Was Cheney an ally—or was he out of it?

**Scowcroft:** I don't recall. I don't recall. So theirs was all on the trade thing, not on the President's political problems.

**Zelikow:** You sent the message, urging this compromise solution, in March. The message to the Lithuanians was sent with [Richard] Lugar as the emissary. Did you want the Lithuanians to suspend their declaration of independence?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. That's my recollection.

**Zelikow:** Did you personally think that the Lithuanians ought to suspend?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I did—because I thought that they were pushing us farther and faster than we were prepared to go. They had been encouraged in that by some Lithuanian Americans—to think that they would get support that we couldn't, in the event, give them. So I thought they were being foolhardy. Especially Landsbergis. Prunskiene was much more moderate. I thought we could have worked with her. I thought the Baltics were throwing gasoline on a flame.

**Zelikow:** Well, then, the differences between you and Baker don't seem very large from this distance. Both of you wanted to suspend. Neither of you would have backed the Lithuanian play if they had refused to suspend. Neither of you would have done much more to the Soviets than risk a summit—which, if Soviet tanks had rolled in, would have been jeopardized anyway. And a trade agreement—and that is where you may have disagreed with Baker—as Baker wouldn't have held the trade agreement as hostage. Of course, the danger of holding the trade agreement hostage is that Gorbachev retaliates by holding hostage the things we want—which are also things that Baker was very concerned about. Does that summary seem fair?

**Scowcroft:** The differences here are very minor. They really relate to—at what rate do we escalate our opposition as the Soviets make more and more steps. Now, fortunately, around April they stopped making further steps—so we stopped—

**Zelikow:** But the Lithuanians did not suspend.

**Scowcroft:** They didn't suspend, but they welcomed discussions, or something like that. See, we were caught between two things, neither of which was palatable. Either abandon the Lithuanians, or jeopardize what was a very positive outlook for U.S./Soviet relations. We didn't want to do either one of them, so we were caught here with trying to calibrate what we had to do not to jeopardize either side of this.

**Zelikow:** Suppose Gorbachev—as a hypothetical—comes in and says, as he came very close to saying, "You guys know what's going to come if I fall—if I'm removed. I kind of need to fix this, to have any hope of holding power. I need to basically fix this, using any means necessary." Starkly posing the dilemma that was already surfacing: Well, do you want the right-wing

dictatorship, or do you want Gorbachev saving his authority by keeping Lithuania in the Union by any means necessary? Had you worked through your answer to that question? What was your answer?

**Scowcroft:** Our answer was, "We told you before that in a sense, we couldn't be responsible if you used force, and we mean that. It is serious. The President cannot retain the confidence and good will of the American people if he looks like he's supine in the face of the use of force." We desperately did not want to do that. A good part of the government, if it had really come to that decision—I don't know where we would have come out.

**Zelikow:** It would have been a very tough decision.

**Scowcroft:** A very tough decision, but I think the President probably would have gone that way—as a political issue.

**Zelikow:** I see. Well, then, let me—because I think Baker would have come out the other way, no question.

**Scowcroft:** He would have. He would have—clearly.

**Zelikow:** But let me circle this back around to Germany. I don't really want to spend a lot of time in this session on Germany. Between the two of us, we've covered a lot of this ground. I don't think there's a lot more to unearth there. But the interaction between Lithuania and Germany is very interesting to me, and I don't think it's covered in the book I wrote with Condi—not well covered, it's nominally covered. By April, March/April, the Soviets are hardening on the negotiations we're having with them. This is a period in which they—February, we made a lot of progress, then we have this cold spring. They're pulling back. We had very tough meetings with [Eduard] Shevardnadze in Washington in early April.

So there are already signs that the progress is slowing, and is endangered on all fronts. The stakes now—looking back on this—are extremely high. I've posed one really hard dilemma for you. There's another one, which is the negotiations on Germany collapse and the Soviets decide to play hardball. We knew all the ways the Soviets could play hardball if they wanted to. We worked through some of that and they were formidable.

Concentrate on the question about Germany. If the Soviets had, basically, begun playing very tough on that issue—had you thought, at least privately—we've almost never talked about this, at least you and I never talked about this—whether you were prepared basically to do what needed to be done to make this happen? Without the Soviets, if necessary—play hardball in return, rather than compromise our positions on NATO, et cetera?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. The one thing that we—or at least I—was very worried about is Gorbachev making an offer to Kohl that Kohl might feel he couldn't refuse. That is, an offer for German reunification in exchange for neutrality—or something like that. And pointing to something like a crisis in Lithuania, saying, "You stick with the Americans here and forget it. There will be no reunification if we have to send troops back into East Germany in force."

**Zelikow:** Or leave the ones we have there.

**Scowcroft:** Or leave the ones we have there. "Forget it! But I'll give you a deal." That prospect worried me a lot. I still don't know why Gorbachev didn't do it—here, or anywhere else.

**Zelikow:** There are half a dozen variations on this—ways it could have been deployed palatably, ways to turn the internal momentum so that the locomotive was pointing at us, rather than at them.

**Scowcroft:** That was my nightmare.

**Zelikow:** Then we would have had to decide, basically, whether to go forward without Soviet cooperation, call their bluff, and move—which would have been hard—perhaps not impossible, but hard. So the question back to you is—it's clear you were thinking about this, at least privately. Were you prepared to step up to playing hardball on Germany, if the Soviets escalated to that? Going forward without the Russians?

**Scowcroft:** I honestly think we did not get that far in terms of explicit contingency discussions. It never got quite that sharp.

**Zelikow:** The kind of exchange you and I are having about Gorbachev and Lithuania and Germany—did you have these kinds of conversations with the President?

**Scowcroft:** Not including Germany, not at this point. I don't remember including Germany.

**Zelikow:** Not working through how stark the dilemmas could become?

**Scowcroft:** No. We were focused primarily on Lithuania itself—and the possible consequences on bilateral relations—rather than on Germany. Although, in the background, of course, was that if the bilateral relationship collapsed, everything else was likely to collapse.

**Zelikow:** To turn the wheel another click forward, as we move into late April and early May. The Soviets have put on the economic sanctions. They are constraining energy supplies, but it's not a total embargo. They haven't used force, but they're squeezing the Lithuanians hard and it's hurting. The issue now is to go forward with the trade agreement, or not. The negotiations on the trade agreement had resumed, is that right? Resumed to the point that a deal could be finalized in time for the summit.

**Scowcroft:** I'm not sure about it. What I do remember is that at this point we told the Russians that we could not conclude a trade agreement, as long as they had this pressure on Lithuania. We didn't say, "No summit." We said we would not conclude a trade agreement as long as you have this pressure.

**Zelikow:** Did you think the Russians had actually relaxed the pressure?

**Scowcroft:** Some.

**Zelikow:** Or did we fall off our position a little bit?

**Scowcroft:** We didn't fall off our position. But by the time the summit actually took place, they had relaxed their position and had indicated that they were prepared to work their way out of this dilemma with Lithuania. Gorbachev said he desperately needed a trade agreement. So at the last moment, the President said, "I'll give you a trade agreement, but I'm telling you privately—and I will not say this publicly—that we will not implement a trade agreement until you have reached a solution with Lithuania."

**Zelikow:** This was a conversation that occurred at the summit?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. The President took on a big risk in doing that. A big risk in the sense that some of what I had worried about came about. It looked like he was caving to the Russians, coming out, supporting the Russians rather than the Lithuanians. It wasn't as bad as it could have been. But he showed a lot of courage in doing that.

**Zelikow:** Did you support that decision? Is that a decision you had recommended to him?

**Scowcroft:** No, I didn't support it.

**Zelikow:** Was this, again, a case of you and Baker at odds?

**Scowcroft:** Well, I didn't argue against it. I just didn't support it, because I had thought that Gorbachev had treated our concerns cavalierly in solving his own. He had a problem. He had a real problem, but I thought he had—pretty much—just said, "I'm going to do what I have to do—now, you guys just accept it." I thought that was behavior that was beyond the pale. So I would not have done that. And the President incurred the opprobrium of the Lithuanian community, and looked like he had kowtowed to the Russians.

**McCall:** You were also, as I recall, there was some feeling that this was another pawn in the chess game over Germany because—of course—right after he gets back, the Soviet Union has the Party Congress. There was this hope for movement on putting all of Germany into NATO. That was all during the same set of discussions.

**Zelikow:** No, that's later. The Party Congress is in mid-July—after the NATO and the G7 [Group of 7: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States].

**Scowcroft:** But this was at the meeting—bilateral meetings at the summit meeting—Gorbachev made this statement about letting Germany stay in the NATO alliance. Didn't continue it, but that was after the President had agreed to go along with the trade agreement.

**McCall:** I thought it was—I'm trying to remember the timeline for that.

**Scowcroft:** Excuse me, I misspoke. No. The agreement about the trade agreement was just before the final communiqué for the summit. No, that was wrong.

**McCall:** I'm just trying to, again, get the context down. It's not simply a matter of the Lithuanians in the equation, it's also a matter of trying to move the ball in other fronts, so to speak.

**Zelikow:** Is it possible that the President—I don't know where the President was on this at the very beginning of the summit, whether he was inclined not to sign the agreement. If that's true, is it possible that Gorbachev's move on Germany tipped the President in deciding to sign the trade agreement? I think there's some evidence—my guess is that the President would have signed the trade agreement anyway. But I don't know, it's just a guess.

**Scowcroft:** Gorbachev really made a plea to the President on the trade agreement—in fact, he did it twice. The first time, the President said, "Can't do it." And Gorbachev came to him again and the President didn't change, and Gorbachev said, "Well, we've been without a trade agreement for years, we can go on." But he was clearly very upset. So the President called Baker and said, "See if you can't work something out." He gave him the outlines of what to work out—and Baker did it.

Was the President worried about Gorbachev? Yes, he was worried about him. Was he worried about Germany? I don't know that Germany explicitly played a role here. But certainly Gorbachev, and the possibility that he might be undermined by going home empty-handed sufficiently to create problems across the board here—was certainly an element in it.

**McCall:** There was another little aspect of this that we didn't really cover in the stories elsewhere. On the eve of the summit, there had been reports that the military was reining him in. It wasn't clear whether or not he was a totally independent agent or not.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, there was. That, I think, influenced Baker. I, at that point, even—regardless of that—I felt we had to take a hard line with him. But the President didn't—and it worked out just right.

**Zelikow:** Were you getting along well with Baker during this period?

**Scowcroft:** Well, I always got along well with Baker. Did we see eye to eye? No.

**Zelikow:** Don't have to. That wasn't my question.

**Scowcroft:** We always had a cordial relationship. Every time there was some tension in the relationship, he would send [Lawrence] Eagleburger over to talk with me. [laughter.]

**Zelikow:** I guess Baker was getting along well with Eagleburger, which I don't take for granted either.

**Scowcroft:** Yes. No. No. So that relationship stayed on a fairly cordial basis while there was a lot of opportunity for difference because we did look at things differently.

**Zelikow:** I'd like to stick with the U.S./Soviet story, rather than try to hold the chronology—let's just carry this through. Because, after the summit, the Germany developments were well documented. The Soviet moves on the Gulf—with respect to the Gulf War—also well documented. There is another acute crisis—maybe that's too strong a term, but pretty serious—again, with respect to Lithuania in January of '91. If I'm reconstructing this wrong, you should let me know. Before, in spring '90, it was coming in juxtaposition with Germany and so on, now it's coming in juxtaposition with the Gulf War—not at an easy time. Here, clearly now, the

pressure on Gorbachev is immense. Shevardnadze has resigned. It's obvious that the Soviet Union is entering a period of national crisis.

By the way, did you think that—by the end of 1990—after the Lithuanian crisis had subsided for a time—did you and the President think that the American role had been significant in preventing the use of force against Lithuania? Did you think you had mattered a lot in this equation?

**Scowcroft:** I don't know. I don't think we knew. Obviously, we had made clear to Gorbachev that this was an issue of great importance to us. That we had made clear. But I don't know about that. When the January '91 crisis came up, it crossed my mind that it could have been manufactured—in an attempt to give the Soviets more leverage either on Lithuania or on the impending Gulf War.

**Zelikow:** Well, in a way though, the January '91 problem is different because what cards did we have? What cards did you think you had—to influence them not to use force?

**Scowcroft:** Not many—we never did have many cards.

**Zelikow:** The President pushed the issue hard with Gorbachev—the issue of not using force—I think both in letters and phone calls.

**Scowcroft:** In the January '91 crisis, contrary to the '90 crisis, I was on the soft side because we had a timetable. We had to move on the Gulf, which was very important. We needed to keep the Soviets on board. It wouldn't be a catastrophe if we didn't—but it would have greatly complicated our operation. I thought that, on the other side, we had a reason we didn't have in the spring of '90 for not taking a hard line. In other words, we had bigger fish to fry in '91, with a war about to take place. So I was relatively on the soft side there. But there were some threats, the President did threaten him.

**Zelikow:** Threaten him with what?

**Scowcroft:** I can't remember.

**Zelikow:** Who was on the hard side, if anyone?

**Scowcroft:** The President. The President was very acutely aware of the domestic impact of anything dealing with the Balkans. He himself was imbued with this magic about the Baltics.

**Zelikow:** The dilemma again could be posed—if Gorbachev doesn't use force, Gorbachev may go and there may be major upheaval in the Soviet Union. How did you think, by January '91, how did you address that dilemma?

**Scowcroft:** I addressed that by being on the soft side, because I thought a development like that, in '91, on the verge of us going to war, had possibilities that we hadn't thought of. There could be some nasty surprises that we hadn't contemplated. I didn't know what—but I thought at this point, it was fairly important not to rock the U.S./Soviet boat. Therefore, turn the other cheek if there were machinations—and I didn't rule that out. Just turn the other cheek.

**Zelikow:** If they had declared emergency rule—a kind of martial law in the Soviet Union. There was a decree that had been prepared to do this, as I think you know.

**Scowcroft:** [murmured assent]

**Zelikow:** If that had happened—and we had, I think, some information that such possibilities were at least in the air—would you have then counseled that we react in sorrow, but not in anger?

**Scowcroft:** I think I would have counseled that we denounce the action—but without any teeth in it. I don't know what teeth, in fact, we could have put in it that would not have hurt us more than the Soviets. But we would have had to do something. The very minimum would have been a strong denouncement of the action. But in a material sense, there wasn't anything we could do.

[BREAK]

**Zelikow:** You've written about the events involving the dissolution of the Soviet Union—all the developments in 1991. What I'd like you to try to do is to step back from the material in the memoir and give people a sense of what the paper flow, or the book, might not show. About what you thought was hard in '91—what choices did you feel you faced that were the hardest choices as the Soviet Union began to threaten to break up. In the spring and summer, did you feel the U.S. was facing any real choices or dilemmas about how to deal with this situation?

**Scowcroft:** Well, let me sort of walk through it a little. The spring of '91 was a pretty good period in U.S./Soviet relations. We had gotten through some difficult days during the Gulf War—when Gorbachev really tried hard to stop it. Things were moving quite well. We were aware that Gorbachev was having a lot of internal problems with nationalities and so on. We were looking forward to the summit without any serious concerns about anything in the bilateral relationship. So the coup came as a distinct surprise to us, because there did not seem—at least as far as our relationship with the Soviet Union—there didn't seem to be any kind of precipitating event. Which is what we feared about for the last two or three years—that we would push something beyond a point and it would either precipitate a coup, with or without Gorbachev. We didn't see that in '91.

**Zelikow:** But you were getting these CIA estimates in spring and summer—"The Soviet Cauldron—"

**Scowcroft:** Oh, yes.

**Zelikow:** —predicting all kinds of instability and potential unrest.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, and as I say, Gorbachev was clearly having problems—but not added to in '91 by the nature of the relationship, which seemed to be doing well.

**Zelikow:** You got some information, though—didn't the United States government get some information that revealed to us some of the plotting that was underway?

**Scowcroft:** There were all kinds of plots—there was stuff in the summer about—was it [Gavril] Popov? I think it was Popov mounting a legislative coup to remove Gorbachev from decision making and turn that over to the Prime Minister. There were all kinds of things like that. I have to say that one of the things that influenced me to minimize these sorts of things was a discussion we had with CIA on, essentially, Gorbachev versus Yeltsin. It seemed to me that the Soviet division of the Agency was so pro-Yeltsin that I thought it, perhaps, affected their judgment.

Yes, there were all these things, but as I say, the Agency was kind of gloom and doom. You could read whatever you want into it. I increasingly doubted his chances of doing what he wanted to do, and that is to redo the Soviet constitution, make it a looser, more voluntary association. I thought particularly—he fundamentally misread the role of nationalism. He just didn't understand it.

Did I think that, two weeks after the summit, he was going to face a coup? No. Neither did he.

**Zelikow:** Two weeks after the summit with President Bush, during his trip to the Soviet Union.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, yes. Neither did he. If he had thought he was in that kind of jeopardy, he certainly wouldn't have sailed off into the Crimea for a vacation. Indeed, one of his great skills was, when he really got embattled, to work his way out of dilemmas, which he had done more than once.

**Zelikow:** Do you remember passing—or having the government pass—any information to Gorbachev about coup plotting?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. There was the case of the Popov coup—that's what we finally decided it was. Anyway, the Mayor of Moscow—and I can't remember the name right now—went to our Ambassador—and warned him of a coup. He told us about it, at the very time that Yeltsin was here meeting with the President, in the summer of '91. We tried to warn Gorbachev, without using communication channels that would warn the KGB that we were warning Gorbachev. When we finally got him, which was not till the next day, he said, "Oh, don't worry about that—I've got that under control." So that was one time when we specifically warned him of the possibility of a coup.

After the coup, we faced some big issues. It was clear to me, when Gorbachev came back from the Crimea and defended the Communist Party. Then when Yeltsin had him up in front of the—was it the Russian Supreme Soviet, I think—and just humiliated him—that he was finished.

Then we had one of our big debates, which is: what is in the U.S. interests? Is it to keep the Soviet Union together? Break it up? What should our role be in the disintegration of the centrality?

**Zelikow:** You're describing a discussion that's occurring after the coup, in September '91.

**Scowcroft:** You asked what big events—

**Zelikow:** There is a bill of indictment that has been laid against the administration for the so-called "Chicken Kiev" speech, which is made before the coup and is taken to imply that the administration had made up its mind that it had to support Gorbachev against the forces of "suicidal nationalists."

**Scowcroft:** No, that's nonsense. Let me explain that—that's nonsense. I have no idea who wrote that speech. I reviewed it on the plane going to the Ukraine. I had not read it before. I accepted the language for very different reasons. We had three things going on. We had a civil war in Yugoslavia—or the coming apart of a state in Yugoslavia. We had insurrections in Moldova and we had a Ukraine which looked like it could split between the West and the East.

The speech was given in Kiev, because it was the only place we were going outside Moscow, and it was a speech you couldn't give in Moscow. It was not designed, in any way, to support Gorbachev. It was designed to say, "Hey, don't give up one oppressive situation only to find yourself at the mercy of extreme nationalists who may put you in a worse situation." It was less worried about the relationship between Ukraine and Russia—or the Soviet Union—than it was for the internal Ukrainians themselves going at each other.

Now, it was badly misunderstood. In retrospect, we probably should have seen it—but it was not designed to be a speech in support of Gorbachev.

**Zelikow:** Misunderstood because—if my memory serves—well, certainly one person who helped frame the public perception of this was [William] Safire.

**Scowcroft:** Yes. He's the one who called it the "Chicken Kiev" speech.

**Zelikow:** Misunderstood because neither you, nor anyone else, had backgrounded Safire—or talked to him?

**Scowcroft:** Not before the speech, because it wasn't a big deal and we were already over there. I subsequently wrote an Op-Ed—I don't remember where it was published—but I wrote an Op-Ed on it after Safire came out with his piece.

**Zelikow:** Did the Ukrainians think you were trying to discourage them?

**Scowcroft:** I didn't have that sense. Some of the Western Ukrainians were upset about it, because it seemed to relate to them. But I don't recall an outcry.

**Zelikow:** Did you tell the Ukrainians that it did not relate to them, or related to them only in the narrow sense of avoiding the Ukrainian civil war?

**Scowcroft:** I didn't have any discussion with the Ukrainians about it.

**Zelikow:** Having detained you on that small matter, let's go back to September '91. You were describing—now the U.S. government was seriously engaged in considering what kind of Soviet Union it wants.

**Scowcroft:** That's right. We were split, badly split. Baker thought it was important that we try to keep the Soviet Union together—principally because of command and control over the nuclear forces. Cheney, at the other extreme, thought we ought to do everything we could to break up the Soviet Union. I thought that we were better off with a broken up Soviet Union, because it would fractionate the Soviet nuclear forces—and a large part of them, we could stop worrying about.

But I disagreed with Cheney that we ought to actively pursue it, because if it didn't happen that way, we would engender great bitterness on the part of the Soviet Union. In the end, we took no position at all. We simply let things happen.

**Zelikow:** By October, people, including from the State Department, were beginning to testify, though. I was out of the government, by this point, but I was watching the issue closely. I do remember that certainly by October the U.S. government looked pretty forward-looking in the way it was viewing these new republics. Basically, already creating a policy framework of, "We're prepared to see this, so long as certain criteria are respected." And beginning to work on what those criteria might be. I actually got engaged slightly on this in helping out Nick Burns.

I have the sense, although I have no inside information, that the wheel turned a little bit—between the discussions you described in September and, at least, a few weeks down the road.

**Scowcroft:** Not really. Despite his position, Baker was busy trying to establish consulates in all of the republics. We had a problem about Ukraine and its vote on independence. What became clear to me was that Yeltsin was maneuvering so that the Ukraine would be the proximate cause of the breakup of the Soviet Union. They almost certainly would vote for sovereignty, but not necessarily independent from the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian lobby—the President gave some kind of speech to a group of Ukrainians. In it, he said something about—if the Ukrainian referendum turned out for independence, we would move quickly to recognize—I don't remember what the words were, but that leaked. Gorbachev was extremely upset and he called the President and said, "You're pulling the rug out from under me." The President said no, he wasn't. But there were strong pressures. If the Ukrainian people voted in a certain way, we would have to acquiesce in that. That was domestic politics, it was not U.S./Soviet politics. You could say that represented some slight movement.

**Zelikow:** You've mentioned a couple of examples of the President being attentive to domestic politics and formulating policy on those issues. How did he get the input on the domestic political calculation? Was it perfectly obvious to him directly? Or was Sununu playing that role for him as Chief Political Advisor to the President—which is a way of conceiving the role of the Chief of Staff?

**Scowcroft:** Sununu—if you hadn't mentioned his name, I would probably have answered that I didn't know. Sununu was a great conduit for ethnic Americans to the President. He frequently did things, maneuvered things, got people in, without telling him. I can't rule out that Sununu was the one that invited these Ukrainians in—for the President to make a statement to. I don't know that. But he clearly appealed on political grounds to the President on these issues. Now, was the President so disposed anyway? Possibly so. But my recommendation on the Ukrainian referendum was total neutrality.

**Zelikow:** I ask because the news of these ethnic groups is not represented well in the major newspapers.

**Scowcroft:** No, it isn't.

**Zelikow:** And so, if a President is really getting that, then he's getting it—maybe through the office of the Public Liaison in the White House staff, which means it probably has to come up through the Chief of Staff—or he's getting it through the Chief of Staff. Or he's getting it from political advisors or friends of his outside the White House altogether. That's why I asked.

**Scowcroft:** Well, it was one of those. He had a lot of sources outside the White House. He's got friends everywhere, and a lot of ethnic friends in the Midwest, and so on and so forth. So I don't really know where it came from. The leak was unfortunate, because it put the President in a place—in a position with which he was very uncomfortable. Because he didn't want to pull the rug out from under Gorbachev. By that time, the rug was gone, as far as I was concerned.

**Zelikow:** In retrospect, do you think that the more passive approach—neither propping up Gorbachev nor taking him down—was the right choice?

**Scowcroft:** I think it probably was. What it did was insulate us from charges of bad faith, whoever won. In other words, by not participating at all, by staying completely neutral—I mean, Gorbachev was disappointed in us, particularly about the Ukraine—but we did not antagonize anybody, and Yeltsin was quite happy with the role that we played. So yes, I think it was the right thing to do. But while it was going on, I think I did not realize the extent to which all this was happening. The Soviet Union was disintegrating, I think, almost completely because it was the way Yeltsin could get rid of Gorbachev. He really pulled the Soviet Union out from under him. Here was the President of a political entity that no longer existed. I think if that had not been the case, if there had not been that enmity, I think there still could have been some kind of a Soviet Union today. Because Yeltsin, ipso facto, was not trying to destroy the Soviet Union.

**Zelikow:** I want to be sure that I understand your argument, which is that let's say, for instance, that Gorbachev had arranged a bargain with Yeltsin, where Yeltsin would become Gorbachev's replacement as head of the Soviet Union, then there might well be a Soviet Union today—because Yeltsin would not have needed to destroy it to take power.

**Scowcroft:** It might have been. I don't know it would have been—because the forces of disintegration were pretty strong.

**Zelikow:** It's actually timely to bring that up. We were discussing how much time to spend on START II and the reciprocal nuclear initiative of 1991. My premise was to spend little time on that—since I thought we had covered some of that story, and the story is covered elsewhere. There will be a good deal of paper records for that.

James raised the interesting tangle of succession issues that arose as the Soviet Union broke apart—and that resulted in the multilateral agreements I believe Lisbon in May of '92—where the new republics committed to turn their nuclear weapons over to Russia. That there were some discussions in the government regarding who controls what, what can we do—other things upon which you might want to shed further light—where the record might not be obvious.

**Scowcroft:** Well, as the Soviet Union broke up, the issue of control over the nuclear arsenal became a live one. We followed, as best we could—for a time, Gorbachev still controlled their equivalent of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But not the rocket forces—he turned his codebook over to Yeltsin. I was pretty relaxed about the whole thing. It really didn't bother me, that the Ukraine may have nuclear weapons—or Kazakhstan. Because under no circumstances were they going to be pointed at us. While I think it was probably better that they didn't, it wasn't a big issue for me. It was a huge issue for Baker. He spent a lot of time and energy trying to get them to turn their weapons over—I would not have spent that time and effort. They were not going to use their weapons; they were probably not going to maintain their weapons. I just didn't think it was worth us spending any legislative chits to get them to do it.

**Zelikow:** Another big issue about U.S./Soviet relations and U.S./Russian relations is the issue of whether or not the U.S. could, or should, have done more economically to help either the Soviet Union, or the new republics that took its place. There is an argument that the Soviets were making—that Gorbachev made—that we should have helped him a lot more in '90 and '91. You can address that if you like. Although I think the more important argument that you should address is to describe your attitudes and performance on the issue of economic aid for the successor states—in helping the transition to democracy in '91 and '92. It's a big question, I know.

**Scowcroft:** '92, not '91.

**Zelikow:** Well, very late '91, or into '92.

**Scowcroft:** Christmas.

**Zelikow:** Because non-Union is passed—the end of '91. The rap on that is that the administration stayed aloof from non-Union—didn't oppose it, but didn't take the initiative.

**Scowcroft:** We didn't oppose it. The issue of aid to the Soviet Union, first of all, was one in which there was not a great deal of difference within the administration. Or, indeed, among most of the allies. In the course of '90 and, perhaps, into '91, Germany had given something like 15 billion dollars in aid to the Soviet Union—which disappeared, as far as we could figure out, without a trace. Gorbachev himself refused to back and implement any economic plan which gave us any hope that any additional moneys would not go the same way. So what we did is provide technical expert help to show them how to organize themselves. To help their transportation so half of the grain didn't rot because there was no way to get it to market.

There was little thought about serious assistance before the Soviet Union—and subsequently Russia—adopted an economic program which had some assurance that any money given would stick to the program—would be used for the purposes intended, instead of just ending up in Switzerland. We never had that assurance. Therefore, while in '91—no, this was '92 then, when Nixon went after, I guess that was '92—we did provide some aid. We had the same reservations about Yeltsin—and the feeling that money was not going to be used for any worthwhile purposes. The Russians did not take the advice either of our own technical experts or the IMF, or the World Bank. Therefore, we didn't think it was worthwhile.

The non-Union program was pretty vague on the background for it. I think—I know we didn't initiate it. We didn't oppose it. One of the additional problems we had this time were budget caps. Theoretically, if you wanted to propose any new programs, you had to find the money from other programs to fund them. While you can say that this is force majeure—a unique circumstance—we pretty much lived in those budget caps. As you remember, they really made hash of it in Eastern Europe in '89 and '90.

As to the successor states, I think the same thing. I'm vague about those, but I think the same arguments pertained. That we were unsure that anything we provided would be used for worthwhile purposes.

**Zelikow:** You mentioned Governor Sununu a minute ago. I did and you responded. We haven't really talked much about your relationship with the Chief of Staff. We talked about your relationship with State, Defense, CIA, but there is the Chief of Staff. And through him—or in connection with that—this potential triangular relationship in the White House with the President. I'd like you to comment on whether you thought that was an excellent relationship—if there were trouble spots, what were the trouble spots?

**Scowcroft:** With Sununu?

**Zelikow:** Yes.

**Scowcroft:** We had an excellent relationship. I pretty much kept him informed about what I was doing. He never objected to the access that I had. He was always active in any meeting we had. He always had a solution to whatever problem we had, whether it was informed or not. There was very little official friction. The problem, mostly, I had was that he had his own press relations—and used to talk about whatever subjects he wanted to—and, in essence, on background leak very badly, and not always helpfully.

**Zelikow:** Including on foreign policy matters?

**Scowcroft:** Oh, yes, whatever. So that was a problem. I couldn't get Marlin to do anything about it.

**Zelikow:** Did you take it up directly with John or the President?

**Scowcroft:** I took it up with the President—who blamed Sununu's deputy, a guy by the name of [Edward] Rogers. But, you know, you couldn't pin anything on him—because it was nameless. Other than that, I did not have a problem with John Sununu.

**Zelikow:** Any difficulty with him offering policy advice to the President outside of the process that you had devised for getting such advice or information to the President?

**Scowcroft:** No, I really didn't, because—I mean, he talked to the President, of course—separately from me. Sometimes he would offer judgments and so on. I think the President invariably told me about them. It was not a problem.

**McCall:** What about during Desert Storm—during the run up. Was there any conduit from the Arab side, or Americans, or Ambassadors that you can think of?

**Scowcroft:** Not that I saw. I mean, he's an Arab.

**McCall:** Well, he's made cryptic references in the past, you know—being a conduit. I mean, not a conduit in a negative sense, but being a facilitator.

**Scowcroft:** Well, he would sometimes, as I said before, bring the ethnic groups in. A lot of the ethnic groups were people like Jordanians and others that were close to him. He set himself up as kind of a spokesman for those groups. But it wasn't really a problem. It didn't interfere with my work.

**McCall:** Do you recall if he got involved the discussions with [Prince] Bandar—right after the invasion in early August?

**Scowcroft:** Oh, I should say I got involved.

**McCall:** Did he get involved in any of that?

**Scowcroft:** Not that I know of. He came down to my crucial meeting with Bandar right after the invasion. He came down and sat in on the meeting—I remember that. But if he had separate contacts with Bandar, there was no—he could have had, could have had. You know, he was his own person, there was no question about that. He was very much of an activist. But I can't think of a particular case where he really constituted a problem.

**McCall:** What about with, say, the Saudi arms bill—aid bills and things like that? Did he facilitate any negotiations like that? On the Hill, in some way that's unusual?

**Scowcroft:** No, no, he was generally—he was generally helpful. He had good relations with some Hill people, but not unusually so. I can't ever remember—we had a problem with aid to the Saudis right after the Gulf War started. I can't remember him being particularly helpful in resolving that. Which is not surprising because, with an Arab background, helping give aid to the Saudis would not be useful to the people trying to block the aid, up on the Hill.

**Zelikow:** I'd like to stop taping at this point, mindful of your schedule.

August 11, 2000

**Zelikow:** This is the second day of oral history sessions with General Scowcroft. It is Friday, August 11th, in Washington D.C. General, I'd like to start this morning by bringing you to July 1990—late July, when the warnings come in about a possible Iraqi attack on Kuwait. When people see the documents, they'll see these documents that have "Warning of War" on top. Even in a jaded office, that'll get your attention. There is naturally speculation about whether those

warnings were discounted, how those warnings were interpreted. People who wrote those warnings would be the first to admit that they wrote them basically on the objective evidence of the military preparations that they could see, which they thought had reached the point of being nearly irrevocable. Now we're talking about July 23rd, 24th, 1990. You get an intelligence report like this—what happens?

**Scowcroft:** What happens when we get a report like that, in this particular circumstance, was that we did very little, actually, to change what we were operating on. That is that we had seen a constant pattern—beginning in very early spring—of increasing belligerence—with some military preparations, but not many. Now, in July, military movement toward the border. Our Arab friends, who purportedly knew Saddam Hussein better than we did—for example, [Hosni] Mubarak visited him just a few days before the attack actually came—were saying, "This is show. Don't respond, don't react—he's not going to attack. And if you respond with some belligerent moves, you may push him into an attack."

So we didn't do much. And, interestingly enough, neither did the Kuwaiti Armed Forces. When they went on alert, I don't remember exactly when it was—I think it was 10 days before the attack—and then they de-alerted their forces. We told them what intelligence indicated. Let's say that we did not have that advice from our Arab allies. There is very little at that point that we could have done that would have made any difference. We could have gone to the Saudis and said, "We think they're going to attack. How about letting us send some forces into Saudi Arabia?" I think the answer, at that point, almost certainly would have been, "No." Because it was a complicated negotiation with the Saudis even after the attack, before they agreed on forces going in. So basically, we did very little other than to tell Saddam—what did we tell him at this particular point? On about the 26th or the 27th, there was a lull in his preparations and it seemed—we thought for a moment that maybe the crisis was at least deferred. He began to make some better noises. There was a meeting set up for the 30th or the 31st in Saudi Arabia to discuss the border issues, and so on and so forth. It looked like maybe we were receding from the brink. But 48 hours before the attack, the CIA said, "His forces are positioned so he can attack without warning."

As I say, I think there was very little different posture we could have assumed in those last days. I think what we did do—by not responding provocatively, we had all of the Arabs solidly on our side. There was nobody who said, "Well, you provoked him into it." They all supported us very strongly, because the evidence was absolutely unmistakable that this was deliberate, unprovoked aggression by Saddam.

**Zelikow:** Did you understand the methodology by which the CIA—National Intelligence Officer for Warning Charlie Allen and his staff—came up with something like "Warning of War"?

**Scowcroft:** Well, it seemed fairly straightforward to me, and that is—up until a fairly short time before the attack, there was little actual movement of forces toward the border. Preparations were being made—ammunition moved and so on—before that, but no movement toward the border. I think it was movement toward the border that changed the CIA from being relatively relaxed about it to a warning of attack. It was the 48-hour warning: "He now has x hundred thousand troops poised. We do not need to see any more indications of an attack. Or we may not see—because he's ready now to attack."

**Zelikow:** I partly asked that because of the way Charlie has explained this to me is that one of the indicators that they have is, "They've done a lot of things that are now causing considerable disruption in civilian society. They've done call-ups and other things that are now costing them a great deal of money and causing other problems." Which means that, after a certain point, it's very hard for them not to do something because they're now paying an enormous price to get to this level of preparation. To then stand all that down is not impossible, but they judge that to be less likely. So the way it was explained to me, it's not just the movement of forces into an operational position, it's the additions to those forces at great cost to the civilian economy that gives you an indicator of intent.

Now, I may be garbling Charlie's explanation of this, but I was wondering if you had heard that before—and if you had heard that kind of explanation, whether it would have changed your view?

**Scowcroft:** No, I frankly had not heard that explanation before. It would not have fundamentally changed my view. First of all because, even then—part of this is in hindsight—Saddam pays virtually no attention to the suffering of his people and the economic disruption he causes. I think if we had used that argument, for example with Mubarak and the Saudis, they would have said, "Look, of course, he's being realistic. He wants all the leverage he can on the border dispute, and the disputed oil field that goes across the border. He really doesn't want to attack, notwithstanding it."

**Zelikow:** Why did you believe them? Or did you believe them?

**Scowcroft:** No, I don't know that we believed them. There was clearly a strategic change on the part of Saddam. But I go back to the point—what, in fact, would we have done? *They* believed him—or maybe it was wishful thinking—but they were making steps for negotiations and discussions, sponsored by the Saudis, between Kuwait and Iraq. If we had said, or acted, as if we didn't believe him, there was very little we could actually have done to a) dissuade him or b) take steps to be better prepared. That might have been at the cost of support by the Arabs after the attack.

**Zelikow:** Let me play, if you'll forgive me, devil's advocate. You can make an argument that—all of that being true—we still don't really look like a government that is preparing for the possibility of war, when this breaks. You've got the Secretary of State in the middle of Siberia, the Deputy National Security Advisor out in the mountains somewhere, people are flung around. There's not a sense that the government has already started, basically, the kinds of meetings—reviewing wider interests and stakes, what options are—in a serious analytical way that then happens very stressfully when the invasion takes place. While you may have worked all this through for yourself—worked all these options through and come to this conclusion—you just don't get a sense that the government is basically checking its guns and rifles, making sure everything is loaded, and oiled—and thinking about its planning, its options, and its studies.

**Scowcroft:** That is very true, but you've got to put yourself back in that period and that was that the U.S. government had certainly not decided at that time that if there was a conflict, we would be involved. Indeed, the first NSC meeting after the attack was one that indicated, "Well, it's too bad, but gee—that's a long way away—how would we get forces there? You know, it's just kind

of too bad, too hard to contemplate." There was sort of a fait accompli atmosphere in that first meeting. We're a long way, as an administration and as a country, from saying, "This affects our vital interests and we're going to have to do what we eventually did." Indeed, in the Senate in January there was grave doubt that it affected our interests enough to use force.

**Zelikow:** Well, this is interesting, because it sounds to me—it's quite reminiscent of the story of the outbreak of the Korean War. You have a situation where you're not actually sure you want to fight there. But then when the attack comes, it suddenly seems clear—at least to some people—that we must. Which then creates the natural puzzle—when the abstraction becomes the reality—why didn't you see it in the abstraction? But in a way, I'm hearing you saying, "There is a difference between an abstraction and a reality that is hard to pin down." Clearly, because when you actually see it happen—when you see that they're taking all of Kuwait, and it's not just Rumaila oil fields—something's happening that's emotional and intellectual and analytical that I think you're describing.

**Scowcroft:** We were not or didn't perceive ourselves as on the front line. The Arabs were telling us, "This is an Arab problem. Let us handle it. Don't you guys get in with your muscle. Let us handle it. He's *our* problem. He's not *your* problem." So our fundamental strategy was to be supportive to the Arabs who were trying to defuse it. King Hussein never did change that view, "Stay out of it, it's an Arab problem."

So the Arabs are telling us, "Don't be belligerent, don't force him—because he's an unpredictable guy. But we think we can handle it." Even after the attack—even Mubarak said, "We're going to have an Islamic conference in Cairo. Don't do anything—just relax." We did do something then, because we were then fearful the attack would not stop at the border of Kuwait but go into Saudi Arabia. We thought we had to put a line of U.S. forces over there—to make a threat at that point, because Saudi Arabia was clearly in our interest. We did not have great relations with Kuwait before this war. Kuwait has always been a prickly country in dealing with the United States. It was not as if we had an alliance and our ally was about to be attacked. As I say, maybe a week before the attack, they de-alerted their forces.

**McCall:** I want to get back to Kuwait for a moment also. We talk about sending troops to Saudi Arabia ahead of time—it would have been unlikely that they would have been accepted. Was there an overture to Kuwait to put any troops in place?

**Scowcroft:** No. The only overture we took was to send some tanker aircraft to the U.A.E. [United Arab Emirates], at their request, to give their fighters greater legs. That caused some—first Saddam Hussein yelled about it—but our Arab allies said, "Hey, don't rock the boat here."

**McCall:** Another aspect—there's the question about how clearly the message was given to Saddam that the U.S. would not tolerate this kind of expedition. We've covered the [April] Glaspie issue in the book. One of the criticisms that always comes up is that the President wasn't direct enough himself. Could you talk a little about that?

**Scowcroft:** He wasn't direct enough by himself because, in fact, we had not reached that point. Even if we had—again, deferring to our Arab allies—I don't want to blame them for all this, but deferring to our Arab allies—they said, "*Don't* provoke him." So the last message that the

President sent—on the 27th or something—was not a belligerent message. It had a threat in it, but it was a velvet threat, if you will. Because at that point, it looked like the diplomatic efforts were succeeding and he was changing his tone just a little bit. This was fairly complicated diplomacy here—well, it wasn't complicated, but our role in this escalating crisis has to be understood as we saw it at the time, and as the Arabs saw it. In retrospect, we may have misled Saddam. But also in retrospect, I think not—because he never got any of the signals we sent, right down to the time of the ground war.

**McCall:** After you received the warning, I know there was a question about—and this is before the actual launch of the attack—there was a debate about sending one last message, one last direct telephone call.

**Scowcroft:** Well, as a matter of fact, there had been a meeting on the day of the attack. The meeting broke up about 6:00 to 6:30 in the evening with the recommendation that the President call. By the time [Richard] Haass told me about the recommendation—and we got to the President—we also—when we were discussing this, we got word that they had crossed the border. So yes, there was a recommendation for a direct appeal.

**Zelikow:** I don't want to put words in your mouth, but there is also the problem of a warning that has an implied threat in a situation where you can't make good on the threat, unless your Arab allies are there to support you. Because you can't make good on the threat unilaterally due to the basing problems.

**Scowcroft:** Well, that's why we couldn't take any preparatory steps because we did not ask the Saudis. There is no doubt in my mind that the Saudis would have rejected any suggestion to put troops—even a squadron of aircraft—into Saudi Arabia before the attack. I say that in view of the initial Saudi reaction to our suggestion that we do it, after the attack had been made. They were very skeptical and it took three days of intense negotiations.

**Zelikow:** I'd like to move to the Aspen discussions with Prime Minister Thatcher. The intervening events are covered in the book and, indeed, the book also covers the Aspen discussions with Thatcher. But I still run into—all the time—the "backbone transplant," the "wobbly" stuff. I'd like you to comment a little on that argument. Let me ask you to comment a little, and there are a couple specific points that perhaps can help clarify this.

**Scowcroft:** Those stories are around for two basic reasons. The first is the NSC meeting that was held that morning, and the character of the NSC meeting, and the President's choice of words. They let the press come in for a photo op before the meeting started. And the President—I don't remember his exact language, but I suggested that he say, "This is a meeting to evaluate the situation, this is not a decision meeting." He said it in a way which seemed to detach us from the crisis. That was the first thing.

The second part of it was that there's been a little historical revisionism on the part of Maggie Thatcher. Even to the point, I believe, of suggesting the "Don't go wobbly" statement was there. It was really three weeks down the road—on a very different situation.

**Zelikow:** Yes, I know.

**Scowcroft:** My basic analysis of the President's mood there was based on the fact that we flew to Aspen in a JetStar aircraft—which is a very small aircraft—so we didn't have to change planes in Denver. We spent most of the time with our knees touching in the aircraft. He was calling his counterparts around the world to get a reaction. I was madly revising a speech which he was going to give in Aspen—setting forth our new military posture statement to make it compatible with the things that I thought we might have to do. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind about the President's determination.

In fact, on the aircraft, I told him I was very disturbed at the tone of the NSC meeting—a sort of throw-up-your-hands tone. I said that, with his permission, I would like to lead off the discussion at the next NSC meeting, and explain the stakes I thought were really involved. He said, "Why don't I do that?" I said, "No, if you do it, you will kill the discussion. What we need to do is have a discussion and get people to understand what the stakes are." So he said, "OK, let's do it that way." There was no doubt in my mind about the seriousness with which he took the situation.

What did happen at Aspen is some sense of relief that Mrs. Thatcher saw and analyzed the situation exactly as he did. It was a reinforcement meeting—on both sides. It was not, in any sense, a discussion of, "Well, come on, Mr. President—this is more serious than you think." Not a bit of it.

**Zelikow:** There was one other feature of this that I think has been misunderstood. You can clarify this more that I can. I was out there. I was kind of in and out of the fringes of this meeting, helping to work—place phone calls.

**Scowcroft:** I never looked at the MemCom of the meeting, but I think it would show it.

**Zelikow:** Well, you did the MemCom. The thing that I remember about the meeting is that—in the literature now—this is the meeting where big decisions are being made about whether to use force to expel Saddam, but that was not, actually, what most people were talking about. The fragments that I remember as I was kind of going in and out were mostly reactions of people around the world—who's firm, who's not—almost an obvious and immediate sense of political determination—you know, we have to turn this around. But mostly, a concentration on the various economic moves—the sanctions—maybe the possibility of stopping shipping—discussion of rules of engagement for doing that. Like a lot of the discussions in that early period, there was a lot of attention being given to the economic moves and the ways in which we could make those work, and the rules of engagement associated with those. Not the big global issues about the use of force, which in my recollection of this early stage, were still largely implicit.

**Scowcroft:** They were largely implicit. This was, as you say it, partly a stocktaking, but it was also, "How do we mobilize the community to deal with this thing?" You can see that by the breaks that are taken for the President to call—I think he called King Hussein. I think he called King Fahd. He made two or three calls. It was to take the temperature and increase the sense of crisis to gather a coalition together. But it was not militarily oriented.

**Zelikow:** There is another argument that has not been made that you might wish to address. It's not been made in the literature. Were people—instead of saying that Maggie Thatcher helped

George Bush decide to show resolve—they might say that *you* did. That you're the guy who, from the start, seems to have a really clear notion that the government doesn't see the stakes here well enough—you articulate this so strongly. No one's in doubt about where you stood on this question, from very early on. So an argument could be developed that, in fact, you were the guy who was pushing the throttle on this train and helping to persuade the President of the need for resolve.

**Scowcroft:** Well, there's no doubt that I, early on—in fact, the night of the attack—thought it was a crisis for the United States. But that thesis—you know, the door was open—the throttle was—There wasn't any need, there was no—I was not arguing with the President that we needed to take this seriously. It didn't come up. My sense was that he and I were at one. It was taken for granted that this was a crisis that involved vital interests of the United States. There was not much of a discussion otherwise. State was represented by Kimmitt, I think. At the second meeting, Eagleburger was there and made a strong statement.

**Zelikow:** The second meeting, I think, on the 4th?

**Scowcroft:** That was the day after Aspen.

**Zelikow:** The 3rd.

**Scowcroft:** I don't recall the statements by the Defense people. Most of the tone of the meeting was from—I must say—from non-Defense people at the NSC. I believe the economic people were in this meeting, because it clearly involved economic concerns. What I'm saying is that door was open, I did not push on it.

**Zelikow:** The book has good summaries—I presume they're good, I haven't seen the original MemComs—but the book does summarize what happened at the NSC meetings that took place on the successive days. The question I had, in looking at this again, was, "Yes, but what happened before these meetings?" I understand this is what's happening in the room but—if I try to put myself in your shoes for a moment—you're coming back here, you're very uneasy about the way people are articulating their positions. You want to have a better meeting. Now, you could just kind of walk into that meeting cold and run it the way you think it should be run.

Another thing you might have done is you might have picked up the phone and called Larry Eagleburger, or called Dick Cheney and said, "Dick, we need to think about how we want to present things to the President here." Not necessarily telling him what to say, because you couldn't really tell Dick Cheney what to say—but telling him, kind of, "Sit up and focus on this. Think about the global issues at stake." Now, the book does not talk about what you did to prepare the way for a successful NSC meeting on those succeeding days, if anything.

**Scowcroft:** That's correct, and I didn't do that. I don't recall if I talked to Larry Eagleburger or not. Let me put you in the framework. Before both of these meetings—before the first NSC meeting, we had had a deputies meeting. Since my deputy was out hiking in the Olympic Mountains, I chaired it. There, the focus was basically, "What's the status of our forces? Where are the forces? What can we move if we needed to?" —so on and so forth. That went on 'til after midnight, I think. We had the meeting—the NSC meeting was 7:30, something like that, in the morning—because we had to get out to Aspen. We got back from Aspen at—my recollection is

1:30 or 2:00 in the morning. We had an NSC meeting set for 9:00 or 10:00 the next day. I didn't call and prepare. Because if I had been worried, I don't ever recall thinking about calling—which is, as you say, a natural instinct. I thought the case, first of all, was so persuasive on its merits that I could make the case, and I knew where the President was. So I didn't think this was a case where there was mobilization necessary. Indeed, had I been around, I might have picked up the phone and discussed things, but all the time between these two meetings we were away. I didn't do it. I guess I didn't think it was necessary.

**Zelikow:** Now, again, to flip forward—people sometimes ask me, "What do you think were the most stressful periods in the White House during the war?" I was not at the center of this, but I had a good seat. The two periods that stand out for me—I want to mention this now because one of them is very early. I thought some very stressful. I'm not sure if they were stressful for you and the President.

The first one was right after the Desert Shield decision had been made. In that first early period when we were putting stuff down there, but we were very vulnerable to attack. If we had gotten attacked, stuff would have been overrun—we couldn't really defend the positions we were beginning to put together. They could have made it very hard for us to deploy, because they could have occupied a lot of the logical deployment areas on that side of the Arabian Peninsula. I was nervous because once we got enough stuff in there it was clear that we were going to make it hard for them to get into Saudi Arabia. There was that period, maybe about three days, maybe more.

Of course, the other period where I felt stressed was actually the period of the Senate vote. I really did not feel that we knew how that was going to come out. If it didn't come out right, it could create a real train wreck.

**Scowcroft:** I would agree with both of those. In the first few days, I remember enormous frustration waiting for the next satellite pass—to see evidence that the Iraqis were massing for a further move into Saudi Arabia. It was going to take us—well, it took us a couple of days to convince the Saudis to let us send forces. It took another 48 hours to get forces there. So there were several days there where they could have moved—not only unimpeded militarily, but politically. What we wanted was enough troops there that he would physically have to run over American troops. That was a very tense period because for those few days there was nothing—basically nothing that we could have done. I guess we could have bombed him with B-52s or something, but that was very stressful.

The most stressful of all, because it had a long buildup to it, was the Senate vote—or, really, the Congressional vote. I had deep misgivings about the wisdom of asking for a vote—although, once we had gone to the UN—and that was halfway accidental, that we did the UN. We decided to send Baker out to test the waters, and to see what the mood around the world was. Well, he was getting such a reception that by the time he finished his trip we decided, "Why sure, we've got this thing won." Having won that, and we did win it, then you almost couldn't not go to the Congress. You get permission from the UN, and not from your Congress? So we were trapped in that. I worried, because the vote really wasn't there in the Senate until the last hours. In fact, we really didn't know it was there until some of them voted, because we had to attract a handful of Democrats.

There were other periods that were stressful. I was very stressed by Soviet behavior, and their attempts to prevent the air campaign, the ground campaign, and so on and so forth. They were very difficult. The President was terrific there, but it was very stressful. Another thing hanging over our heads, all the time, was the possibility that Saddam might agree to withdraw. And that by the time we got 500,000 troops out there—that was my principal nightmare. It wasn't a crisis stress, but if he had been smart, he would have agreed to some conditions that we couldn't reject without the coalition falling apart. Maybe even agree to withdraw—he'd pull his forces back to the border of Kuwait, and we'd be sitting there with 500,000 troops we couldn't keep out there. We'd have had to pull them back. We would have been in a terrible position. That was my—by the time we got 500,000 troops out there, we needed a conflict. We couldn't stand a diplomatic solution. Now, I didn't articulate that, except to the President. Jim Baker and Colin Powell didn't agree. But there was no doubt in my mind that by late December—middle of December—we were committed.

**Zelikow:** I just want to be sure—I want you to explain that a little more on the record. I don't think this point's been fully understood, even though that point has come out in print—but people haven't fully grasped its significance. Is that because, by that time you were convinced that we couldn't pull out until we had smashed their offensive military capability and their weapons of mass destruction capability? Or was it because you wanted to see them forcibly ejected from Kuwait?

**Scowcroft:** No, it was that we would be in an untenable military position. If he pulled his forces back out of Kuwait, we were sitting there with 500,000 troops, basically in Saudi Arabia—at great discomfort to the Saudis. We couldn't rotate those troops. We did not have a base back here sufficient to rotate the troops. That was one of the big criticisms of the Congress—and it was true. So we couldn't keep them out there indefinitely. The Saudis certainly would not have agreed to a semipermanent garrison of a half a million U.S. troops in their country. We would have had to withdraw at least a good portion of those troops—making it then very easy for Saddam to attack again. And if we were in the middle of withdrawing the troops and he attacked, we would have had, militarily, a totally chaotic situation. In other words, he could have created a monstrous mess, which he did not.

**Zelikow:** So you needed to—you felt, at that point, that the operational objective for the United States was to destroy Saddam's ability to attack Kuwait—or threaten Kuwait in a meaningful way, thus eliminating any further need to retain American force there to defend against that threat.

**Scowcroft:** That's right. The Congress—people in the Congress like Sam Nunn basically understood that. That was the reason for the furor about the further deployment of troops, up to the size we had. You know the old saying, "The one thing you can't do with bayonets is sit on them." Those key Democrats understood that, once we had those troops out there, we had to either use them or withdraw them.

**Zelikow:** Well, in a way it's the reverse of the "Warning of War" methodology I mentioned a moment ago in the Iraqi case. Once your deployment gets to a certain threshold, you either have to use them or stand them all down.

**Scowcroft:** But the difference is that Saddam could have stood them all down, because there was no counterthreat. We couldn't, because we were still facing an undiminished threat right on the border.

**Zelikow:** Now you have not, in your answer, emphasized the WMD [weapons of mass destruction] point. But it sounds from your answer that from your perspective—at that point, you had to have a war.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, from my perspective.

**Zelikow:** Indeed, wouldn't that have been true in a way even before December? Your recognition of it may have been in December but, in principle, really that might have been—if he withdrew under any circumstances that would allow him to easily return—and everyone in the region knowing that he could easily return—that's unsatisfactory. So you could make the argument that, in a way, the need for war was implicit from very early on, as soon as the United States recognized the stakes involved.

**Scowcroft:** It was nearly so, but not irrevocably so. It's one thing to stop a buildup of force there. It's another thing to have that massive force out there, and pull it back, and then send it back in again. I don't know, but my guess is that it would have been inordinately stressful to the country. So it became more and more inevitable as the buildup continued. I don't know what the cutoff date was. I'm saying that, to me, it became absolutely apparent once the buildup was completed. You're probably right—at some point along the way.

**Zelikow:** Let me wind back a little bit. I don't want to spend a lot of time on the diplomatic maneuvers of August and September—though they're very important. They're covered in the book and there are a lot of paper records for this period that people will eventually unearth. What I do want to get to are the issues of the military planning, and the briefings on the plan, and the reactions to that. There's already material in print that basically describes the meeting in which there's the initial presentation of the more limited military planning, and the negative reaction to that. What is less clear, from the material I've seen, is just exactly what happened informally—outside of the room—after that meeting. There is evidence that Dick Cheney is beginning to set up his own planning cell and working on his own version of the plan—that you're working with this. If you could comment on that—after you heard that—how did you try to work the system informally to produce a different formal meeting next time you heard about this plan?

**Scowcroft:** When we heard the plan, in the Situation Room, I formally questioned it at the time. After the meeting, I told the President that I thought it was unacceptable and that I wanted to talk to Cheney about it. I did talk with Cheney. I said that was an unacceptable performance and we had to do something differently. He agreed. I basically left it up to him to get it turned around. I mean, it was not up to us to come out with a new plan—although the left hook was such an obvious military strategy. I actually brought it up at the meeting where we were briefed on this frontal assault across the border. The only answer I got—I got a twofold answer. First, we don't know if the sand would support tank operations out there, which—

**Zelikow:** Well, find out.

**Scowcroft:** Yes. And, secondly, we did not have enough gasoline carriers to do it, and we'd run out of gas right up on the shoulder. I remember those two specific things. So to me it was an indication of a lack of enthusiasm for this operation. That's what I thought had to be changed. I did not talk to Colin about it, I talked to Cheney about it.

**Zelikow:** Well, in principle, from a ground war perspective, as you say—I mean, unless you think you can solve the problem from the air without a ground war—there's really either a right hook with amphibious forces, or driving straight up, which is the plan that the Army's Jedi Knights offered you, the left hook. Or else the Western approach—that's a fairly exotic idea.

**Scowcroft:** That was Cheney's idea.

**Zelikow:** Which was reminiscent of what the British did in 1941. But you had no preference, necessarily, on which of those broad strategic approaches—

**Scowcroft:** Well, first of all, I thought we had to have a ground war—that air power would not do this job. I was opposed to Cheney's Western strategy, because I thought it was too complicated, would divide our forces, and might not work. To me, it was such an obvious solution—a left hook, to trap his forces in Kuwait—that yes, I strongly supported that notion.

**Zelikow:** How did you find out about Cheney's thinking on this—this Western approaches—idea? Some thought there were some further conversations.

**Scowcroft:** There were a lot of conversations about it, and it was a live discussion issue for a time. Cheney pushed it, and he may have had some military planning look into the thing.

**Zelikow:** These informal discussions about the strategy—this is just you and Cheney?

**Scowcroft:** Well, no, Cheney raised this in some of the informal meetings we had.

**Zelikow:** Is Powell a participant in these meetings?

**Scowcroft:** I can't remember. I can't remember Powell in this discussion, I really can't. It's strange, but I can't remember him. I determined not to talk to Powell about this, but to talk to Cheney about it. I didn't want to put Powell in that kind of position. Cheney was the one, because we were talking grand strategy here, not military. I did not know what role Powell had in the plan that was presented. I knew it was presented as the command plan. But obviously it wouldn't have been presented if Powell had strenuously objected—so I didn't know what his position was.

**McCall:** This is just further evidence of what you said before—that there was reluctance on the part of the Uniform Services to put forth a serious plan early on. Could you comment further on that?

**Scowcroft:** Well, they deny that now. In the discussions that I've had since—and I believe it's Powell's argument was that the command was devising a plan based on the forces they had right then. I find that unpersuasive. But that's the subsequent argument that they used—that with the

forces they had, all they could do was an assault up the center. I really think it reflected a lack of enthusiasm for a major military engagement, but I can't demonstrate that.

**McCall:** Let me ask you this. It's on-topic, but it's slightly off. It's on this issue of what Powell and others—the [Caspar] Weinberger doctrine and other things about how U.S. forces should be used. We have a military tradition in the Army, going back to [Ulysses S.] Grant, to assemble overwhelming force to grind down an enemy—win by attrition. We did this in the Second World War. In light of what actually happened in a very quick ground war, was there any thought, earlier on, in any portions of the military, about whether we could do more with less? That it was not necessary to build up to half a million troops?

**Scowcroft:** No. Not that I know of. On that particular issue, when we sent them back to the drawing board and the left hook eventually became accepted, I guess, or either the left hook or the Western strategy, and the command came in with this list of troop requirements—they were huge. My state of mind was such that I thought they were deliberately large with the hope that the President would reject them and there'd be no operation. I remember recommending to the President, "I think we don't need this much force, but tell them they've got everything they want." And that's what he did.

**McCall:** Even so, there was that notion, especially toward the middle of December, that [General George] McClellan-like issue—

**Scowcroft:** It became frustrating. [Norman] Schwarzkopf always wanted one more battalion, one more regiment. In fact, you know, we had to send Cheney and Powell out there to get the war started.

**Zelikow:** Say more about that.

**Scowcroft:** Well, we were trying to set a date for the ground war. The initial notion was that the air war—that the outside limit for the air war would probably be a month. There was little doubt in my mind that by about three weeks the air war had accomplished its fundamental objectives. That is, morale, in terms of indications of desertions from the forces and reports of tank and artillery killings—whether you took the CIA's report, or the command's report—were such that the air war had done its job.

But we couldn't get a firm date from the command for a ground war. It kept shifting—and the weather was bad—and so on and so forth. The President was getting more and more nervous. The coalition—you know, the French were playing around—the coalition was shaky. And the Soviets, Gorbachev was saying, "You've made your point, you've made your point. Now let's negotiate." So sometime in early February, I think, we sent Cheney and Powell out there to tell Schwarzkopf we had to have a date. Even then, they came back with a date that was not actually specific—and ended up pushing out to the far end.

**Zelikow:** The book—there's a meeting on February 3rd. Powell says, "Schwarzkopf says he needs at least another two weeks or more for the air campaign." The President simply notes his concern. Cheney offered to go to Saudi Arabia with Colin and talk to Schwarzkopf—they could leave on February 7th.

**Scowcroft:** The President was very deferring to the military. He did not want to go down as a Commander in Chief who tried to run the war. So he didn't want to say, "Get moving!" But he clearly was restive at what was going on.

**Zelikow:** You do report that Cheney briefed you on his trip. He, Powell, and Schwarzkopf had agreed to shoot for February 21st—with a few days of leeway in there. But you also remarked in the book about Powell—once the left hook plan had been worked through, Powell presented that plan with a real air of confidence. Clearly not the attitude of someone who thinks this is a bad plan, it's not going to work. So I'm inferring from that—and you need to correct me if I'm wrong—I'm inferring from that that actually Powell was not a skeptic of the ground war plan—Powell thought they had a good plan.

**Scowcroft:** Oh, I think so, yes.

**Zelikow:** Do you think that the hesitation about going forward was more in the theater?

**Scowcroft:** I think it was in the theater. Powell was very neutral about it. Well, underlying all this is a concern about Schwarzkopf. I wanted him replaced. Cheney, I think, wanted him replaced. Powell said, "No, I'll be responsible. I will make sure that things work." So there wasn't anything done about it.

**Zelikow:** What period of time is it in which you are expressing these concerns? Does this go back to the concerns about the planning in October, or is this very late in the game?

**Scowcroft:** Probably in November. It was some things—it was the planning, it was Schwarzkopf's temperament—these blind rages that he would get in, terrorizing his subordinates and so on. There were a lot of things.

**Zelikow:** Is that related to the decision to send Calvin Waller out there?

**Scowcroft:** Yes.

**Zelikow:** Were you party to that?

**Scowcroft:** No, this was Colin, though. Having said, "I will guarantee Schwarzkopf's performance," how does he do that? He sends Cal Waller out there to calm things down and to be the rock on which he can rely. That's my sense of it.

**Zelikow:** One impression I take away from some of the story is the extent to which Cheney is a crucial ally for you in this whole story. Without denigrating Powell or Baker, who were playing different roles, especially Baker. I'm struck by—if the person in that job has a very different personality—or was even like Weinberger—I can imagine a very different dynamic that would have put you and the President at the very least under much greater stress in how to manage your military problem.

**Scowcroft:** It would have been much more difficult, much more difficult. As it was, and you can see from these discussions, the President was here, but his power didn't have to be engaged in these kinds of intramural disputes. Had you had a different Secretary—

**Zelikow:** You said, "The President was here," but people won't be able to read your gestures.

**Scowcroft:** The President, his presence was there, but he didn't have to engage himself directly in sorting these things out. I think he agreed with my analysis, with Cheney's analysis, and so on. But we did it without having to call in the President. If there had been a different Secretary of Defense, is what I'm saying, it may have taken the President exercising a much more direct authority to get things done. That's very hypothetical, because we didn't have that situation. But you have a President who was very sensitive about the accusation—the possible accusation—of running the war, running things himself and not letting the military do the planning of the operation—a la Vietnam and Johnson. So he wanted to bend over backward and he was able to. As I say, he was there in the background all the time and urging Cheney—making his discomfort known without saying, "Get this Goddamn show on the road!"

**McCall:** You talk about the President's reluctance to do that. The President's impatience is a little bit underplayed in the book.

**Scowcroft:** Deliberately.

**McCall:** Yes, but the President's impatience—he does voice it. I know, he also voices it to foreign leaders—he voices it to [Brian] Mulroney on a couple of occasions. There are the discussions with Mrs. Thatcher at the time of the General Assembly meetings at the UN—the opening of the session. At that point, the President's actually talking about a version of the old Desert One solution used to get the hostages out, that are still in Baghdad.

**Zelikow:** We're now talking about late September 1990?

**McCall:** Yes, right. Are there other things that we're not hearing about with the President kind of venting about this?

**Scowcroft:** Well, not much about this, but there were other adventures that were going on—which we haven't discussed and really aren't in the book—and that is the whole situation with the Embassy. We got far down the line of planning an amphibious rescue of the Embassy if it was necessary. It would have been a horrendous operation if they had resisted it. There were those kinds of things that went on at the same time.

**McCall:** I know that with the discussions with Mrs. Thatcher, he was talking about sending in choppers—almost provoking an incident.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, well, she was on the leading edge of doing that, which was great theater, but you don't want to provoke an incident that you can't emerge on top of. We had to be very careful with that. We avoided the Embassy thing because eventually he let the Embassy go. But I remember the President, when we had won a confrontation with Saddam on the Embassy, and said no, we wouldn't close it, then Baker unilaterally announced he was evacuating the Embassy. The President was in Latin America at that time—furious about it.

**McCall:** Another issue that arises in this time, I don't know if it's planning too, is what's going on with Powell and others about reluctance—the readiness issue. We had problems with the Reserve components—National Guard components—being ready. Being trained up, once they're

in the desert—stuff like that. Does this also get into the mix with what's coming from the Pentagon?

**Scowcroft:** It was a real irritation. I was reluctant to call up Reserves, because I thought that psychologically heightened the situation in September. But the military force structure and the relationship of the Reserves had been based on mobilization for Germany, so that Reservists were in key logistic positions in managing ports and so on and so forth. We actually could not operate—we could not move the forces over there without a call-up of Reserves. So we had to do some. And then we get [G. V.] Sonny Montgomery in there—wanting to have the Reserves and the Guard playing a role, and so on and so forth. So that was politically allowed. They were in woefully bad shape. Did that affect the overall planning? I don't think so, but it complicated it some.

Then there was the very nature of the coalition. This was a big management job for Schwarzkopf, there's no question about that. We had 29 or 31 countries with some kind of military force there, but some of them were just hospital units. We didn't need them. Actually, most of them were more of a hindrance than a help. But it was to show solidarity, and it was very complicated managing them. Command and control was another issue, especially with the French.

**McCall:** You mentioned before that there was some discomfort with letting Schwarzkopf continue, partly because of the prickly personality. Obviously, this is sort of an Ike-type situation—where you need somebody who is both diplomat and a strong commander. Were names bubbling up about who might go in to replace him?

**Scowcroft:** I don't recall that. I think it was a case of Schwarzkopf getting overstressed. I don't recall—well, I'd better not say, because I have a couple of names in the back of my mind, but I'm not sure if we ever got to names.

**McCall:** To me, it sounds similar to what you said about appointments to the Joint Chiefs and things like that. We have quite a bench out there—and there were plenty of alternatives for just about any senior position.

**Scowcroft:** I don't recall enough to get into that.

**Zelikow:** The coalition was complicated. What I try to explain to people is there were really three different kinds of coalitions, all of which were being maintained. There was a political coalition to get you the votes in the UN. There is a financial coalition involved in raising the money, compensating people being harmed by the imposition of sanctions against Iraq. And then there's a military coalition. The membership and roles in these three coalitions overlap, but are not identical, and all had their own problems. It's a fantastically intricate piece of work—for which it's very difficult to find any precedent short of going back to Britain in the Napoleonic Wars. I was wondering if then, or later, you had a chance to reflect on what you thought was key to that coalition management. Personalities. Way the government was organized so that the government was effective in managing the coalition. I wanted to invite you to step back, and offer some bigger picture reflections that may not be as clear out of the details that you recount in the book.

**Scowcroft:** I think the key to all of these coalitions was the President and his performance in handholding, cajoling, leading, urging the members of the various coalitions to keep them all together. It was a ceaseless task. If you look at some of the timelines—the numbers of phone calls that the President would make in an average day are astonishing. I think there was probably rarely a day that he didn't call at least one person. Maybe on a particular issue, maybe just to say—[Turgut] Ozal for example. Ozal was a great ally, but nervous. Calling—just to hold his hands. It was a tremendous job and it was a constant job. One of our fears when we were talking about whether war was inevitable or not was we did not think that time was on our side. One of the reasons we didn't want to let sanctions work was that we didn't really believe we could hold these coalitions together—very disparate coalitions with members with different perspectives, objectives, and so on. It was an enormous and a ceaseless job. I think the thing that made it work was the President and his willingness to do this heavy lifting day after day after day—whenever we would see somebody wavering, or somebody needed encouragement or what have you. It was a remarkable performance. I think that's what made it work.

Not that—Baker did a fantastic job as well. There's no question about it. But that's what made it work.

**McCall:** One of the things that's not talked about much in the book, other than the Baker trip and the Brady trips and things like that, is the issues of enticements to the coalition members. Sometimes it's promises of aid, military or otherwise. Can you reflect at all on that? What sorts of enticements were also made to sweeten the commitments?

**Scowcroft:** Actually, I don't recall that being a big issue. Really, we had an embarrassment of riches after the first few days when there was some Alphonse and Gaston between Canada and Australia—members of the Commonwealth and so on. People wanted to show that they were participating. Even Czechoslovakia sends a hospital.

**Zelikow:** You're talking about the military coalition.

**Scowcroft:** It's the military coalition I'm talking about now. Now, the financial coalition was heavy arm-twisting, no question about that. The UN coalition—there may have been a few diplomatic promises that Baker made, but I don't believe that was a major part of it. Again, I go back to the President. He infused the whole thing with an energy that made people want to be a part of it. As I say, we worried we couldn't keep this up indefinitely. We were building toward a climax, and that feeling infused everybody with a sense of participation. But how long we could have sat on it, I don't know.

**Zelikow:** Again, one thing that strikes me stepping back on this—this seems to be a period of absolute, maximum stress on the interagency process and the circuitry of managing the government. If you think of all the things that were running simultaneously, then also the fact that actually on the domestic side the President is in the midst of what turns out perhaps to be the most pivotal and intense set of negotiations about the future of his domestic agenda—of the entire administration. So it's not like there's a lot of excess capacity there. This seems like a situation where everything had to be running at absolute maximum pitch of efficiency. It's hard to think of a time when the government had to exert itself so broadly any time in recent years—although I think there are periods, maybe like 1983—and maybe some others one could single

out—it was unusual. So here you are. You're in charge of the interagency process. I'd like you to reflect then on what you thought your challenge was as the manager of this process under some pretty extreme conditions. What you thought you did right and what you thought you did wrong.

**Scowcroft:** We had, interestingly enough, we had a pretty smoothly running operation by then. We had had our initial bloodletting, if you will, in Panama, in the abortive coup of early October of 1989, when we were not organized efficiently and found that we had—everybody had intelligence but it was all intelligence from their own sources. There were no cross-discussions, and a lot of confusion. After that, we really set up the Deputies Committee as a serious crisis management operation. Gates did a fantastic job with it. Then we tested that system in the Panama military operation and it worked pretty well. So by the time the Gulf thing started, we basically had two structures. We had the Deputies Committee, which was a clearinghouse but basically an operation and execution thing. And we had what began to be known as the Gang of Eight. I don't know how many meetings we had—not daily, but close to daily. As we got into the war, there were daily meetings. It worked quite well. What did not work as well was the cross-relationship with the civilian side of the House.

One of the things, for example, which didn't work well was the whole issue of oil—release of the strategic reserve and so on. That was painfully slow, painfully complex. By the time we got some oil released from the strategic reserve, we didn't need it anymore.

What did work well, and what we basically did was in the beginning, we got Venezuela and the Saudis—they were the only two who could increase production in a short period of time—to increase production and take some of the spike out of the oil prices. But that side of the House—that kind of thing—did not work as well as it should have. We could have stabilized the oil situation much quicker than we did, I think.

**McCall:** On that same topic, one of the refrains you always get from the critics, that one always hears from the critics, is the notion of economic objectives from the war—talking about oil and so forth. Can you summarize your response to this—that the real purpose of the war was not Saddam, but the control of oil reserves?

**Scowcroft:** To me, the fundamental U.S. interest was twofold. The one was strategic that we had inherited from the British—the role of stability in the Gulf region. That this was a major threat to that stability. It had been rocked before with the Shah leaving Iran, the Iran/Iraq War—where I think our strategy was correct—we didn't want either side to win it. But here was a possibility of a major change. That's on the one side. On the other side was the economic concern—and Iraq, with that much additional control over especially OPEC [Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries] reserves, could have threatened the world economy dramatically. That was unacceptable.

On the top—and the President got very imbued with this—was the notion of dealing with aggression. In the background, the way we operated this whole thing was the thinking that we were trying to set up a method of behavior for the post–Cold War world. We wanted to behave in a way—and use the UN in a way—which would set a pattern for the post–Cold War world in dealing with aggression. Which is one of the reasons that we worked so hard at making the UN

work in this case, and one of the reasons why we were religiously observing the dictates of the international community.

For example, you know, at the end—had we gone on to Baghdad—the coalition would have probably collapsed. On top of it all was—we had a mandate from the UN to do X, that is to throw Iraqi troops out of Kuwait. Had we said, "Well, we've done that—but now we, the United States, have further interests and we're going to go on and replace him," we would have undercut the confidence of the international community that we were not the superpower that would do whatever we wanted. But we were upholding the world community—we could be trusted with this kind of a mandate to do whatever is necessary. So that was another thing that developed. The President was very keen on this aspect of it—and on the nature of the Iraqi regime and what they had done to Kuwait.

**McCall:** One thing you sort of touched upon in the beginning of your response was the notion of the Persian Gulf balance. One country has been conspicuously absent from the discussion—and also is not really in the book—is Iran. There were overtures indirectly from Iran about wanting to play some sort of a role. Can you talk about that a little bit?

**Scowcroft:** Well, we actually had a reasonable dialogue, much of it indirect, with Iran. We were fairly comfortable with Iran's role. They were supportive, gave indications that they would not make trouble. When Saddam sent his air force over to Iran for safety, we had a momentary flurry, because we scoped out a possibility of a massive one-strike from Iran by his forces that could do a great deal of damage to the ports of Saudi Arabia. But they made it quite clear to us that there would be no flights of Iraqi aircraft out of Iran. It was an OK situation. We did not try to engage Iran. They didn't indicate that they wanted to engage. But they worked with us on the interdiction of shipping oil out of Iraq and so on. So it worked OK.

**McCall:** You talked about the interdiction of oil, wasn't there a strong feeling and some evidence that there was some smuggling going on of oil over the Iranian border?

**Scowcroft:** Some, but not much. It wasn't a big concern.

**McCall:** I also seem to recall that they were interested in somehow obtaining spares for their ancient American equipment. Do you recall anything about that being somewhere in the equation of keeping them sort of friendly?

**Scowcroft:** It tweaks something in my memory, but not enough to comment on it. I don't think we did anything like that.

**Zelikow:** Let me move to the issues of the termination of the war—and close of that. Let me first just hone in on a particular detail. We're now on the day the decision is made—this is February 27th, 1991—and the question is really just what exactly did you know about the situation in the field? I was there in the first part of that, because it had spun out of a meeting with Douglas Hurd. I heard Powell's initial military briefing, which I actually wrote up and gave you that MemCom. Schwarzkopf, the day before, had given the mother of all briefings.

**Scowcroft:** It wasn't the day before—it was that day, I think. When we called, he had just come out of his briefing, saying we had accomplished our objectives.

**Zelikow:** He used the words, "The gate is closed," in that briefing. Well, you don't have to agree with that. You may not know whether or not he said it. Maybe I'm mistaken. But I was struck by the fact, especially in retrospect, how Powell described the military situation. The only thing that he described as undone were ongoing engagements with Republican Guard units that he thought should be completed. Everyone seemed to agree with that. He did not say anything about whether the gate was closed or not closed. Schwarzkopf had already spoken to that. In the book, you mentioned that later in the day, Powell said that the Basra Gate would be completely closed—you're not quoting him directly here—at the latest by the end of the next day—cutting off the remaining Iraqi units.

**Scowcroft:** That's what I remember.

**Zelikow:** So here's the problem I have. It's just conflicting indicators about what the status was of American military forces. Was Schwarzkopf saying the gate is closed? Powell saying the gate is not closed—we need another day? Then the call to Schwarzkopf. Schwarzkopf doesn't say we need another day. We know later that some of Schwarzkopf's commanders were puzzled that they weren't given another day. So the first issue is, what did you know in the White House about the completion of the envelopment? Two is, how important was the completion of the envelopment, which may lead to some other issues?

**Scowcroft:** What I was told that day, and I can't remember who told me, before we had our meeting, was that there were two, at best three, Iraqi divisions which could be considered still an organized fighting force. The rest was a rout. We had the meeting. We started to discuss the military situation, and so on. There was some confusion about the gate being closed, but my recollection is that it wasn't and would not be for another day.

**Zelikow:** Is there a MemCom of that afternoon's session?

**Scowcroft:** I don't think so.

**Zelikow:** Haass didn't take notes—or not that you know of?

**Scowcroft:** Not that I know of. There may be, but I don't know that. The issue of the Highway of Death came up. That's the major highway through the gap, and that soon the press would get on us for the war being over and what we were doing was just slaughtering people trying to run—not fight a war.

**Zelikow:** Which, in fact, is just what Barry McCaffrey is recently being accused of.

**Scowcroft:** Yes. So I don't know who raised it. Somebody said, "So why don't we stop?" So we don't run into this problem.

**Zelikow:** In the book, you actually have President Bush suggesting that we might stop.

**Scowcroft:** I'm not sure.

**Zelikow:** "In a very matter-of-fact way, the President asked whether it was time to stop."

**Scowcroft:** Maybe. Anyway, that started another discussion. Colin said, "Let's find out from the commanders." So he picks up the phone—the secure line at the desk—and calls Schwarzkopf, who had just finished his briefing, as I recall. We didn't know what he had said in his briefing, which was, "We've accomplished our objectives." We said, "We're coming to the conclusion here—do we need to continue? Is it time to stop?" Schwarzkopf said—I think Powell was the one on the phone—Schwarzkopf said, "I think so, but I need to poll my commanders—and I'll get back to you."

So our meeting stopped at that point. Cheney and Powell said they had a briefing up on the Hill. They went up on the Hill and had their briefing, and came back and we called Schwarzkopf again. He said, "It's OK." Then we said, "OK, what time will we cease operations?" And then Sununu came up with this cute notion—let's make it at 100 hours. That's how it actually happened. Now, the big issue we did not know was that Schwarzkopf's strategy had not worked. The Marines, in their attack up the center, had moved so fast that the Republican Guard was not drawn down inside the left hook as we planned. So there was a large part of the Republican Guard that was not engaged. Part of it then became engaged—actually the next day when they fired on McCaffrey's forces. He pretty well devastated them. Had we known that a considerable part of the Republican Guard had gotten away, I think we probably would have gone another day or so to try to catch them. We did not know that.

**Zelikow:** Why didn't you know that?

**Scowcroft:** We weren't told it. As I said, I walked into the meeting with this information—and I can't remember who told me, I certainly didn't dream it up—that there were only two, at best three divisions in the Iraqi Army engaged that were still operationally significant.

**Zelikow:** Is this information about the real military situation information that you later learned that the government possessed somewhere, and you just didn't hear it? Or is this information we did not know and could not have known?

**Scowcroft:** I can't answer that directly. But what did not happen is clearly that Schwarzkopf didn't put the brakes on his Marines to try to draw the Republican Guard down.

**Zelikow:** Did you know that before?

**Scowcroft:** No, no.

**Zelikow:** Well, you knew Marines were running up through Kuwait City and they were advancing rapidly.

**Scowcroft:** Sure, we knew that, but I didn't know where the Republican Guard was disposed.

**Zelikow:** But you never had—when you saw that the forces in the center were advancing so rapidly, you did not express a concern that we were pushing the retreating Iraqis out of the net before they had come into it?

**Scowcroft:** No, because my assumption was that the left hook was going around the back of the forces. That was the plan and, in fact, it didn't go around the back of all the forces. Let me say

one more thing. I think in the end, 24 more hours might have helped. I don't think it had a strategic bearing. Tactically, we would have been better off—tactically, his forces would have been more nearly destroyed. Strategically, I don't think it made a difference.

**Zelikow:** Why not?

**Scowcroft:** Because it was a matter of would there have been another two or three divisions destroyed? Probably so. But he had over 20 divisions that were not engaged at all—they were up in other parts of the country. He had enough strength left to control the country—without the forces committed.

**McCall:** One thing I think also you leave out of this is what Saddam's perspective is on all this—in terms of whether or not those divisions would have been committed down there. Because there had already been that Khafji attempt to provoke an early onset to the ground war and that had failed so—who knows—those divisions—

**Scowcroft:** Well, the whole Khafji incident is interpreted by different people in very different ways as to how strategically significant it was. It may be that Saddam would not have committed those forces anyway. My only point is that since that was the strategy, the commander should have done his best to make sure that the strategy worked. And he let his Marines go. That's all.

**Zelikow:** Let me turn to two other war termination issues. The first is the next really immediate issue. There's a whole set of work going on—on the UN resolution and the whole approach to what I call "the indirect occupation of Iraq." Using the UN to replace, in which a lot of effort is invested, and actually I think turns out to be pretty ingenious and successful for a long time. But then, in addition to that, there is the more immediate need of armistice, cease-fire lines, and the immediate negotiations on the ground and the guidance to do that. There are criticisms, of course, of the Safwan negotiations conducted by Schwarzkopf. We don't need to go into the substance of those negotiations, that's already been written up. What I do want to ask you about is how come Schwarzkopf doesn't have guidance from Washington about what he's supposed to do?

**Scowcroft:** Because this was a military cease-fire at the time. The dispositions, demarcation lines, things like that, were really military. I will say we probably gave him inadequate guidance. I'm prepared to admit that. But this was not a notion that this was a peace treaty or anything. This was a unilateral—we stopped operations. It was not even a negotiated cease-fire. We stopped operations and so did the Iraqis at that point. So we saw Safwan as a pretty narrow operation, simply to draw the lines between the forces and to do the kind of things to separate the forces and so on.

**Zelikow:** The helicopter issue, for instance, was never—you never addressed that or considered it? So it wasn't that you made a deliberate decision to confirm what he had done. It just wasn't on your radar at all.

**Scowcroft:** No, he had done it, we had not anticipated that he would have a request to fly his helicopters. I think you can argue that that, in essence, is also a military decision. Now, when he started using his helicopters for military—Saddam's argument was, "The roads have been destroyed. I need to be able to administratively communicate with my government, with my local

government." So Schwarzkopf said OK. Then he immediately started using the helicopters for military purposes. At that point, I suggested to Cheney and Powell that we tell Schwarzkopf to rescind the helicopter order. They both said that would be humiliating to a commander, and so on, and they didn't want to do it. I did not take it to the President. I think, in retrospect, I should have—but I didn't. But we did discuss that issue and they felt strongly that it would be a humiliation to Schwarzkopf and we shouldn't do it.

**Zelikow:** Well, it was worse than a humiliation for the people at the other end of the helicopters.

**Scowcroft:** Yep.

**Zelikow:** There's this little issue of the "On to Baghdad," question. It's not discussed a lot in the book. It's discussed some. Then there's the Kurdish issue. I do want to talk a little about the Kurds and segue into Arab/Israeli stuff, but we're about done with the war. You can reflect, while you're working out, whether there's something else you want to say about the war that we didn't ask you about.

**McCall:** One thing I was going to ask about was a retrospective view of the performance of the forces, if there were any specific lessons learned, might have been addressed with restructuring, something like that.

**Scowcroft:** Never found out, because they didn't do what I asked—which was a rigorous postmortem of the performance of the troops and the weapon systems.

**McCall:** We should probably mention that.

**Scowcroft:** Nah. [laughter]

**McCall:** OK. You're in enough trouble as it is? [laughter]

BREAK]

**Zelikow:** During the war, there is a story that President Bush tells in his memoir, about inviting you out to Camp David so you could relax and recover your strength, because you'd been working so hard. Instead, you come out to Camp David—bring a mountain of paper with you, your assistant Florence Gantt, and spend all your time working. I know that everyone respects the fact that senior officials have to make big decisions—that they think a lot about those and those can be hard. But I don't think outsiders can understand why it is a top official like you has to work 80 or 90 hours a week. Why you have to bring a mountain of paper with you to Camp David—what it is you're doing all day long that's keeping you so busy. Why there are all these things that you can't delegate to subordinates. I'd be grateful if you tried to explain a little bit about your world and your day to people who may be reading this later.

**Scowcroft:** That's a good question. Let me approach it this way. My day from early morning until six in the evening was almost always taken up with meetings, phone calls, things like that. Calling the Hill, giving an interview to the press, talking with my senior directors about policy studies and so on. On the phone with my counterparts and others in the administration. I didn't get to any paperwork, other than 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning to read the intelligence, until after 6:00 when the phone stopped ringing, people stopped coming in, and I could concentrate.

Now, what is the paperwork? There is an enormous amount of paperwork—a lot of it trivia. Some of it reading, drafts of policy studies of this region, that region. Reviews of nuclear weapons programs—all kinds of things that I have to sign off on for one thing or another. I have to read, in order to understand what's going on, or to be able to converse and give guidance to my staff. In the end, there is far more that should be done than at least I was able to do. So I focused on what I thought the important things were, and some things didn't get done. I had mountains of paperwork in different categories. I relied on my own instincts and partly on my staff to say, "Hey, you really have to do this. This is important because A, B, C, D." I think part of the problem is that this is a place where, if you have a problem and you don't know exactly what to do about it, you come to the NSC. People, even outside the security arena, would come with problems that they thought the NSC could solve for them—because we seemed to be able to solve problems that nobody else could have a handle on. There's a lot of that sort of thing.

**Zelikow:** Can you give an example of that?

**Scowcroft:** I probably could with a little more time—but it happened with some frequency.

**Zelikow:** Commercial—like corporate?

**Scowcroft:** No, not corporate. But there's another meeting thing. Every corporate boss that came to Washington—especially defense contractors and so on, American or foreign—wanted to pay a courtesy call. Wanted to explain what they were doing, what their problems and issues were. It was never-ending.

**Zelikow:** Looking back on the end of the Gulf War, there's been some criticism about whether or not you should have driven on to Baghdad. As you reflect back on it, do you have any second thoughts about that decision?

**Scowcroft:** I have no second thoughts about it. At the time, emotionally, would I have liked to do it? You bet. At the time, I didn't think it was a thing to do. Despite all the criticism of it, "Well, Saddam's still there—we still have the problem," I think we did the right thing. We talked about one of the reasons—and that is setting a pattern for behavior, and how the United States would relate to the rest of the world. That is a cooperative leadership role, not a unilateral role. Another one was—and, incidentally, these questions, "Why didn't you go to Baghdad?" all came up after the war, not before the war. Nobody said, before the war, that I can recall, "Well, you've got to go get Saddam Hussein."

Anyway, the coalition almost certainly would have fractured. There's a thing in the Arab world about occupying Arab powers. The coalition was as one with kicking Iraq out of Kuwait. Moving in and occupying an Arab land would have been an intolerable strain, I think, on our Arab allies. In addition, we had planned for and we knew how to do what we were going to do.

We knew we could win this war—knew we could do it relatively handily. We had a general picture of what the situation would be afterward. We had no idea—we would have been in essence starting a new war by going to Baghdad. We would be the occupier of a large country, with no visible way that was apparent to us to disentangle from that kind of development.

Ten years after the war, if you look, Saddam is still there. Iraq is nowhere near as powerful as they were before the war. Saddam is a nuisance, he's a pain in the neck—but as long as we are alert to the problem and keep him from doing what he would otherwise do, which is not an enormous task, he's not a threat to the region. And that's what it's all about. It would be satisfying to get rid of him—but we still have forces in Korea! Fifty years after the war in Korea. In many cases, in foreign affairs, you can't solve problems. You manage them, you reduce them to the point where they don't get to be crises, and I think this is one of them.

**Zelikow:** In the aftermath of the war, there were revolts in Iraq—first in the south, then in the north. There's a little bit about those revolts in the book—not a whole lot. Did you ever actively contemplate a more forceful military intervention to tip the scales in those conflicts in 1991?

**Scowcroft:** No, we didn't. In 1991, one of the things we did contemplate—and I wish we had done—was to give some assistance to the marsh people in the south. A lot of that happened near the end of the administration. But Saddam dried out the marshes so he could get at the rebels living there. I would have bombed the dikes and kept the marshes flooded to give them protection. I would not have done anything more.

**Zelikow:** You would not have extended a no-fly zone.

**Scowcroft:** We did install a no-fly zone, because of what he was doing, because of the use of his air in the south.

**Zelikow:** Including no helicopters.

**Scowcroft:** [murmured affirmation] We did it for that basic reason. We had another important consideration in how we dealt with the minorities in Iraq, and that is we did not want Iraq to split up. Our fundamental strategy toward the Gulf was to preserve a balance in the Gulf that did not require enormous presence of U.S. forces. Preserving that balance meant an Iraq and an Iran that sort of offset each other. It would not have been difficult, perhaps, to split Iraq—Shiites in the South, Sunnis in the middle, Kurds in the North. We didn't want to do that, because then there would have been no offsetting power to Iran. So that was another consideration. In the North, there wasn't much we could do to help the Kurds. Although, eventually, we did install a no-fly zone there. Actually, the Kurdish situation came to a head and we did move forces into Northern Iraq. But that was fundamentally—I mean it was a terrible human rights, humanitarian crisis. But, basically, we had a huge problem with Turkey, which could not accommodate the refugee flow—and did not want to accommodate the refugee flow—across the border into Turkey. So we had to stop it. The way we stopped it was to drive out the Iraqi forces, and install a no-fly zone.

**Zelikow:** What would you say to those who question why you intervened to help the Kurds and did not intervene to help the marsh Arabs and others in the south? What distinguishes the two cases?

**Scowcroft:** I just described one of the things—refugee flow into Turkey.

**Zelikow:** Exacerbating their ongoing Kurdish problem.

**Scowcroft:** Turkey was invaluable to us—in installing sanctions, as a base during the conflict, so on and so forth. And Turkey paid a high price. A strong flow of Kurds actually threatened the Turkish government. We did help the Shiites in the same way. We did a no-fly zone. And that's basically what we did in the north. It took some troops to protect some of the people up there, which was easier to do than in the south. The southern problem was a little different.

**Zelikow:** Did you fear, though, that protecting the Kurds would begin creating a provisional government—raise the same issues of breaking up Iraq that you just warned about a moment ago?

**Scowcroft:** Yes.

**Zelikow:** How did you resolve that dilemma in pursuing this policy?

**Scowcroft:** We made it quite clear to all concerned, including the Kurds, that we had no such goal in mind, and would not be supportive of it. Now, in fact, there is an autonomous—I don't know if you'd call it a government, it's not a government—but Kurdistan, up in the North there, is autonomous. The Iraqi rule does not extend that far. The Kurds have shown themselves, in any case, singularly unable to get together in a way that would make the threat of an independent Kurdistan real.

**Zelikow:** You mentioned that you had considered the idea of bombing the dikes that were drying out the marshes in the south. Do you remember why that idea was not adopted by the U.S. government?

**Scowcroft:** As I recall, the actual draining of the marshes was later on. It came up in the last retaliatory strikes that the Bush administration launched in the south, which was December '92, even January '93. I think, had we still been in power, we would have bombed the dikes. I think so. It wasn't a live discussion in the administration. It was my hobbyhorse, but I think we would have bombed the dikes.

**Zelikow:** Did you, during the war or afterward, get involved in military planning that would target Saddam Hussein personally? Or covert action planning that was designed to affect the assassination or physical removal of Saddam Hussein?

**Scowcroft:** Well, to be a purist about it, all we did is bomb command centers. But by definition, anywhere that Saddam is, is a command center. All of the places he frequented, I believe all of them were attacked. But he was smart enough not to stay in any of them. He took extraordinary precautions during the war.

**Zelikow:** Was there any discussion in the administration about the relation of these military plans to the Executive order, that you know very well, concerning assassinations of foreign leaders?

**Scowcroft:** Of course, yes.

**Zelikow:** How did you work through that issue?

**Scowcroft:** Command center—that's how we worked through the issue. There was not a strike that didn't have a lawyer peering over the shoulders of the planners. There was one case that got Cheney especially upset. That is—in Baghdad, there is a triumphal arch that commemorates I don't know what. Anyway, it's a great national symbol and Cheney wanted to take it out. The lawyers said he couldn't do it, because it was not a military target, so they refused to permit the strike on this triumphal arch. Cheney thought that was just beyond the pale. It was a cultural thing. There was unusual attention given to all of those legal aspects—including assassination.

**Zelikow:** CIA efforts, after the war—

**Scowcroft:** Which, incidentally, to me is ridiculous. If I had my way, I would rescind the ban on assassination.

**Zelikow:** Why?

**Scowcroft:** Why? Because it seems to me really ridiculous that it's OK to go to war and kill thousands of people, but it's not OK to avoid a war by taking out one. I understand the problem with assassination, but it seems to me that one of our options—in the Gulf War for example—could, or should have been, a Special Operations force to go after Saddam. It probably was not feasible at all, in this particular case—but it *was* feasible in Panama. We found that our CIA people in Panama were very reluctant to have anything to do with coup plotters against Noriega. Because when you're plotting a coup, the chances of somebody getting killed are very, very high. You don't want to leave the person standing that you're going after—and then they would be accessories. It seems to me that we tie ourselves in knots about something that should not be that much of a problem. It's never going to be changed.

**Zelikow:** Covert action against Saddam after the war—anything important there? Let the record reflect that General Scowcroft shook his head no.

**Scowcroft:** Look, there were attempts—internal attempts—against Saddam before the war. I don't know about during the war—and after the war. We were aware of some of them. They were invariably unsuccessful, and so far as I know we never got close enough to any of the perpetrators to provide any help.

**Zelikow:** Without commenting on any particular operation that may still be classified—did your experience in the Bush administration give you an opinion about covert action as a tool of American foreign policy?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, it did. I think it's very valuable in certain circumstances. We don't do it well. We don't do it well because we keep pulling the plant up and looking at the roots, to see how it's going. We're pretty lousy. But in certain cases, I think it is a critical tool. Like, for example, if you have an opportunity to do something about Saddam Hussein. But it takes people—to make the kind of contact that you have to make, you can't send somebody in a coat and tie, out of the American Embassy in Amman, Jordan, over to Baghdad to help.

We don't do enough either to get, or recruit, or contract for the kind of people who can do things like that. I think it's especially important in areas like terrorism—where, to me, the solution is not building Jersey walls around our buildings and fortifying our Embassies so they look like strong points on the Maginot line. It is getting inside the terrorist networks. Either disrupting them, or at least finding out their plans. Preventing these things happening is the way to go. And that takes human intelligence of a very high order, and practices different from those that we usually follow.

**Zelikow:** I'd like to move now away from the Gulf War—

**McCall:** Could I just ask two follow-ons to the war? You talked about the end of the war and President Bush's expressed dissatisfaction with certain—not having the battleship Missouri to defend you, and so forth. There was also the reflection upon the immediate aftermath of the war. Do you feel, in any way, that some of the rhetoric that the President felt was important during the crisis, such as the Hitler comparisons and all, raised expectations a bit about how that ending should have gone—or led to some disappointments?

**Scowcroft:** Well, I don't know. We got a little concerned at his rhetoric. This is when Gates and I started the practice of one of us flying with him all the time on campaign trips, because he was getting carried away. He was very emotionally involved. I don't know that that did a lot, or made a significant difference. One of the things that was an issue for debate, though, was, "Should we declare Saddam, or Saddam and others, war criminals?" Or that we would bring them to trial as war criminals. That's a neat point. You can argue that it creates dissension inside a system—which is useful—but you can also say, "If they have absolutely nothing to lose, and they know that if they lose the war, they're going to get hanged." Then you're, in a way, defeating your purpose—and defeating the chance that somebody will come out and try to make peace. So that's a very complicated issue and I don't think that we know enough about what motivates and de-motivates populations and groups, at least for me to answer that question.

**McCall:** On the same topic of Saddam having his back to the wall, as in the scenario you're describing, there are references in the book to discussions about reactions to possible use of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East—gas use and so forth. Is there anything you want to develop on that?

**Scowcroft:** Saddam, at one point, made some threat that if he was attacked, he would use gas. We thought that that was a considerable possibility—perhaps biologicals, although not so high, and we did not think he had any nuclear capability at the time. Yes, we discussed it, because we thought there was a considerable chance that he would use chemicals. We decided that, in fact, we would not respond with nuclear weapons if he used weapons of mass destruction of any kind. Instead, we would expand the target list. We did not explicitly threaten him with a nuclear response. We simply said something about, "You use those things, you'll be sorry," something like that. We did not wave the nuclear specter. Baker said he did. If he did, he did it on his own. Because we did not explicitly threaten him. So I don't think you can say that Saddam was cautious because he knew we would respond with nuclear weapons.

**McCall:** Wasn't it a discussion along the lines also of carefully not ruling it out? Not ruling it in, but not to rule it out—

**Scowcroft:** We ruled it out as a practical matter. We would not have used it. But no, we did not rule it out in our discussions. It was a noncommittal official answer to any such questions, because we thought it was silly to rule it out. But also, we didn't want to rule it in because in fact we didn't want to give the impression that here's another case—it's all right to use nuclear weapons against certain ethnic groups but not against other ethnic groups.

**Zelikow:** Just to be sure I understand though, in the strategy you've described you made no distinction between chemical weapons and biological weapons in deciding an American response?

**Scowcroft:** I don't think we thought biological weapons would be used, or used extensively. We didn't make a distinction—not that I recall.

**Zelikow:** Let me press, too, on the expanding of the target list. You're already targeting him—or you're already targeting command centers up to the limit of the law. On the surface, you wouldn't think that well, if he was to use chemical weapons, we'll begin attacking Iraqi civilian targets. This does not seem to be a very big deterrent.

**Scowcroft:** No, no. Well, there were certain targets we didn't hit. We didn't hit all of his electrical network. We didn't target his oil refineries. There were lots of targets we didn't—Our targeting was designed to hurt him tactically, but not to destroy infrastructure which we thought maybe in the event we might have to rebuild for him, depending on how the war came out.

**Zelikow:** But again, just thinking now for the future perhaps, because he didn't know—he might not have known these finer targeting distinctions at the time he was making his judgment. So in determining whether our deterrent worked, some of these details would be lost on him. Looking back on it, this is now an interesting question. Do you have any reflections about—were you comfortable with the posture that if he uses chemicals, we'll just be more ferocious? But at that point, you'll be breaking up economic infrastructure, which is not a personal threat to him, either.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I was very comfortable. Because if we had used nuclear weapons, we would have been doing the same thing. And with nuclear weapons, we would have been making a political statement, which would have been very damaging in the Arab world.

**Zelikow:** Did you consider it another option, though? The letter the President wrote to Saddam that Baker delivered I think hinted at this. That the war aims would change. That if he used chemicals, a war aim that said, "Recapture of Kuwait, breaking your offensive capability, limiting your weapons of mass destruction"—that's good enough. There was certainly a hint in the President's letter that Baker delivered that sounded like, "We might expand the war aims, so you're not going to stay in power after this war—one way or another." But I don't want to read into that letter something that wasn't meant, although it's possible Saddam read that into the letter. I'm interested if you thought that possibly expanding the war aims was another way to communicate a deterrent—in addition to changing the target.

**Scowcroft:** Well, it was. You know, I can't say if, in fact, he had used some weapons of mass destruction, we might not have changed our minds and used nuclear weapons. I can't say that.

That was not how we decided we would react. One of the principal considerations was the political consideration and the impact it would have on our Arab allies.

**Zelikow:** In retrospect, it is hard to see. I take the point on nuclear weapons, but if he had used chemical weapons against American forces, on any scale, it's very hard to imagine how the American people would have tolerated an ending to the war that did not remove him from power if he had used poison gas against the American troops. Now, that may be just my emotional sense, and it's a hypothetical—

**Scowcroft:** You might well be right. In the event, we didn't test it. I thought it was more likely—if he used chemicals—that he would use them in a nonmilitary, or semimilitary, way. First of all, biological weapons are not a good military weapon. They're a good terror weapon, not a good military weapon. The results are unpredictable, they're delayed, they're just not useful. With chemicals, we were pretty well prepared to fight in a chemical environment. So he could have used them as a onetime surprise, and catch people in the open and unprepared. After that, it just made our fighting more cumbersome, buttoned up for a chemical environment. I think that's probably why he didn't do it. Now, why he didn't lob a couple chemical Scuds [tactical ballistic missiles] on Israel, I don't know. To me, that's more the way he would have done it—to use something against noncombatants.

**McCall:** Actually, Israel's a good segue. I want to ask a couple questions to move us down that way. One is about the Soviet Union during the Gulf War. In September, when the President goes to Helsinki, his conversation with Gorbachev—and Gorbachev says something interesting, which is basically, "In Eastern Europe, it was our headache; the Gulf is going to be your headache." We spoke earlier about the complications of keeping the Soviets on board. And the ambition also—this is supposed to be the model of cooperation in a post–Cold War environment. Did you have a feeling from Gorbachev that he saw this the same way? That this was an opportunity for cooperation—that he wanted to exploit it?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I do. I definitely think so. Now, he also—either he, or under the influence of [Yevgeny] Primakov—was hoping to preserve the Soviet position in Iraq. At Helsinki, it was really Shevardnadze who steered him away from an attempt to defuse the crisis by concessions to Saddam. But in the end, he signed on to our approach—and continued with his condemnation of Iraq—notwithstanding the big stake that the Soviet Union had in Iraq. I think that was clearly that if he had to choose here, he would stay with us. That a good relationship with the United States was more important to him than Iraq as a client state.

**McCall:** So he never quite crosses the line.

**Scowcroft:** He never did. But he tried hard. And he tried a lot harder after Shevardnadze left the government. Then he had no protection on that side—no one whispering in his ear, "Don't do that, don't do that." He became much harder to manage—because the only one whispering in his ear then was Primakov—who, of course, was heavily involved in Middle East affairs.

**McCall:** A friend of Saddam, self-proclaimed. I know, Phillip, that you want to move on to Middle Eastern questions, and Israel, et cetera. Maybe one way to do that is to talk a little bit

about the relationship, during the Gulf War, with Israel—especially at the time of the Scuds as we spoke about them. Then maybe move into the broader—

**Zelikow:** Well, the book does cover that, and covers the painful meetings with [Moshe] Arens, and some of that. Is there anything you want to add to that?

**Scowcroft:** One thing to add that the book doesn't deal with very much. That is Saddam's attempt to link the peace process—the Palestinians—into his own crusade. In fact, he tried to convert what he had done into leverage on the peace process—calling, for example, more times than one—for a comprehensive conference on the Middle East, which would include Palestine. We strenuously resisted that, and successfully so. But what we did make clear—even to the Russians—was that we refused to countenance any linkage. But after we had dealt with Saddam, we were perfectly prepared to turn to the peace process. And we did, in fact, and the result was the Madrid Conference, which the Soviets cochaired.

**Zelikow:** Well, one of the puzzling things about the Middle East peace process initiative, after the war—one thing that does not puzzle me and one thing that does. It did not puzzle me that the peace process had not been a huge priority before the war, because my sense was that the administration wanted to nurture it, and help it—but did not think that the conditions were right for a major initiative. Clearly, folks thought the condition was ripe to move on this in '91—but I was surprised that the administration—and Baker in particular—were willing to spend so much political capital on this when they did in '91. There were so many other things going on. There was not a major public outcry that you've got to do this. I wonder if you'd comment about this strategy.

**Scowcroft:** Well, we did have—we had implicitly given assurances that we would turn our attention to it. Secondly, I think we felt that we had created the conditions that might be conducive to progress. In this sense—that the Arabs now had a great deal more confidence in us than they had had before the Gulf War. They had a crisis in the Arab world—we had come to them, we had helped them, we had dealt with the crisis. And then, after it was over, we went home. I think it gave them a lot more trust—in us, in our motives and the fact that we would play fair, which they had always doubted, especially in relation to the peace process.

Strangely enough, it gave Israel the same sense. That, in fact, they no longer had to worry. Were we, in case Israel got in trouble, were we prepared to send force out there and use force? The answer was yes, that we take care of our friends. So I think it gave a new sense on the part of both parties—oh, and the third one was that [Yasser] Arafat was thoroughly discredited, because he backed the wrong side. It looked like a propitious moment to get things started. I think that was the principal motivation.

**Zelikow:** You mentioned that the Israelis could see the Americans' willingness to commit—are you speaking not just of the commitment to defend Kuwait and the Arabian Peninsula—but also of the American willingness during the war to actually send—for the very first time—combat troops, combat units to Israel itself—joined, actually, by Dutch combat units too?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, in fact, Israel ordinarily was allergic to having U.S. combat troops. They didn't want them. The reason those troops went there—and the Dutch troops—was that the Israelis had

no more forces trained to operate the Patriot batteries, so we had to do it. But I meant it in a more general sense—that Israel, in extremis, counted on U.S. coming to its aid—in case they were close to being overwhelmed by the Arabs. Before the Gulf War, they really—regardless of our assurances, I don't think they really knew for sure whether we would do it. I think the fact that we, in fact, did it gave them a lot more confidence that yes, we would back up our pledge, and we wouldn't turn cold if the circumstances ever developed.

**McCall:** I want to ask a question about a slightly different aspect of this. We talked about, just mentioned, the Patriot batteries and things like that. Was there a feeling, or evidence, that the Israelis were somewhat taking advantage of the crisis—exploiting the crisis to squeeze additional aid? Raising the rhetoric to squeeze additional aid out of the United States?

**Scowcroft:** Some. Some. The biggest place where Israel was apparent was a huge aid package we proposed for Saudi Arabia, in the early stages of the crisis.

**Zelikow:** Aid or sales?

**Scowcroft:** Whatever. Probably sales—in the unique way that we sell things to Israel.

**Zelikow:** No, I mean to the Saudis.

**Scowcroft:** Oh, to the Saudis. It was probably sales, but there was a whole backlog of stuff and we wanted to use this as an opportunity to get all this out. We ran into a lot of problems with the Congress. I think it was probably stimulated, in part, by the Israelis. Yes, they made a number of requests, which I recall they honored, but it was not excessive.

**McCall:** What about in terms of—later on, when things are coming down to the wire, and the debate's going on about how to keep the Israelis on board should Saddam do something. Was there any sense of linkage at that point?

**Scowcroft:** You mean, provide them?

**McCall:** Provide them additional batteries, help, or whatnot.

**Scowcroft:** No. We desperately did not want them to enter the war—but our argument was, fundamentally, "You can't do anything we're not doing now. You can't help. We know your policy is to retaliate every time you're hit, but we're doing everything you can." In fact, what we did—we diverted a disproportionate number of strikes, in the air war, to Israeli-indicated targets.

**McCall:** OK, in addition to the Scud hunting that—

**Scowcroft:** Yes, well, a lot of these were hunting Scuds. We had teams out there on the ground hunting Scuds—singularly unsuccessfully.

**McCall:** One of the things that's mentioned, but not played up in the book, is the conversation the President has, I guess with [Yitzhak] Shamir, about a possible Israeli retaliation on the Scud launch sites. Up to that point, it had always been, "We'll take it, we'll take it, we'll take it." But

the President somehow blurts out, "Maybe you can reply in kind on those sites." Is there anything you want to add to this comment?

**Scowcroft:** Some—Cheney especially—thought that the Israelis would retaliate, that there was just no question—we could not keep them from retaliating, so we might as well let them do it. That discussion took place in front of the President. One of the really complicating aspects of an Israeli retaliation is that to retaliate, they had to cross Jordan and/or Saudi Arabia. That was a real red line. So what the President was saying, on the assumption you've got to retaliate, "Use your Jericho missiles, don't use aircraft." That was probably a mistake. They did roll the Jerichos out at least once, as if they were going to retaliate. After the war started, I'm not sure that Israeli participation would have broken the coalition. I'm not sure. It probably would not at that point—but we couldn't afford to take a chance.

**McCall:** Did that set of incidents change the willingness of the United States to share information real time with satellite imagery that the Israelis were demanding—?

**Scowcroft:** Oh, you bet. And we resisted. We resisted the kind of information that would have allowed them to independently target. But our ace in the hole was that we refused to, in military terms, to de-conflict—so that the Israelis could fly their planes with impunity in an area where they were otherwise likely to get shot down by us. And we would not do that job for them.

**Zelikow:** Was there actually a request made—a specific request made?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. And they made a specific request for overflight—that they wanted to overfly Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

**Zelikow:** Step back and reflect on the Bush/Shamir relationship, which certainly by '91/'92, after the war, is troubled, to say the least. Was this just a problem of policy differences—or was there also a personal ingredient here, too?

**Scowcroft:** Well, you know, Shamir's not a warm, friendly type. He had a way about him that added to that. He and the President had had a meeting just before the crisis started, and it really had turned out to be—not quite acrimonious, but a cold and unsatisfactory meeting. So there wasn't much love there, but I'll say one thing, that Shamir showed, I think, real courage in accepting our argument about the dangers of Israel retaliating. The easy thing for him to do would have been to retaliate. The hardest thing was not to retaliate—but to his great credit, he did hold his fire.

**Zelikow:** Could you help understand why there was such an acute confrontation between Israel and the United States over the issue of loan guarantees that might be used for settlements in the occupied territories? The Israeli government felt—and made it clear to you that they felt—that you were interfering in their election. That you were effectively weighing in on the side of the opposition candidate, which was Yitzhak Rabin.

**Scowcroft:** We had a policy toward the settlements. The policy—well, the way we described settlements varied from time to time. Either that they were illegal, in terms of UN resolutions, or that they were an obstacle to peace. What the Israelis wanted us to do was to provide loan guarantees for construction of those settlements, which we thought were, at least, an obstacle to

peace. And the President said no. It caused an enormous furor. The Congress, basically, wanted to do it. The Jewish community turned strongly against him in the United States. They still raise that question about the Bush administration—it was unbelievably emotional.

Did it help in the elections? Did it help Rabin? It may have. It may have, because it exposed the true feelings of the United States and what our interests were—and what our interests were not—in a way that the United States usually does not do with respect to Israel. I suspect that might have helped Rabin. Did we interfere in the elections? Not in any sense—that was not a motive. The motive was certainly not to be a party to something we thought would make an ultimate resolution of Palestine harder. It may, or may not, have affected the election. Were we happy that Rabin won? Yes, I should say.

**Zelikow:** When people come upon the documents from this period, will they find that the American government did care how these elections turned out?

**Scowcroft:** Probably, at least in some of the informal memos. Yes, we found Shamir fundamentally uncooperative on this issue. Probably, at that time, the Likud was dedicated to a larger Israel. It was not until Rabin came in that the notion of separating the West Bank and Palestine—and the Palestinian state from Israel—was even able to be talked about inside Israel.

**Zelikow:** Why was the President willing to pay this price? You describe this as a very emotional issue—tremendous furor. Why was the President willing, and why were you willing, to shoulder this burden? I mean, there were ways this issue could be papered over—if you want to paper it over. The loan guarantees can be described as applying to a variety of things—not just settlements in the West Bank—even though you'll know that that's, in effect, what they're doing.

**Scowcroft:** We really wanted to stop the settlements in the West Bank, because we thought they would become—as indeed, they are turning out to be now—a real source of difficulty in solving the Middle East Arab/Israeli problem. We wanted to solve that problem. I don't think we had any real sense that we could—but we certainly didn't want to do anything that would make it harder. That was one of the U.S.'s big issues—perennially—dealing with the Arab/Israeli dispute. If it could be solved, many of the tensions in our relations with the Arab world would disappear. And they were a valuable friend. So it was just straight on the merits of the issue. We thought it was a bad idea—we didn't want them to expand their settlements—and we certainly didn't want to aid and abet it.

**Zelikow:** Let me move off that subject, then. What I'd like to do now is return to personnel and management issues for a moment—because the administration—the NSC—has a bit of reorganization going on in 1991. There's some personnel turnover in some key jobs. Also, the point at which you're looking around at what kind of people you want to have. Let me start with the replacement of Bob Gates. You had mentioned he was your first pick, as soon as you knew you were in, so this was important. Let me first ask you, when you picked Gates as a deputy—what qualities were you looking for in a person? Contrast that with the qualities you were looking for in his successor.

**Scowcroft:** In Gates, I was looking for someone who understood how the interagency process worked, who had a broad enough background to grapple with the wide variety of substantive issues, and was not parochial, and who would be a good team player. In fact, I had brought Gates into the Ford administration. He had had a fine career in CIA. I had always liked him, but I was reassured by the fact that, at his young age, Reagan, in fact, had nominated him to be DCI. He turned out to be superb. So when he became DCI—frankly, what I was looking for was some way to replicate him.

**Zelikow:** Why'd you let him go?

**Scowcroft:** Because it was a great opportunity for him. I didn't want to let him go. Had I not, it would have been much—I would have let him go in any case. But Jon Howe, who I actually knew better than I knew Bob Gates when I asked him to come on board, had just retired from the Navy. He had been in the NSC, as a junior naval officer in the Nixon administration—had done an outstanding job for Kissinger—knew the business, and had also been head of policy planning at State for a while. I thought that was an acceptable substantive. They turned out to be very different kinds of people. That's how it happened.

**Zelikow:** At that point, after the war is over, you brought him in—did you have a sense that you needed to change the way you managed the NSC? Now you've had a couple years of experience—very stressful crises—I'd like to get a sense of your midcourse reflections.

**Scowcroft:** The one thing—as I say, Bob was terrific—the one thing that I did think we needed to do differently is that Bob glued himself to my side. So when I went to the meeting, he went to the meeting. When I did this, he went with me—with the result that, frequently, there was nobody home when things needed to be done. It turned out to be very frustrating for a number of the people we dealt with in other agencies. I talked to him about it several times, but he just—it was just a thing for him. So that was the main thing I wanted to change. I did change it with Jon Howe and Jon Howe did not have that feeling. But, Jon turned out to be not nearly as skillful in the interagency process as Gates was. He was OK, but strangely for a four-star admiral, he wasn't nearly as decisive and driving toward a solution—rather than a debating society.

**Zelikow:** You also had some turnover in the senior directors. There was at least one, whom you replaced very early on, on the economic side. Then there was Blackwill to [David] Gompert, [Arnold] Kanter to [Michael] Gordon, Condi Rice to Nick Burns. With the exception of Gompert, the impression is that the original people are leaving and they're basically being succeeded by deputies, who tend to be more career people. Seems like the staff has more detailees as the administration wears on.

**Scowcroft:** I don't know. I suspect that's not true. Gompert replaced Blackwill. Gompert was less of a detailee, technically. They were both about the same. Gompert had a lot of government experience. For Condi Rice—ah, I can't think of his name—

**Zelikow:** Nick Burns?

**Scowcroft:** No, Nick was a number two. Ed Hewett, an academic, had never been in government. In the economic section—yes, it's true. We talked about that yesterday. There, I elevated the number two man, and eventually, the number three man.

**Zelikow:** You don't have to review all the individuals. Is there a management pattern here?

**Scowcroft:** No, there is no management pattern. I continued to seek the people—not the pattern of seconding or outside hires. I continued to look for the best people I could find.

**Zelikow:** Do you think there's anything to the criticism—and it's not really a criticism, but the description that sometimes has been voiced—that the NSC seemed to be running out of some steam after the war? Maybe, especially in '92, that people were just getting tired. That some of the momentum was diminishing. It's hard to put your finger on it.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, that's a possibility. I told people when they first came in that I expected that many of them would not feel like they could last more than two years—because I expected them to work very hard. There was a significant turnover, as you pointed out, after two years. It's hard to say whether it was momentum running out or whether it was a pretty considerable change in world circumstances in a number of areas, like Europe and the Soviet Union, that didn't call for so much innovation. It's also an older administration having gone through reviewing and establishing policies. I don't know if it's true or not, but it could be. It could be.

**Zelikow:** How about you personally? You've now been working at a pretty terrific pace for years. As you get into the last year, year and a half, of the administration, did you personally feel like you were getting pretty near the end of your rope? I mean you're telling these young people, "I'm going to burn you out in two years." You're working this as hard as they are, and you can spot them a decade or two—or three in some cases.

**Scowcroft:** No, I didn't feel burned out. I did not feel that I would stay for—if the President were elected, I had no sense that I would be able to stay four more years. I thought maybe two, at the outside.

**Zelikow:** Let's turn to the Balkans. This is a problem that comes up in '91. The Gulf War is winding down. There is the National Intelligence Estimate at the end of 1990 that predicts the breakup of Yugoslavia, which the bureaucracies mostly pooh-poohed as a little too alarmist. And things begin to unravel. There have been books that have chronicled that story. The main point that usually quickly surfaces in all these accounts—the main points—there are two that always come out, besides whatever comments people have about Baker's diplomacy, which are both positive and negative. But two things stand out. One—Scowcroft and Eagleburger have direct prior experience with Yugoslavia. Therefore, there's a little extra knowledge that's being brought to the table for those two individuals.

And two—that there is a pretty deliberate decision that's made—certainly by the time of the Croatian War, which most people have forgotten now but was a huge affair in itself, which has broken out in'91—that the United States is not going to be the prime player in trying to sort this out. That, based on an assessment of vital interests, and other things that America was dealing with at that point—at this point, I want to stop my recitation and let you start. Because this is not really a subject that is taken up in the memoir.

**Scowcroft:** No, it was not. The Yugoslav crisis was a very difficult one for the administration. As you point out, Larry and I had both served in Yugoslavia and knew a fair amount about it. At the other extreme, Baker and the President did not understand Yugoslavia—and the complexities

as it was falling apart, and who was doing what to whom and why—and what's the history behind why they're doing these things—made them throw their hands up in despair. As things turned violent—first of all, could we have done anything different before the violence started in Yugoslavia? There was a chance that if we and the Europeans had sat down together and agreed upon terms to the Yugoslavs, which would have gone something like this: "We don't think you should break up the state of Yugoslavia. It makes no sense in the modern world. But if you insist on doing so, here are the ground rules." It might have been possible to have it happen peacefully. I don't know that.

Once the fighting started, I don't think it was, and I think Germany played a critical role there, in their early recognition of Croatia. Because what that did, in a very technical sense—Marshal] Tito had given a lot of the borderlands between Croatia and Serbia—called the Krajina, historic borderlands—given them to Croatia. They had a lot of Serbs in them—and the Serbs all of a sudden found all these Serbians outside of the protection of Serbia—in the state, Croatia—which had been so terrible to Serbs in World War II.

So the hostilities start and there was a big fight within the EU. Germany was way out in front, because of their strong Croatian minority in Germany. They said they were going to go this route, whether the EU approves it or not. So they literally dragged the EU down this route to recognize Croatia. That started the conflict. We could never figure out a rationale for intervention along the lines of the criteria that we had developed in the Gulf War. You know, what are the ways that military force can be useful? There were humanitarian horrors starting right away—that was one thing. But it was difficult to identify American national interests—as opposed to humanitarian interests—unless it spread to Kosovo, or unless it spread outside Yugoslavia. There were no real indications that it would do so.

What would force be used to accomplish? Would it deal with the conflict? We couldn't identify how we would use force that would help resolve that conflict—although it might help some—it might help the refugees. So then we actually asked NATO what they thought a force that could keep supply lines open from the Adriatic ports to the refugee centers, what kind of force would it take? The NATO estimate was in the neighborhood of 300,000. We just couldn't identify—

**Zelikow:** Seems awfully high.

**Scowcroft:** Probably was. It was probably high but you see, the roads have to go through Bosnia. There is no more classic guerrilla territory. The roads hug the sides of hills, above valleys—a stick of dynamite takes out a road, traps a convoy. Then they're pinned down and it takes a helicopter force to come—it's a very complicated turf. Anyway, we were never able to come to grips with what it would take. In the meantime, the Europeans—the British and the French, especially—put Armed Forces in, with a humanitarian mission. And there we started to come apart with the Europeans, because we were prepared to enforce no-fly zones. The Serbs had some aircraft—the Croatians had a couple—and the Serbs were using their aircraft. We did get NATO to declare a no-fly zone—no-fly over the combat territory. Then we wanted to enforce it. This was '92, now. They wouldn't allow it to be enforced—and that became the pattern.

Because what they were fearful of—they had forces in there, but the forces were not able to defend themselves against an attack. In effect, they were hostage forces. So the Europeans were

frightened that something would be done which would result in those forces either being attacked or held hostage. That became the pattern in Yugoslavia until ’95. Increasingly, we’re getting outside the Bush administration, but as the United States got more and more muscular in its rhetoric, the situation got worse and worse. Until it was brought together, really, by the Europeans saying, “OK, we’re going to evacuate our forces. Now, will you help us evacuate the forces?” It was at that time that we started to use air power. That, along with the Croatian Army, which had been revived, brought about the cease-fire. We simply were afraid of being drawn into an endless war. But we could not figure out how to A) solve with the use of force, or B) extricate our forces once we got them in there.

Larry and I leaned farther forward than anyone else. Baker went over there and gave a speech—tested the water, made a speech about not breaking up—and back home got accused of being against self-determination. So there was no stomach for it. We did lend our support at the end of the administration to the Vance-Owen plan—which would not have worked, but it was better than what we ended up with. And we did threaten [Slobodan] Milošević about Kosovo—which we saw as involving U.S. national interests, because of the danger that an explosion in Kosovo could bring in the Greeks, the Turks, maybe the Bulgarians, and create a NATO crisis.

**Zelikow:** Was there anyone in the administration at the senior levels who thought the Croatian, or the Bosnian War—correction: first the Croatian, then the Bosnian War—implicated the vital interests of the United States to the point where we should be willing to commit military power to ensure a cease-fire or a satisfactory resolution of the war?

**Scowcroft:** If there were, they did not surface. The Pentagon was very strongly against it—against intervention. Powell especially, I think.

**Zelikow:** Were you and Larry in favor of some intervention? Or were you just in favor of more active diplomacy? How would you describe the spectrum of viewpoints?

**Scowcroft:** Some intervention. I would have been prepared to intervene with some air power, even though I don’t think it would have been very effective. I worried about the image of us standing by while these horrors were going on in what, theoretically, was the middle of Europe. It was a pretty narrow spectrum. We would not have done much. Again, because we couldn’t figure out how to solve the problem. Or that the infusion of American forces would have stopped the hostilities—because 1991, ’92 was not 1995. So we were willing to try to do something. The other extreme would probably be the Pentagon, which was actively opposing it because they saw troops being introduced into a morass—and somewhere the President was basically uncomprehending of the complications of the conflict and our ability to do something with it. And Baker said publicly at one point, “We don’t have a dog in this fight.”

At the beginning, there was an additional factor. That is, the Europeans said, “You all took the lead in the Gulf War, and that was fine. Now the EU are getting together, and so on. This is taking place right in Europe. Let us take the lead and you take a back seat.” We were only too happy to say, “Yes, we’ll be happy to do that.”

**Zelikow:** The European “take the lead” turned out to mean an aggressive and largely futile diplomatic strategy—series of strategies—combined with some humanitarian relief. If the

Europeans—and I'm thinking now of the Croatian War, even before the Bosnian War breaks out, which I think is in early '92. But in the Croatian War, if the Europeans had said, "We're prepared to do something about this militarily—we wish to intervene. We can't intervene without your help. We want you to play a supporting role. But we're prepared to put our ground troops, and what assets we have, up in front." Would you have been prepared to accept that notion—of an Atlantic approach to this crisis?

**Scowcroft:** Probably. Probably, because this was also the time when NATO was coming under some strains of a very different type, we talked about that yesterday. So yes, I would have done it. If for no other reason than NATO solidarity—yes.

**Zelikow:** So you were prepared to reciprocate. In the Gulf, you took the lead and asked them to follow with their forces. You were prepared to play the other side of that story in the Balkans.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, in a basically logistical way, maybe with air power and so on—but they would do the ground part. I think we probably would have supported that.

**Zelikow:** Do you remember having any conversations with European counterparts in which that kind of thinking was discussed—whether they were considering a more muscular approach?

**Scowcroft:** It didn't happen in such a coordinated way because the Europeans—each one was grandstanding. Germans for their own Croatian constituency. France—Mitterrand went over there and visited, and unilaterally announced that he was going to send French troops. Then the British joined him. It wasn't really a NATO operation. It didn't develop in a coherent way. It didn't develop by all of us sitting down and saying, "Look, we've got a problem on our hands. Now, what can we do and how can we do it together?" Never did.

**Zelikow:** Is this a failure of—well, maybe it's not a failure of NATO deliberation. It implies that, in some way, that key allies are not having the kind of discussion that they need to have—that we did, in effect, have on some key issues earlier in the administration. Is that because the United States was not playing the role of leader/hub?

**Scowcroft:** I hate to say that, but it's probably true—especially in the light of subsequent European action and their inability to really coalesce and take the lead on any serious project. That's probably true and we're probably at fault for not having played a stronger role.

**Zelikow:** You had direct lines to some of your counterparts in West European capitals—London, Paris, also Bonn?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. Good ones with [Horst] Teltschik, not so good after Teltschik left—because, after Teltschik left, the guy they had there never had the access to Kohl that Teltschik did.

**Zelikow:** That was Peter Hartmann.

**Scowcroft:** Peter Hartmann, yes. Good guy, but he was Foreign Service and he didn't know what Kohl was thinking or doing.

**Zelikow:** So your London counterpart would have been Charles Powell until—now, after [John] Major replaces Mrs. Thatcher in 1990, it was Pauline Neville-Jones?

**Scowcroft:** No. It was a man.

**Zelikow:** Len Appleyard?

**Scowcroft:** No. He went on to be Ambassador to Portugal. I can't think of this name right now.

**Zelikow:** Then, in Paris, that ordinarily was Lanxade?

**Scowcroft:** Lanxade, yes.

**Zelikow:** Tell me a little about those interactions—how you thought they worked. This is a pretty murky area of great power diplomacy, but an important one.

**Scowcroft:** They worked a little differently in each country. The closest, and most active, was with the British. Charles Powell and I talked—not daily, but very frequently. He had unusual access to, and influence over, Mrs. Thatcher. We were able to do a lot of very useful work in figuring out the parameters of what we could do and what we could not do—based on the predilections of our two principals. It was extraordinarily frank and useful.

With Lanxade, not so much. He was not a senior with direct access to Mitterrand. His office was across the street, whereas the direct telephone was right outside Mitterrand's door. So it was more cumbersome to call him. I had to call him and tell him I was calling him—so he would go across the street to get the phone. He didn't have the relationship with Mitterrand that Powell had with Thatcher. It worked very well on NATO and European internal issues. It didn't work so well on a broader scale.

With Teltschik, it worked extremely well—especially during the unification. Especially since Kohl and [Hans-Dietrich] Genscher—different political parties, the Chancellor and his Foreign Minister—did not see eye to eye on how unification ought to happen and so on. So we would be getting one input from Baker, who was very close to Genscher, and I could get the other through Teltschik—and find out what Kohl in fact was thinking. So these relationships were more to cut through ambiguities—to find out what these people thought the limits of their principals were in doing this or that or the other. How far could one go? What were the outlines of what we could agree upon? What couldn't we agree upon and so forth? The channels were facilitation, more than anything else. They helped the process so that when the principals did in fact engage, it was usually on ground that had been prepared enough that it was inside the limits of what they were prepared to do.

**Zelikow:** Is there anything else you'd like to say about the Balkans?

**Scowcroft:** Well, I could go on and on about the Balkans. I think the United States made a serious mistake. It wasn't so much of—it really started in the Bush administration—and that is, we mistook the nature of the conflict. It soon became transformed, for the United States, into a war of aggression by Slobodan Milošević, and in fact it was a failure of a state. It was a collapse of a state that maybe never should have been set up. That was the nature of the conflict. I think

by turning it into a war of aggression, we made ourselves less useful than otherwise we might have been. I think we still have that attitude. It is more that now than it was in the beginning.

**Zelikow:** In other words, you're critical of the fact that by late into '91 and into '92 we had cast the Serbians as the villains of the piece, rather than viewing all the combatant parties as equally, or comparably, villains.

**Scowcroft:** Yes. Operationally, did that make a big difference? I don't know, but it gave us a cast of mind that was different from the Europeans, and it wasn't helpful in seeking a way through this thing.

**Zelikow:** Was the Balkans a source of tension, or damage to alliance relations while you were in office?

**Scowcroft:** Oh, yes. I think it came close to destroying NATO.

**Zelikow:** During the Bush administration?

**Scowcroft:** Well, no—not during the Bush administration, but it was going in the wrong direction, even then.

**Zelikow:** I know how intense this became by '94, '95.

**Scowcroft:** It gradually got worse. But the original problem started with the fact that they had troops in there essentially who were hostages to the combatants. We were paying less attention to that than the Europeans felt we should. And that got worse and worse.

**Zelikow:** Was there any point at which you realized that our policy here was kind of going south—even given the limited stakes we wanted to attach? That we needed to have better coordination of a more purposeful policy here with the Europeans?

**Scowcroft:** Yes.

**Zelikow:** Did you ever try to initiate a policy review to get this back on track?

**Scowcroft:** No, we didn't. But what we did do—after standing aside and refusing to get involved—we did support the Vance-Owen plan, and told the Europeans we would. While [Cyrus] Vance was not an official emissary of the United States, we would lend our support to the Vance-Owen plan. That was our step to get back on board. Of course, that was denounced immediately when the Clinton administration came in.

**Zelikow:** No, they pretty much took down the Vance-Owen plan. That then created some pretty serious problems with the alliance.

**Scowcroft:** I had no sense that the Vance-Owen plan would have worked. But it was symbolic that we were back with the Europeans in working at a solution to the problem.

**Zelikow:** So the way that you were identifying the problem is—the Balkans problem is important on the merits—but for you, the more important piece of the problem was to keep this from damaging the alliance.

**Scowcroft:** Yes.

**Zelikow:** So the Bush administration had made a move to ameliorate that breach, whatever the merits of the agenda that the Europeans were pursuing.

**Scowcroft:** Right.

**Zelikow:** I suppose you weren't in office long enough to assess whether or not that approach would have at least healed the wounds, or patched them up for a while.

**Scowcroft:** I don't know. We're talking about, probably, November of '92 by the time this Vance-Owen plan was really formulated. Our news—that we would support it—was welcomed by the Europeans, but there was not much impact in terms of being able to judge if it would have helped.

**Zelikow:** Were there any other major problems? There are always problems, but were there any other major problems that you had with the Europeans in the second half of the administration?

**Scowcroft:** Well, we had a continual problem over NATO, and the nature of NATO. But it was getting better. The real crisis in NATO, when the French made a serious run at NATO, was probably '90,'91. By '92, I think that tide was receding and things were getting better.

**Zelikow:** In that case, let me move you back to the Third World, or the less developed world. Let's talk about two crises that broke late in the administration—one in Haiti and one in Somalia. Since Haiti's closer to the United States, let's take that first. Why did the United States decide not to intervene more actively, in the case of Haiti, after the assault on [Jean-Bertrand] Aristide?

**Scowcroft:** We joined an embargo sanctions for a time—that the OAS [Organization of American States] put on. Baker proposed—maybe informally, I'm not sure—an OAS intervention. I was not in favor of it. Neither was the OAS—on the traditional Latin American grounds that armed intervention is an absolute no-no. I think that our approach to Haiti is that Aristide, whatever his merits or demerits, was the first popularly elected President of Haiti. That this was one more turn of a very tortured wheel of Haiti politics. That they had a long way to go to sort out their political problems. That we didn't know how to do nation building in Haiti and that we didn't want to try. Instead, we tried to—well, we made some efforts to try to help the political evolution—and also to punish, especially when there was a military coup. About six months after Aristide was booted out there was a military coup—and we did join with OAS there. But we focused on dealing with the consequences—the flow of refugees.

**Zelikow:** How would you characterize your approach to the refugees?

**Scowcroft:** Well, U.S. policy—How we actually handled the refugees was very complicated because there were a number of court cases—and the issue of repatriation and refugee status. There was an environment of persecution and so on and so forth that made Haiti much more

complicated than Cuba, for example. We were being flooded. Our refugee camps were full of Haitians. So we stopped allowing Haitians in as refugees. But we couldn't repatriate them back to Haiti—in the state Haiti was in. We asked around the Caribbean for someone to be willing to take them—set up a camp, do something for them. Nobody was willing to—so we housed them at Guantanamo. That became a nightmare.

The problem is, if you intercept people at sea, they don't have the right of refugee status. Once they touch the United States, though, they come under a different set of laws. Even though you can send them back, it takes sometimes years of court cases before you can do it. So that's why we tried the Guantanamo thing. We didn't come close to a solution in Haiti. Haiti was treated very differently by the United States than was Cuba. Laws going way back. A Cuban, at that time, was automatically considered a political refugee and granted asylum. That was not the case with Haiti.

**Zelikow:** Well, with any other country. Cuba is unique.

**Scowcroft:** Cuba is unique. I guess what I'm saying is, we tried to do damage limitation with respect to Haiti—not solutions of the problem. Aristide was up here, lobbying strongly. There were strong forces, both for him and against him, here in the United States. We spent a lot of time on it, but it was all seeking a way to patch back together a political structure that was minimally acceptable to the parties in Haiti. We had not succeeded.

**Zelikow:** Why intervene in Somalia, but not in Haiti?

**Scowcroft:** Interesting question. Somalia was a different kind of case. First of all, to be honest, we were smarting from the criticism of not having intervened in Yugoslavia. That opened the door to some sympathy about Somalia. Secondly, we had been involved.

**Zelikow:** You do appreciate the irony.

**Scowcroft:** Yes.

**Zelikow:** That in the Clinton administration—you went into Africa because you weren't helping in Europe—and they turned it just the opposite way. Go ahead, I'm sorry—I couldn't resist.

**Scowcroft:** In Somalia, the organized government was overthrown in '91. After that, Somalia had no central government. There was a problem of tribal warfare—but primarily there was a problem of serious, serious drought. There were accounts on the news, night after night—pictures of starving women and children, so we were the principal source of aid—economic aid, food aid—to Somalia. In late summer of '92, the war became violent enough that the supply routes—the truck routes—were closed down. It was no longer safe to use them, so we mounted an airlift. By September/October, we could no longer fly the airlift—it was getting too dangerous. The airfields themselves were coming under fire.

So we had to quit our humanitarian aid—or do something else. We debated about what to do. Also, in the end of September, there had been a force of Pakistanis—500 Pakistanis sent in to help distribute supplies in Mogadishu. They were immediately besieged and had to hole up in Mogadishu—and couldn't do a thing. So Somalia was a crisis in the sense that nothing was

happening and there was going to be really large-scale starvation. So we started talking about what we could do.

**Zelikow:** Was pressure from the UN Secretary General important in getting this on the President's agenda—or was it going to be there anyway?

**Scowcroft:** Well, let me tell you where that came in. [Boutros] Boutros-Ghali came by in May and met with the President. One of the stories he had—he was talking about the state of the UN—how it was viewed and so on and so forth. He said he was getting increasing complaints from developing, Third World countries that the UN—especially the Security Council—was turning into an instrument of the Europeans and Americans. That when we had a problem, the UN acted. When we didn't have a problem, nothing was done. Therefore, Third World countries, black countries, southern hemisphere countries, were just not on the agenda. Here was a fascinating case where you could deal with all them. Here was a Third World country, a non-Christian country, a black country, a southern hemisphere country—it fit all the criteria.

**Zelikow:** For neglect.

**Scowcroft:** For neglect.

**Zelikow:** And, by golly, George Bush is not going to be typecast this way.

**Scowcroft:** Well, I made an argument—I don't know if anybody else took that seriously—because this was 90, 95 percent humanitarian. But to me, that was a significant element. So we said, "OK, we've done this. Each route we have is closed down. The UN can't do it by itself. Suppose we mount an operation to clean these people out of the supply lines, reopen the supply lines, and get things flowing again. Then maybe a smaller UN force can keep the aid flowing." We asked Colin to come over and tell us what he thought of that. So Colin came over with all of his briefing charts, and a whole list of reasons why this was not a good idea. But then he said—after he finished his charts, "But if you want to do it…." Then he put up the charts showing exactly how it would be done.

**Zelikow:** Well, where was he on this? What did he think of the Boutros-Ghali argument? That cut no ice with him?

**Scowcroft:** Well, I don't know. I don't know that that cut ice with me, but I don't know if we ever had a general discussion that that was an important factor. There was another issue that helped a lot, too. an ambassador in Kenya—he's a former journalist—

**Zelikow:** Smith Hempstone?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. He wrote the most wrenching cable about the situation in Somalia that I have ever read. Subsequently, he denounced us for going in, but—[laughter] Anyway, Colin did not object to this, clearly. I mean, just the way he went about it, he was ready to—well, it was a fairly neat military operation. Again, you could calculate what you needed to do, how you did it. It didn't look particularly risky. We were not going to go after the various tribal groups, just clear them out. If they got in the way, they were in trouble. If they didn't get in the way, fine. To

open up the supply lines, provide some security around the airfields, get supplies moving again, and then hand off to a UN force—less heavily armed force—that hopefully could keep it open.

Could they keep it open? We didn't really know. But it was a pretty small, contained operation of limited duration, couple of months, we thought. Then we would lift some Marines offshore for another month as a contingency force—just to help in case people got in trouble. It was that kind of an operation. It was very short-term, very limited objective. We didn't know if it would work over the long term or not. But the alternative, in this case, was the world standing by in a really mass situation of starvation, because we simply couldn't get food in.

**Zelikow:** What was the spectrum of opinion about this idea—among the leadership—the President, the chief advisors? You're describing yourself in a way that implies that you were for it. Maybe not heatedly for it, but for it.

**Scowcroft:** I was for it. One of the things I was worried about—we were, at this point, a lame duck. I worried about launching an operation that we couldn't complete. Indeed, I tried the best I could to get Defense to move rapidly so that by the 20th of January, we could have it nearly wrapped up. It turned out to take much longer—to plan and ship the forces and so on and so forth. I don't remember anybody arguing against it.

**Zelikow:** Would you consider yourself the lead advocate for teeing the idea up, getting it on the agenda?

**Scowcroft:** No, I wouldn't want to claim that. I may have talked about it to the President and said, "Why don't we ask Defense to say how they'd do it? What kind of a problem it'd be?" To see, at least, a halfway decent idea. Then, when Colin came in with some enthusiasm and told us how we'd do it—that's fuzzy in my mind. I'm not sure.

**Zelikow:** Let me get you to focus on the transition period. You described—this is an operation launched while you were a lame duck. This operation goes sour after you leave. We can talk about why that happened. But one of the problems in the handoff to the Clinton administration is—it's not clear that the Clinton administration had a concept of this operation that matched the concept you've just described. Jon Howe was the critical point of continuity.

**Scowcroft:** OK, let me address that. When we decided to do it, my point of contact was Sandy Berger in the Clinton team. I called Sandy, and I said, "Sandy, I'm going to tell you what we're going to do." He was the nominal deputy. During the campaign, he had been my point of contact. I hadn't been given another one, so I called him. I don't even know if Tony Lake had been picked by then. I got a fairly cold response. I said, "I'm not asking your permission or anything. I'm telling you what we're going to do. I'm telling you that we will do our best to have it completed by the time we turn it over. I doubt we will get that far, but we will have the back broken of the problem by then." In fact, we had started withdrawing some forces by the 20th of January. We had maybe 10, 20 percent of the force out.

As it got closer, I had a conversation with Sandy. I told him—well, I probably told him part of our strategy at this first one—but I had another conversation and explained what our strategy was—that we were going to get out. We had planned to leave a ship there for another 30 days, just to shore up the UN force. We had trouble with Boutros-Ghali, who wanted to turn this into a

nation-building operation. He was deeply involved in Somalia. We told him no, we wouldn't do it. No, we wouldn't leave our forces in—we were getting out. But he ought to be aware that's what Boutros-Ghali was up to.

**Zelikow:** You explained this to Berger?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, yes. That's where we left it. Now, Jon Howe was the point of continuity. The problem was that Jon Howe went from being Deputy NSC Advisor to a UN employee. He worked for Boutros-Ghali. He didn't work for the U.S. government. I don't think—in fact, Jon maybe never figured out exactly who he did work for. That became very complicated. I don't think there's any doubt that Boutros-Ghali was playing games here. I can't remember what his associate—but he had a deep involvement in Somalia historically. He wanted a certain outcome to the tribal struggle there. This was his opportunity to get it. Had we stayed in office—

**Zelikow:** The administration, the new administration, bought off on the redefined nation-building mission called UNOSOM II in March of '93.

**Scowcroft:** Which—by then, we would have had all the forces out.

**Zelikow:** Sure you aren't being too optimistic about that? You don't think you would have sunk your feet into the quagmire and had difficulty extricating yourselves?

**Scowcroft:** No, we'd have had no difficulty extricating. The real question was, how long would it have been before the thugs really moved back in? I don't know the answer to that.

**Zelikow:** But you had already stepped up to the fact that the thugs eventually would move back in. You were already prepared to—

**Scowcroft:** There was a possibility. We thought that maybe not, because this thing had happened gradually, I mean, it had gradually worsened. In the event, after we had evacuated Somalia—the drought ended, which was a big help—but it rocked along all right until just recently. So it was not necessarily the case that it would have reverted to the preinvasion thing—although there's a good chance that it might have.

**Zelikow:** Your memory will go back this far. In some ways, doesn't this story remind you of the Lebanon story in '82? Before the first multinational force went in with the limited role of extricating the Palestinians?

**Scowcroft:** I hope not.

**Zelikow:** And then the second international force went in—because the first one had done so well—and it got the nation-building job, which then got very complicated in 1983. The same story, in a way, although that was a handoff that occurred in the same administration. But here's one where you went in with one mission, a limited mission, doing well. Emboldened, there's a new mission adopted after the administration leaves office—nation-building objectives.

**Scowcroft:** Very tough thing to do—to hand off a war like this, to hand off an operation like this. I grant it—very tough to do. My sense is they didn't give it the analysis that we had given it

before we went in. This was in the full flush of assertive multilateralism. My guess is they thought, *We can turn this into a real showcase*.

**Zelikow:** It was a showcase of a kind.

**Scowcroft:** That's just a guess, I don't know.

**Zelikow:** Well, it's odd—and this may not be true—but according to the newspaper accounts, at the time the mission was redefined to UNOSOM II in March '93, in the new resolution, newspaper reporters wrote that no one—even at the Deputies Committee level—was engaging the substance of that issue and the significance of the redefinition. I comment on that less to make a partisan criticism, because of the contrast between that and the discussion you had with Berger—spotlighting to him Boutros-Ghali's agenda. Which then has me reflecting a little bit about the nature of handoffs more generally. Let me ask you, did Tony Lake and/or Sandy Berger—did Tony Lake ever sit down with you and ask you to, kind of, walk through with him—"Let's go through the issues around the world, let's work through NSC management issues." Kind of talk through your perspectives on what it was that you were handing over to him?

**Scowcroft:** Strangely enough, the transition of the leader of the NSC was Madeleine Albright. I had my discussions about turning things over with Madeleine Albright. They were cursory—at her choice, not my choice.

**Zelikow:** Tell me more about that.

**Scowcroft:** Well, I can't tell you much more—it's pretty much a blur. Madeleine came sweeping in and pretty much acted like she knew everything she needed to know. Madeleine and I have known each other for a long time—we had a couple of conversations about different things. I told her what I had prepared—a list of all of what we considered all of our formal obligations, hints between heads of state, so on and so forth. I would make that available to her—and anything she wanted to talk about. I was ready to talk. It didn't get much beyond that. I'm trying to remember whether Tony and I actually ever had a meeting. I know we had one scheduled, but I'm not sure that we ever actually sat down together.

Now, Madeleine went through the staff, and there were other people. Her deputy was—I can't think of his name—and he spent a lot of time with the staff.

**Zelikow:** So her deputy wasn't Sandy Berger either?

**Scowcroft:** No, her deputy was—oh, you would know it, I just can't think of his name.

**Zelikow:** Can you think of anything about him?

**Scowcroft:** I think he was Foreign Service. I think he had served in the UN. He was in the State Department.

**Zelikow:** Not [Karl/Rick] Inderfurth?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, Rick Inderfurth. Whoa! That's impressive, Philip! Rick Inderfurth. Rick spent a lot of time with the staff. Didn't spend much time with me, but a lot of time with the staff.

**Zelikow:** So that's how they learned what it is they wanted to learn from you—about management issues, paper flow, and so forth. That's helpful, because it also may help explain—it's one thing to say, "Well, they chose a different policy." But it's another thing to say, "Well, we actually didn't understand what the previous policy was—which is why we got snookered." It sounds like—in the Somalia case, at least—it's more the second story.

**Scowcroft:** I think it is. I think it is. I think they didn't sit down and analyze where they were and where they wanted to go. They inherited an operation, which was succeeding in goals as we described it. As I say, there had been nominal withdrawals already. We had a schedule of withdrawals that we left for them. It was somewhere about the end of March that we figured we would be out. I think they simply took that on, and then their attention was drawn to the tribal leaders and the trouble they were making. They made trouble for us, too. Then there was a big conference held—UN conference, I think—and it was heavily on, "What'll you do about Somalia and nation building?" I think they just migrated to it, without really thinking about what they were doing and how that changed the character of what they had to do in Somalia. That's my sense.

**Zelikow:** I'd like to step back now. There are so many issues we could talk about in more detail. We haven't spent a lot of time on some of the international economic issues—some, yesterday, but not a lot. I don't want to minimize the importance of the Western Hemisphere or some of the East Asian issues we haven't dwelt on as much. But we've covered a number of important topics. I do want to give you some chances to reflect more broadly about your experience. One question I'd like to get you to reflect on is—when you look back on your own role personally, what do you feel best about and what do you feel worst about? If you don't mind answering that question.

**Scowcroft:** I feel best about the teamwork that we were able to establish. I give an enormous amount of credit for that to the President and his way of dealing with people, and getting the best out of people. We sometimes had very sharp debates and disagreements. But they never went to personalities. There was, as far as I know, no personal involvement. When the President would say, "OK, I've heard you all, this is the way I want to do it," everybody closed ranks and gave him total support.

What I feel worst about is not giving higher priority to some of the less immediate, but very important, issues on which we could have made a difference. That was mentioned briefly yesterday—the organization of the military. As we drew down our forces at the end of the Cold War, I advocated that we start with a blank piece of paper and say, "If you were starting from scratch, how would you organize the Department of Defense and the military forces?" And then, using that as a blueprint, draw down, to try to get closer to what we would like the force to look like. An evolutionary change—but not simply to keep it the way it was. Well, Cheney didn't want to do that and I didn't press it.

Another one—two more—on economics. I thought we should have pushed, by '91, hard for a new—maybe not a new Bretton Woods conference, but to take a look at the IMF and the World

Bank and see what restructuring was needed to bring them into a new economic environment. Very different from the Bretton Woods environment in which they were set up. They were doing different jobs than they were set up to do—and to rationalize that. Nick didn't want to do it. I let it go.

**Zelikow:** Nick Brady.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, Nick Brady. I thought we should, hard on the heels of the Uruguay Round, propose to the Europeans a free trade agreement between the United States and the EU. As a way to give us something positive to work on, and to help put some more legs under the Atlantic community. Not just NATO, which was having problems. I guess those were the things. There are probably a couple more I could think of that didn't have to be done, that didn't get a reception. To try to get people to do something that they're not disposed to do takes an awful lot of work. I guess that's what I'm most disappointed about.

Another thing I'm disappointed in is my inability—and, in a way, the government's inability—to do what I would call useful long-range planning and thinking. We never figured out how to do it. I made an effort with Peter Rodman, but it didn't work. We had two kinds of problems. One is, you either don't isolate those people from the day-to-day things, or they get called away to put out fires. There's always a need for more people, especially in the NSC—in a way, the NSC was deliberately kept small. Or you insulate them—and they do thinking, and they bring stuff to the operators, who say, "Oh, that's nice, but I don't have time for that stuff." You know, you've got one idea here—there could be a number of others. How to integrate some useful thinking down the line with where we are now, and how you try to move in that direction is, I think, one of the biggest problems in government. I don't know how to do it.

**McCall:** You mean long-range planning?

**Scowcroft:** Yes. You know, take the Pentagon—which probably plans more than anybody else. To me, the Pentagon plans it backward. It plans it through its weapons systems, which is the worst way to go. So you have your weapons systems, and you deal with the environment based on the systems you have. Because it takes 15 years to plan a weapons system. Instead of looking at the environment—at what we're going to have to use military forces for—and then plan your forces to fit the environment.

**McCall:** You also have to take a step back. You need the political decisions about what those environments should be.

**Scowcroft:** Oh, yes.

**Zelikow:** By "long range"—what do you mean by "long range"?

**Scowcroft:** Beyond putting out fires. Henry Kissinger had the ability to do that in a—not long range, I'd say medium range. He had probably the most strategic mind I've ever seen. Deal with current issues of particular importance in a way that helped you down the line—and bring them together into something else you have in mind. In other words, you don't deal with an issue sui generis. But you deal with it, in the connection with everything else that's going on—so that you

can build it together into moving a whole bunch of things forward. That's what I mean about longer-range planning. It's very hard to do.

**Zelikow:** From a government's perspective, to me, planning three to five years ahead is long range.

**Scowcroft:** Well, I'd be happy if we did that usefully. You know we have organizations that do it. The Pentagon has them. The State Department has a policy planning staff, which I gather mostly writes speeches now. But that's what it was designed to do. For this one brief time in the late forties, they did some really innovative thinking—divorced in part from operational responsibilities—about what the world was like and how we ought to react to it.

**Zelikow:** It was less, though, an effort to predict what the world would be like in 1957, than an effort to think strategically. What's the concept of the way the world is organized, into which we can plug our current operations? That's a concept that's not necessarily a 1957 concept. But it is an effort to think strategically. To provide an overall framework into which the policies can fit.

**Scowcroft:** They're a little different, but they're close enough together. Alternative futures are not exactly what I'm talking about, but I think we ought to be able to do more useful strategic thinking than I think we do. I think the place to have it done is really the NSC—which is, after all, the focus of all of the national security agencies.

**McCall:** Let me ask a follow-up to that. You were National Security Advisor to two administrations, and you're very active now in these questions. I'm wondering if you feel the definitions of national security had changed—and what the role of the NSC should be, as you're describing it now. If so, what sorts of changes might be prudent?

**Scowcroft:** There are a lot of recommendations for changes in the NSC. I'm perhaps too much a creature of the existing structure—since I've been in it so long. The one thing I would try to do is to harness OMB, in a way, to the NSC system. To look at the budget—not as they do, department by department, agency by agency—but in terms of missions, interdepartmental responsibilities—and give the President the opportunity to look at some things in terms of their overall cost. Rather than how much the State Department is spending this year on A), the Defense Department, on B), and so on and so forth. I think the budget reviews for the President are a horror. Other than a few particular things on which he can decide, it's too late in the process. He looks at it slice by slice by slice. I think if you could somehow meld the NSC system to supervise the OMB system, you could help give our budget reviews a much more strategic—

**McCall:** A better overview.

**Scowcroft:** A better overview. You know, a lot of the things we try to do now—well, take drugs for example. There are six, seven, eight, nine agencies involved in drugs. You ought to look at a drug budget and allocate it that way. I guess OMB does that internally, but OMB is not a policy agency, or shouldn't be a policy agency. If you look at drugs—whether you want to say NSC does drugs or the Drug Czar—it is inherently a multiagency issue, which ought to be looked at and guided in a multiagency way. And OMB is not the agency to do it.

**McCall:** That's also implying some changes for what the definition of the National Security Council might be, and the NSC apparatus. I want to go back to the prior question also. Do you feel the nature of what should be covered, under national security, has changed? Should it include more technology in things?

**Zelikow:** AIDS? The environment?

**Scowcroft:** In theory, the answer is, "Yes." As a practical matter, I think that one of the principal values of the NSC is that it is a relatively small staff that can respond quickly and flexibly to different kinds of problems. As you expand it to become a mini-government—it may be the way to go, but I just fear that you turn it into a ponderous machine in which you lose more than you gain. I don't know the answer. There are a lot of things now. We're in globalization—I hate that word—but globalization in a useful way is that the world, in many respects, is going in that direction where the interrelationship between things is much stronger. Maybe that's what we have to do.

**Zelikow:** Let me pull the question back a little bit. One of the things about the administration that was interesting to me is that you and Bob Gates seemed to run a process in which you didn't walk into meetings at the senior levels without having done some serious analysis first. In the Clinton administration directly after that—and they may have worked that out and got completely different—but I had some experiences with them, from the inside. They'd go into a meeting at a fairly senior level—deputies level or above—and they'd spend two hours talking about press guidance and what were the analytical papers beforehand.

What I'd like to get you to talk about is—now we're talking about short-range planning as opposed to long-range planning. Short-range planning doesn't happen when you sit down at the table—or it doesn't happen exclusively there. You can't, kind of, make up the analysis at the table. So you've got to then put in place a procedure, a process, whereby by the time you tackle the issue, ideally there actually has been some analysis. I'd like you to reflect a little bit about this.

Now Kissinger was extremely self-conscious about this as one of his strengths. He did believe in analysis; he did believe that it was important to try to advocate real analysis. Over the years, the quality of written analysis on policy issues and foreign policy issues in the government seems to me to have changed quite a bit. Mostly not for the better, in fact—I read analytical papers in the archives from the 1940s that I think are far superior to anything produced now in the government. I'm troubled by this. Part of the answer seems to have to do with the very unglamorous thing called staffing procedures. But you're in charge of that for the NSC and to a degree for the interagency process in the government. So I'd like to get you to talk about your view of how to do good short-range planning—from a process perspective.

**Scowcroft:** We talked about part of this yesterday in the interagency system and who ran the various study groups. Ideally, that ought to be done by the NSC, but I think the first notion that one needs to have is where one thinks one wants to go. That may turn out to be, on closer analysis, wrong—but I think you need to start there. When you get to meetings, you ought to know where you want to end up the meeting. You may not end up there, but you want to know where you're going. I don't believe in going into meetings, unless you're really befuddled, just to

see what comes out of it and to hope a consensus emerges. I think you need to go in with a particular point of view.

Have to be careful when you do that with the NSC, because one of your principal tasks is to be the honest broker. That can be compatible with a strong view of your own, but it has to be done diplomatically—or you lose the faith of the agency heads. If you do that, then the system breaks down—because then, each one will insist on presenting his own view to the President. But to me, the staffing procedures are—you take an issue, and there are two parts to an issue. What are the facts that relate to the issue, what is the background that you need to know, how to get started, and all those kinds of things? And secondly, what are the policy threads that this issue deals with? The fact-finding, the background, ought to be pretty much the same for everybody. It gives everybody an even starting place. So I think it's useful for meetings—to have the background there for everybody.

The policy threads are more individualistic and particularistic by the different agencies. There is a very different thought process in the State Department from that in the Defense Department. They do things differently. They think differently. I think that the role of the NSC is to figure out from the President's perspective what are the policy threads here that the President needs out of this? And then, how are the other people likely to think about it. How can you reconcile those to get what the President needs? That's an ideal way to go about the process. It doesn't work that way too often. But I don't think, in interagency meetings, I don't think Bob and I ever went into a meeting without a short discussion between the two of us beforehand as to where we wanted the meeting to come out.

**Zelikow:** But to get the paperwork up in front of you, in time to have that conversation, can sometimes be hard. It may mean that you need to slow things down—delay the meeting until you have the paper. Then press your subordinates and the agencies to give you real analysis—and not just talking points.

**Scowcroft:** It's very hard. That's very hard.

**Zelikow:** Did you self-consciously put a priority on that? Did Bob do something about that?

**Scowcroft:** I'll be honest with you. It happened so frequently that the basic paper was not ready when we had the meeting, that we went off inadequately prepared with the basic facts. It happened over, and over, and over again. Starting right with our reviews at the outset of the administration. So there's a problem A) that you don't have the paper on time, or B) the paper is inadequate.

**Zelikow:** We never experienced that—of course, that never happened in our office.

**Scowcroft:** Of course not. But that takes a process of paper producing which—especially if the paper's going to be produced in an interagency framework—it takes a close supervision to make sure it's done, to make sure it's done right and so on. That's hard to do. In many ways, it's better to have the papers, the basic papers, prepared by an individual agency—because there, you've got the internal discipline. When you've got people from different agencies, it's hard to do it. But papers done by individual agencies frequently raise the hackles of the others, because their perspective is different.

**McCall:** I don't have firsthand knowledge of the paperwork. But my observations from past work here, especially dealing with Desert Storm—One of the comments I hear you make, and I heard you make in your earlier interviews—was the value of the quick analysis, the quick turnaround—someone who can write fast in these positions. I just know from the Desert Storm stuff that a lot of Richard Haass's things were available for the meetings. On the one hand we would look—when we were working before—I would look at the briefing and the papers, and I'd see it reflected in the conversation as you or Bob Gates would speak in the NSC meeting or something like that. Was there some method by which you could encourage that sort of quick turnaround, that quick writing? Or is that something that should be in the mix when evaluating someone's coming in?

**Scowcroft:** If there is, I wish I could identify it. Richard Haass was particularly skilled at that. I mean, you'd agree upon some kind of policy or something—and have to get a cable out in 15 minutes. He did better work than if he had all day to do the cable. He could do it very well. That is an enormous skill. The most frequent thing that happens when you really have to do something in a hurry is that people freeze. You don't know where to start—you don't get the actual words down and it's very hard to get going. I don't know—Richard is a master at that.

**McCall:** Should it be something you look at in the mix, when you're selecting people for staffers—who would be good?

**Zelikow:** Since we're on the subject of personal qualities, I'd like to actually get you to lift your sights a little to the President, President Bush. I'd like you to think a bit about his strengths as a foreign policy President, and his weaknesses as a foreign policy President, or as a President more generally. You're in a privileged position. I know he's your friend. Every person, however wonderful, has their strengths and weaknesses. What would you want people in the future to understand about the way to see this President clearly and his particular balance of strengths and weaknesses and trade-offs that people got when they made him the President? That he showed to you during the administration. Also, think about this, too. Think about—did he change while he was President? Did these qualities evolve in a noticeable way—one way or the other?

**Scowcroft:** I think he had a couple of qualities that were really outstanding. The first was, he had an enormous background. I'm talking about national security, now. He had a view from a variety of perspectives that, my guess, is unique for a President. That was extremely valuable. You never had to go through the basic paper with him. You'd come up with something that had happened—he knew the country, he probably knew the leaders, he knew what the background was, he knew what the policy in general had been. You could start out right with the problem, not—as you usually have to do with a President—go through what it's all about. That was a tremendous advantage.

Second was his people skills, which were phenomenal. He liked people, and he liked to know what people thought. He liked to talk to people and find out what they were thinking about and how they were thinking. That gave him an intuitive feel for policy, which you probably can't get any other way. It was an enormous advantage. He used it constantly. He was always on the phone to people, one way or another. He liked to say what Mubarak or—I can't remember who—anyway, told him when he was at the UN, "Go talk to the little countries. They'll be so happy to know that you have an interest." And he really did that—and he did it seriously. So that

when he came to people, with a real problem—when he wanted help—they were disposed to provide their support because they knew who he was and they had respect for the way he thought and so on. I think that is likely to go down as his most outstanding quality.

Weaknesses? Probably too loyal. Personally extremely loyal, and I think it led him to retain people in jobs when it was pretty apparent they were not well suited. I think that added a lot of friction to policy. His mind is not conceptual. He approaches problems in an instinctive, rather than a conceptual way. That is more a problem of articulation, I think, which is one of the President's main jobs—than it is of his thinking about it. He comes intuitively to decisions you and I would come to conceptually—after having really thought through the problem. He doesn't approach it that way. He just has a feel for what's the right thing to do and he's fairly unerring in that. But there's something in the conceptual approach that gives you more ability to articulate and to inspire people. That you know where to go, and they ought to follow. He's very courageous—not afraid to make decisions. And not afraid to make decisions based on the national interest. Believes deeply that he is the custodian, for a time, of the national interest. It's his duty to pursue it, and not listen to the vagaries of public opinion, or interest groups, and so on and so forth. He does that. He does that very well. I could probably go on. Those are the kinds of things that come to mind when I think about it.

**Zelikow:** Let me pursue a couple of those. One thing that I wanted to pursue, especially after I read the President's book of letters, what struck me above all—and it surprised me, but I don't know the President very well, I don't really know him well at all—is how emotional he is. A phrase that constantly recurs in his writing is his references to someone's heartbeat. It ties in very much with what you said. You called it instinctive and intuitive—how he really comes at issues emotionally to a remarkable degree. In fact, there is actually a very interesting contrast with Ronald Reagan, who's extremely conceptual. And who, in many ways, is quite analytical—although in a distinctive, self-taught way—mostly because he's almost entirely self-taught. But in many ways, President Bush is a much more emotional person than President Reagan. Including on policy. This is a double-edged characteristic. One double-edged feature of it strikes me—how transparent he is. It's very hard for me even to imagine him trying to dissemble.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I think it is.

**Zelikow:** And, as you know, among politicians—this is unusual. I think this is one reason why a lot of people who are close to him are very devoted to him.

**Scowcroft:** It is a strength, because it is easy for him to build confidences. People instinctively feel that they can put themselves in his hands because he does not dissemble to any degree. It's true. At the emotional—if you looked at the book of letters, you'll see in there a George Bush you'll never see personally. He hides his emotions. He rarely says, "Thank you, that really meant a lot to me—that was terrific, what you did." Why? Because he chokes up so quickly—it's an agony for him to speak at a funeral or something. He doesn't mind writing it—and that, to me, is the striking thing about the letters—you see the George Bush you just described in the letters. You don't see it in—as a matter of fact, if you look at him in a public speech or so on, he comes across as slight patrician and austere. Unlike George W, who's more like Clinton or Reagan. Bush is not that way. But he's not that way because he *is* austere and patrician, but because he

doesn't want to risk getting too close to his emotions—because he gets very embarrassed if he breaks down, and he does it so easily.

**Zelikow:** But this also helps understand—it is a powerful tool to understanding some of the really critical foreign policy judgments. Powerful in terms of his well-founded instincts, in my opinion, on Germany, for instance.

**Scowcroft:** Oh, yes.

**Zelikow:** Which come out very early and, surprisingly unequivocally.

**Scowcroft:** Yes. Oh, he was way ahead of me on Germany—way ahead. I was much more careful and cautious. Essentially, Kohl explained things to him and he said, "Go for it."

**Zelikow:** And also it helps the Gulf story—makes much more sense. Once he had recognized a challenge of a certain kind, he had enormous clarity and resolve.

**Scowcroft:** Yes. And it's not off the cuff solutions. It looks that way, because it doesn't come from a long analysis process that—at least—I go through. It's all there and he has a way of drawing on it—to know instinctively what's right and what's wrong.

**Zelikow:** But it's not impulsive.

**Scowcroft:** No, it's not impulsive, but it sometimes looks impulsive—because he doesn't go through this long process. In making up his mind, he asks questions and things like that. But it is an intuitive, rather than an analytical process.

**McCall:** Do you think he reads people well?

**Scowcroft:** I'd give him a mixed verdict on that. He's easy to fool—and his loyalty gets in the way of an analytical reading of people. He can make some excellent choices. I think that the group of people he put together in his national security team was quite remarkable—in the sense of people he knew he could work with, and work with each other. But he's made some phenomenally bad choices. So I think it's a mixed bag.

**McCall:** I know that one of the criticisms—

**Scowcroft:** Part of the bad choices is loyalty. Once he gets that loyalty, he'll stick with it—and overlook faults that a President shouldn't do. A President, I think, has to be something of a butcher. When he sees somebody who's not doing just right—he doesn't have to do it, but he has to cut his losses.

**McCall:** What about in dealing with foreign leaders? There was a concern at one point that, perhaps, he was being too generous and loyal to Gorbachev—even toward the end of Gorbachev's time. Do you feel that aspect of him got in the way at all in foreign policy?

**Scowcroft:** No, I don't. He resonated with Gorbachev. I think he was closer to Gorbachev than he ever got to Yeltsin, although he liked Yeltsin as well. I don't think it got in his way. For

example, he never was able to get really close to Margaret Thatcher. I think there was something there that just held him back. On Gorbachev, I really thought he felt this was a man he could work for. I don't think he was blinded by Gorbachev, but I don't know how to describe it. I think he thought that Gorbachev was moving in the direction that we wanted the Soviet Union to move—and that he had, about him a reasonableness that would permit us—as few previous Soviet leaders would—to engage with him, rather than confront him. And I think he was right.

**McCall:** One of the things that President Bush also has—this is his people handling skills—an unusual ability to develop a rapport. He uses humor to establish a rapport. [laughter] Which is probably one of the reasons it was hard to do that with Mrs. Thatcher, because she does not—

**Scowcroft:** She does not have much of a sense of humor.

**McCall:** It's almost disarming.

**Scowcroft:** He's very good at that. He's great at breaking up tension with a bit of humor. Not distracting from the business at hand, but allows people to keep perspective, not get too emotional.

**Zelikow:** To wrap up, I would like to spend a few minutes on the election of '92. There is some fragmentary evidence—and I don't know if it's true—that suggests that you are getting pulled a little more into the domestic side of the White House by late '91 especially, when the turmoil engulfs Sununu. Basically, here's one Chief of Staff goes down. The National Security Advisor is, in a way, kind of a Chief of Staff on the foreign policy side. The President had by this time formed a close relationship with you, relied on you. I just have the sense, as I said, from scant, circumstantial, little bits of evidence, that you were getting pulled more into the domestic side in the last year or so of the administration, which pulls you closer to the electoral politics of '92.

One fragment that I've picked up is that it looks like you were involved, to some extent, in the question of who replaces John Sununu. I don't know if you were involved in John's odd departure, but there is some indication that you were involved in trying to recruit—to locate and recruit—a successor. That you may have made at least one phone call to try to persuade someone to come on over to the White House and do this job. Is my perception accurate? Did you see it that way at the time?

**Scowcroft:** I don't know I would say being dragged more into the domestic side of the White House, but let's say more outside the narrow realm of the NSC system. I did talk to the President about Sununu. I did inquire, for him, of some people who might take it. I had nothing to do with the selection of [Samuel] Skinner—nothing.

**Zelikow:** You didn't recruit Skinner?

**Scowcroft:** No, not at all.

**Zelikow:** One person whom I think you may have tried to recruit was Dick Cheney—who I guess said he'd done that.

**Scowcroft:** Been there, done that, was happy where he was. It was a mistake. He should have been pressed. I asked him what he thought about coming over to the White House. It should have been, "Dick, the President needs you." The President didn't want to phrase it that way.

**Zelikow:** Of course, this appears on the surface to be a decision about a new Chief of Staff, which is important enough. But it was also, in effect, a decision about who was going to manage the '92 campaign.

**Scowcroft:** Yes.

**Zelikow:** Which then turns out to be a very large problem.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, and it never was managed. Well, Baker comes over and makes the trains run on time. But for the critical period—he actually doesn't get on board until the last week in August. Before that, for this critical period, there was a triumvirate that ran the campaign. It just was not working.

**Zelikow:** Can you mention anyone else whom you recruited—or contacted?

**Scowcroft:** No, Cheney was the only one.

**Zelikow:** But at the time, both you and the President just took his polite demur as an answer—

**Scowcroft:** Yes, unfortunately.

**Zelikow:** And moved on.

**Scowcroft:** Then I got out of it. I think Skinner was an unusual choice. He'd done a good job as Transportation Secretary, but his wife had befriended Doro Bush at a very difficult time in her life—and given enormous help. Whether that had anything to do with it or not, I don't know. The President didn't talk to me about Skinner. As far as I know, he made the choice—but it was a fateful choice, because Skinner did not have the personality to do that job. And for a critical eight months, he was in it.

**Zelikow:** In that winter of '91/'92, which was a difficult winter, I think, did you have any conversations with the President about the agenda for '92, about his domestic, political situation, or any broader-ranging discussions that give you some insight into how he was thinking about this whole reelection problem? Because this is a puzzling period now, and people in retrospect—because of this appearance of lassitude, there's speculation about the President's medical condition—did that contribute to it? I don't know, there may be nothing to it, but if you could shed any light on it.

**Scowcroft:** No, I really can't. I did not talk with him broadly about the campaign. I did, on certain issues about the campaign, I did tell him I thought it was a mistake, for example, to stay away from foreign policy just because the polls showed the American people weren't interested in it. But no, I did not engage in the pure political side of the house. You know, I traveled with him a lot—in campaign tours, and so on—so some of it rubbed off—but no, I didn't do it.

**Zelikow:** Did you feel that the foreign policy agenda was constrained by the electoral pressure in '92—to keep the focus away from foreign policy? Even aside from the media buys and the way the ads were put together?

**Scowcroft:** Oh, yes, absolutely. Absolutely. It started with the special election in Pennsylvania, in November of '91—when [Richard] Thornburgh, who everyone thought was a shoo-in for Senator, got beaten on foreign policy grounds. The country was going in the wrong direction, we have all these domestic problems, foreign policy, the Cold War is over, and so on. The campaign people simply panicked. From that time on, foreign policy was anathema. And the consequence was we moved right over onto the agenda of his opponent.

**Zelikow:** Were you involved in the decision to replace Skinner—when it was finally made?

**Scowcroft:** I don't know that. I think replacing Skinner was more a case of—we've got to have Jim Baker come back. That he's the only one who can save the campaign.

**Zelikow:** Did you agree with that judgment?

**Scowcroft:** Yes, I think so.

**Zelikow:** Did you ever discuss that with the President? Because it would mean, of course, that you lose Baker as Secretary of State.

**Scowcroft:** Yes, we talked about that. That's one of the reasons that Baker didn't want to come. We talked about that, we talked about after the election, could Baker go back to State? Would he be barred—and so on and so forth. Yes, that was discussed widely—and decided to do it anyway. Because if we didn't win the election, it didn't matter where Baker went. So the first thing was to win the election.

**Zelikow:** Did you discuss this with Baker? Discuss coming over, talk to him about the pros and cons and what would have to be done?

**Scowcroft:** Not really about the pros and cons. I think I urged him to come—that we had a disaster on our hands—and he needed to bring order out of it.

**Zelikow:** The delay in Baker's coming over—do you attribute this Baker's reluctance? Or do you attribute this to the President's unwillingness to ask this of Baker until too late?

**Scowcroft:** I think there's a little bit of both. He knew Baker desperately didn't want to do it—so, yes, that occasioned a delay. But even after he asked Baker to come, it took some time for Baker to get over there. So I think it was Baker didn't want to come over, and the President didn't want to ask him to come over. Both of those induced a delay.

**Zelikow:** How is that logjam broken—?

**Scowcroft:** They did it—the two of them did it, I don't know. I don't know an answer.

**Zelikow:** You did not play a role….

**Scowcroft:** I did not play a role.

**Zelikow:** Were you involved much in the Iran/Contra business that percolated back up to the surface in ’92?

**Scowcroft:** Well, there wasn’t much to be involved with in ’92. The thing that percolated back up to the surface was [E. Lawrence] Walsh, in essence, going after the President.

**Zelikow:** Yes. Then, after that, there was the issue of the pardons. Were you involved in that? What was your perspective?

**Scowcroft:** I opposed him granting the pardons.

**Zelikow:** Why?

**Scowcroft:** Because I thought it made him look bad—that that issue was not his issue—it was Ronald Reagan’s issue, and Ronald Reagan hadn’t granted any pardons. So why should Bush solve Reagan’s problem? That was my view of it—and I lost.

**Zelikow:** Why do you think you lost?

**Scowcroft:** Because I think he thought it was the right thing to do. And whatever you think about Cap Weinberger, for example, he’s an honorable man—and I think that’s why he did it. He thought it was the right thing to do. And it probably was, in the general sense, because it brought that mess to an end—and it would not have been. Was it the right thing for the President to do—or someone worried about his legacy? Probably not.

**Zelikow:** What do you hope people will see as the legacy of the Bush Presidency in foreign policy?

**Scowcroft:** That he was a critical factor in bringing the Cold War—the end of an age, the end of an empire—bringing all that to a close, with almost literally not a shot being fired. One of history’s great confrontations—the collapse of a great empire—both of which, more often than not, historically have ended in tragedy. Military tragedies, one way or another. This ended not only not in a tragedy, but not even in residual enmity and bitterness for the time that Bush was President. The Soviet Union didn’t feel defeated, in the sense that Germany went away and nursed its wounds after World War I. I think it was a remarkable achievement. I think it’s his great achievement. The Gulf War is what attracts people’s attention. In history, that will be a little blip on the screen. A good blip, but nevertheless a blip. This is a major historical achievement. Did he do it single-handedly? No, but he took the forces at work and nudged them skillfully in directions that maybe would have happened anyway, but, easily could have turned out very badly.

**Zelikow:** I think that’s a fitting place to put a period.

**McCall:** Thank you, sir.

**Scowcroft:** OK.

**Zelikow:** Thank you.

**Scowcroft:** My pleasure.