

**CARTER PRESIDENCY PROJECT**

**FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT**

INTERVIEW WITH ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI  
WITH MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT, LESLIE G. DENEND, WILLIAM ODOM

February 18, 1982

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**YOUNG:** As you know, Mr. Brzezinski is scheduled to arrive at three this afternoon, and to be with us for two hours, until five. The ground rules that I have gone over with the participants and with the academic participants are quite explicit and needn't be reiterated for the record. The essential points are that nothing said in the room goes out, and that the materials will have their first and primary use as source material for analytical reviews written under Miller Center auspices on the Carter Presidency. The disposition of those materials beyond that purpose will be subject to whatever arrangements the participants wish to make in making them available for general scholarly purposes, perhaps by deposit in the presidential libraries.

Without further ado, why don't we proceed first by asking Madeleine Albright and Leslie Denend, in whichever order you prefer, to give us a general overview of the circumstances under which you came into the White House, the range of your responsibilities and roles while you were there and as they might have changed over time. I think the bulk of the session, until Mr. Brzezinski arrives this afternoon, will be devoted to the staff work as it relates to other staff work and the nature of their responsibilities. Then we'll try to get questions that will focus on the National Security Adviser's personal role in his working relationships with the President and other related issues when he comes in. Who would like to go first?

**DENEND:** I'll give one perspective on how I came to join the NSC [National Security Council] staff and then, in my case, since I am still an employee of the government, it would be worthwhile to understand what I'm doing now. I joined the NSC staff in June of 1977. That's approximately six months after the administration started, and I joined a cluster of two people called Global Issues. It was Jessica Tuchman [Matthews] and myself who worked on nuclear nonproliferation, the human rights policy, and conventional arms transfers. Prior to that, I was teaching economics at the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

The circumstances by which my name became known to the NSC staff are probably worth mentioning very briefly. In 1974-75 I was a White House Fellow and worked on the Council on International Economic Policy staff in the [Gerald] Ford administration, and then when I left at the end of that year, I went to Colorado to teach. It was through associations that I had made during that experience that my name came up as somebody who might be interested and who they might be interested in to join the staff. I had no

long-term association with Zbig, for example. In fact, I had met Zbig once or twice before, I think, going back as far as 1962 when he came out and spoke at the Air Force Academy.

Then for approximately two years, until about March of 1979, I worked on global issues. I spent the bulk of my time on conventional arms transfers, and we can go into some detail as to the substance of that experience. I spent a good deal of time on those aspects of the human rights policy that dealt with refugees and the international forums in which these issues came up. I spent less of my time, although a growing amount of time, on the nonproliferation issues. In March of 1979, Zbig asked me if I'd like to come over and be special assistant, and I naturally agreed to do that for approximately—

**YOUNG:** By coming over, you mean—

**DENEND:** —move from the EOB [Executive Office Building] into the West Wing. At the time I went over, there were two special assistants. In December 1979, I became the only special assistant until January 1981, when the inauguration occurred. I am now in the office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and have been there since January '81.

**THOMPSON:** What is it that you're working on in the JCS?

**DENEND:** The Chairman has a small group of four officers, a colonel from each service, called his staff group. We are the principal liaison with the Joint Staff, which is composed of approximately 400 officers. Most of the papers prepared by the Joint Staff come through the Staff group on the way to the Chairman, and most of the initiatives that the Chairman takes or the requests that he makes for material, preparation for speeches, papers, congressional testimony, are made through the Staff group. We in turn ask the Joint Staff for it.

**THOMPSON:** What did you do as a special assistant?

**DENEND:** I was in the office just outside Dr. Brzezinski's office. I was the center of the paper flow through the office. I had some responsibility for quality control, for tracking the papers before they got there, when they went to the President, when they came back. I worked with the rest of the White House staff to the extent that the NSC needed to be involved in the things that were going on. One obvious example is that we were very much involved in the substantive and mundane sides of all international, presidential travel. I also was in large measure responsible for the way instructions from Zbig were conveyed back to the staff, and the way the staff conveyed requests to Zbig to do various things.

Christine Dodson, who was the staff secretary, and I were a team of two. We were the last point of quality control for most of the products of the NSC and also the staff—and also the procedural matters of meetings, agenda, preparation of papers, things like that.

**HARGROVE:** You coordinated work with other staffs, CEA [Council of Economic Advisers] or whatever, on overlapping issues.

**DENEND:** On overlapping issues, yes. There was a morning White House staff meeting, chaired by the Chief of Staff. I attended that for Zbig and was responsible at that meeting for the concerns that others might have about what was going on in the world.

**YOUNG:** Were these meetings from the beginning? You referred to the morning meetings with the Chief of Staff. There was no title, "Chief of Staff."

**DENEND:** The meetings were not from the beginning, in a sense from '77, although I would not have been involved until later. I'm trying to think; there had been a meeting that you went to for some time—

**ALBRIGHT:** From the very beginning there was an all-White House staff meeting at the deputy level.

**DENEND:** Then after that meeting, the staff meeting started when? I'm trying to think—

**ALBRIGHT:** It was around '79—

**DENEND:** In the fall, I would imagine, the mid-fall of 1979.

**THOMPSON:** Did you know when you came in that human rights would be an important aspect of national security policy?

**DENEND:** Yes. The initial blast that attended that policy in the beginning, remember, was very much U.S.-Soviet directed in the first several months, and even in Colorado that was reported daily in the papers. I had read quite a bit about it, and so I knew, yes, I knew what to expect.

**YOUNG:** We have a picture of meetings beginning with a deputies' meeting, as things got regularized, proceeding into the senior staff meeting with Billy Mack to the Chief of Staff, and then senior advisers and then going in to the President about 10:30—

**DENEND:** Yes.

**YOUNG:** I'm just trying to place these meetings. At the end were they in [Hamilton] Jordan's office?

**DENEND:** No. Hamilton had left in 1980 sometime. Then Jack Watson chaired the meetings.

**ALBRIGHT:** Al [Alonzo] McDonald—

**DENEND:** Al McDonald, who was Watson's deputy, chaired some of them.

**YOUNG:** All right, I've got that straight...

**DENEND:** That's the same meeting. That's that intermediate meeting.

**ALBRIGHT:** Zbig's role was a little deeper, in that he didn't often go to these senior meetings. He had seen the President earlier. The senior staff meetings would be last, and that would be in the deputy—

**YOUNG** In the deputy staff meetings. Okay, that's just a detail I wanted to fit in.

**HARGROVE:** Can I ask one more question about the global issues staff? What were you doing? What were your products and who were your consumers?

**DENEND:** The consumer was the President, for the most part. What were we doing? In three areas there were new initiatives, firm policies, policies that were among the first that were articulated by the administration. All three of the policies had PDs—presidential decision memoranda. PD 8 covered nuclear nonproliferation. The numbers give you some sense of when they occurred, though not precisely. PD 13 on arms transfer, and then PD 29 was the human rights PD, although it's important to note that the policy was being implemented before the PD was signed.

The real job was to take those policy statements and translate them into meaningful day-to-day instructions and decisions in those three areas. Most of those policies pressed out into areas in which the U.S. government, or at least the executive branch, had taken a less active role previously. In particular, it required the creation of an assistant secretary in the Department of State for Human Rights. Before, it had been handled at the office level. I'm most familiar with changes that took place in arms sales procedure— Those were revolutionary, based on what had happened, say, in the previous decade. The same thing was true on nonproliferation, given the ambitions set out in the policy.

**PRANGER:** Could I ask you two questions? Did you come on a normal military assignment? That is, was there a billet vacant for a military officer?

**DENEND:** I was detailed to the NSC staff, so that I was a military officer on active duty assigned to the NSC staff from the Defense Department. There was no such thing as a military billet in the NSC staff as set up by Zbig. In fact, I think that of the people who were considered to join the staff at that time, perhaps five people, I was the only military candidate. If I had left at any particular point, I doubt seriously that I would have been replaced by a military officer.

**PRANGER** The issues you dealt with were not exactly issues on economics, which you were teaching at the Air Force Academy. Do you feel that somehow these issues were an important kind of thrust of the administration for which there was some special staffing or

a program within the NSC? This is a question partly relating to your own expertise, because these wouldn't seem to be your areas. Was this some kind of special project area, or what?

**DENEND:** Do you mean for me personally? Or for the NSC?

**PRANGER** You said it required a special treatment. You said the material went to the President. It wasn't simply coordination of programs within the NSC system that was being generated out of the staff of the NSC itself. Is that right?

**DENEND:** Let me try to give a fuller picture, then. The policies that were articulated in the PDs set out basic goals, things that would be accomplished in the medium and longer term. In the case of the arms transfer policy, for example, there would be a ceiling on arms sales. All of the machinery to implement that had to be developed. There would be certain criteria applied to sales that were different than had been applied in the past, and so on. It took a period of months to develop the procedures whereby these dimensions of policy would be reflected in the day-to-day action. In the case of the security assistance agency in the Defense Department, it required a whole different kind of statistical accounting than they had been used to, and it required a major effort on their part to accomplish that.

The day-to-day work involved two tracks. One: procedural issues. How are we going to handle this particular aspect? How are we going to do this? And second, ongoing policy issues. In the case of arms transfers, are we going to sell the aircraft to so and so? If so, under what circumstances? And so on. In the case of the human rights policy, it was the periodic meetings that took place to consider the U.S. position in multi-lateral institutions when loans came up for various projects. Also the human rights policy was an element of the arms transfer policy. These questions had to be resolved, in addition to implementing the policy and developing procedures.

As far as how my day-to-day activities were organized, it's significant that there were two of us who were working on this, and we divided the work. Jessica was hired and had the lead on all three. I was assisting her. There was a clear number one, number two relationship; That's important. The day-to-day activities were a series of interagency meetings to consider the various issues. Interagency papers were prepared that were forwarded for decision, or reporting papers were prepared to report on progress.

**HARGROVE:** Forwarded to who?

**DENEND:** To the Assistant to the President, for the President.

**PRANGER:** Were there papers that were also sort of think pieces, which were generally within the NSC system?

**DENEND:** Yes, yes ...

**HARGROVE:** Would the President get the diverse papers, including NSC papers? Would he get the whole panoply of papers, or would you distill the variety of papers and give him one paper?

**DENEND:** First of all, it's important to note that I didn't know at that point—1977, 1978—exactly what papers the President got. I can speak to the question of what kind of papers the President got later—1979, 1980—because I know. I think at one point the statistic was given that Zbig reviewed approximately 300-400 pages a day and the President saw some fraction of that. Something like 100 or less than 100 pages.

There were different opportunities that we had to present information to the President in different ways. There were issues that needed to be decided by the President, for example he made decisions on major arms sales. A major arms sale was one that required notification to the Congress.

For as long as I was involved in the arms transfer issue, the President reviewed at least every arms sale that was required to be notified to the Congress. Those generally were presented in a memo from the Secretary of State, concurred by the Defense Department, and addressed to the President. It came to the NSC staff, where there were certain checks that had to be made, e.g. make sure that OMB [Office of Management and Budget] in fact concurred. Then a brief cover memo was prepared that in general concurred and highlighted one or two other concerns that were not raised in the State paper. That was forwarded as a package over to the front office, I presume.

In fact, this is the way it worked; the President saw that paper and made the decisions on it. It came back and a memo was prepared that translated the decision then back to the agency.

**YOUNG:** Are you describing here the Presidential Review Memo?

**DENEND:** No, this is a lesser paper, but a paper still requiring presidential attention. I think one of the things that I'm sure you're gleaning as you talk to other people is that President Carter processed an incredible amount of paper every day by design. He did so from I think the very beginning, and I know 'til the very end. It was an incredible amount. That's a style question, I think. Then there were other papers that were prepared that were along the line of thought pieces. I mean, "have you thought—" "here's where we're heading on this particular issue—" or, "if you take this piece of information and—" Trying to integrate, based on the perspective, the kind of unique perspectives that you have on the NSC staff.

We tried to integrate various and sundry threads and then alert Zbig. Using his judgment, he would then alert the President about things that were going on. "We're going to end up doing this." Or, "This is inconsistent with this, and have you thought about that?" Or, "Here is a good opportunity, it fits with this and this and the other—" Trying to pursue

that. We did those kinds of things. We did probably more of that in the beginning than we did toward the end, because we became caught up in the pace.

In addition to that, there were certain kinds of reporting that we did. In the case of arms sales, there was obvious reporting in that if we were going to have a ceiling, there was great interest in progress toward that ceiling. There was great interest in other kinds of items that might be reported, where the NSC staff would have either access to special information or would be the logical point to try and integrate that information. Those were also prepared by the staff.

**MELANSON:** What about the thought pieces that would be generated by other agencies, like the policy planning staff? Would that go through the NSC staff for clearance before it went to the President? Or could the President receive those thought pieces independently from staff?

**DENEND:** In general, the track for a thought piece generated in policy planning at State went up through the Secretary. Then it usually became an issue for an interagency meeting. The President did not read very many strictly thought pieces from the Cabinet Secretaries. He dealt for the most part with action memoranda from them; sometimes something shorter than an action memorandum would set up a situation indicating a possible approach or something like that. There were routine papers and there were papers of more sensitivity, which he saw. But that's not the sort of paper I think you're describing where the policy planning staff would work—

**MELANSON:** I had heard a rumor about a major history of U.S.-Iranian relations, for instance, that had been written in the policy planning staff that in fact President Carter did read. I was just wondering, when a major effort like that on the part of another agency was made, if the NSC had anything to do with clearing them first before it went to the President?

**DENEND:** That was a really unique circumstance, that particular study. The circumstances under which it was prepared and so on, and the President's personal day-to-day and minute-by-minute involvement in that issue caused it to be handled in a different way. There was some tasking by the NSC, but the President was deeply involved in a great number of details, and often would ask for things which were subsequently relayed from the assistant's office to the Cabinet Secretary, asking for one thing or another, and that prompted development of a paper. I think most papers like that were issue-oriented, and were the subject of some sort of interagency meeting that focused on what the issues were and what the decision needed to be. Then, if possible, the decision was taken short of the President and he was informed, or he was given a recommendation, or he was presented, if need be, with options from which he could choose.

**YOUNG:** The impression I'm getting is that major think-piece papers that were generated outside the executive office or outside of the NSC staff came from State or perhaps from Defense. They would not get to the President through the single channel of



the NSC, but as you say, would be subject somehow to interagency meetings and thereby the NSC staff and the National Security Adviser's office got involved. In other words, there was not a point of central clearance for everything.

**DENEND:** Yes, I'm trying to recall. The kind of paper that I'm thinking about is the kind of paper that you would read; it wouldn't lead you necessarily in any particular decision, it would alert you to some things. You would think, *Aha! That's something we ought to work into some other things I'm worried about.* That generally was not the focus of the papers that came to the President from the agencies. Now that's not to say that the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense did not in fact do private papers in which they thought along these more strategic lines and forwarded them to the President. I think the fact that I wouldn't know about them or that I saw very few of them meant that they went in a more direct channel than through the assistant to the President.

**YOUNG:** I'm just trying to get a picture of the extent to which, as we play with models here, that was kind of a limited "spokes-of-the-wheel" model, in which papers were taken to the President independently.

**PRANGER** Did you get the impression if the NSC staff itself was producing more general thought pieces for the National Security Adviser, possibly also going to the President? Were the other Departments also producing papers internally, perhaps for the Cabinet Secretaries, through the policy planning apparatuses of the Departments? Could there be some differences of general philosophical position even between the President and his Cabinet Secretaries as a result of this? Or wasn't there that much thought generation going on from the policy planning staffs at State and Defense?

**DENEND:** There wasn't that much, I don't think, going on at Defense, at least that surfaced. There was a very active policy planning staff. I think that it's important to view the administration as having a life over the four years, and that in fact the majority of the studies, the Presidential Review Memoranda that were signed out were signed out during the initial six to nine months. That didn't mean the studies were completed by then, but the studies were commissioned during that period, and it was during that time that the greatest amount of this sort of work was done.

During that time the NSC staff was intimately involved in the interagency management of these studies, and it was also during that time that you developed most of the kind of relationships that persisted over the administration with the people that you worked with. You learned where they were coming from and they knew your philosophical bent, what you were good at and what you didn't know much about. And most of the things that were done I think reflected this kind of interagency experience. Most of the studies were chaired by an agency, the Defense Department, the State Department, and they had the greatest control over how the inputs were put together and so on, not the NSC.

The studies served a purpose, not in their own right, but to highlight issues that turned out in most cases to be slightly different from the issues that you thought were important

when you commissioned the study. Then that became the focus of subsequent deliberation and decision. Most of the material that was prepared, either to report on these studies or to provide updates and status reports, reflected this experience; the staff reflected that.

If in fact there was a difference between the staff perception, it was not uncommon to report that study such and such is taking the following approach, which draws us off the point for which we originally commissioned this paper. We might also suggest that at some point we would need some high level involvement to try to redirect it along the direction which answers the questions that we originally asked.

**THOMPSON** This is directed to both of you. Was there ever any implication, as you talked about these memoranda, that the NSC, as is said was true in the [Henry] Kissinger period, was going to be the center of fresh ideas? Some of the people who left NSC under Kissinger have written books on this, as you know. Was there an implication that insofar as these path-breaking memoranda on human rights and maybe arms transfer or other issues that you've mentioned were concerned, fresh thinking was more likely to come out of the NSC than it would the State Department? Was there any attempt to build up a mystique of the kind that allegedly was built up in the Kissinger period?

**DENEND:** We really should follow through with the intended purpose, and have you give a short person summary, as I started with. It would be worthwhile to briefly outline the PRM [Presidential Review Memorandum] process that was the model for the development of most of these policy statements.

A PRM, a Presidential Review Memorandum, was usually a one-page memo signed by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. It had four important parts. One, it addressed the agencies that were going to participate in the study, and if you had an interest you wanted to be sure to be an addressee. It also gave the title, which obviously identified the subject; these were numbered memoranda. Second, it said who the study would report to and would be filed with. It would be either under the purview of the SCC, Special Coordination Committee, which is chaired by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, or it would be under the purview of the PRC, the Policy Review Committee, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary—and that's a significant difference. Third, it established a deadline, which helped get the work done. Fourth, it asked four or five jolting questions. Going in, these are the questions that seemed to be what the issue was about, things we need to make decisions on.

These PRMs were not written by a single individual. In almost every case they were widely circulated and coordinated with the agencies. "If you agree this is how it ought to happen, who should be involved?" and so on. So when they came out, they were not a surprise. Then they were approved by the President and signed out. The study was commissioned. The study was prepared, and as I say, it could take a short time or a much longer time. The study for technology transfer, I remember, was about three inches thick and was not really worth reading. It was distilled and became more useful.

A study served the purpose of transferring attention to those issues that are most important, ones that most needed to be addressed. There was usually an executive summary, an issue paper that was written from the study, and that in fact became the basis for the Cabinet-level meeting, either an SCC meeting or a PRC meeting, at which time those issues were addressed. In many cases the decisions were taken in those meetings. Once again, all of the Cabinet Secretaries from the agencies involved sat there. The studies had been drafted by the people who had the expertise in the government for the questions that were being asked.

Once the decisions were made, or at least it was clear where people stood, then a paper was forwarded to the President for decision. He made the decisions. A Presidential Decision Memorandum was prepared, signed, and sent out as a policy. That was the process clearly, for conventional arms transfer, for nuclear nonproliferation, and for human rights, so that all of the agencies were involved, all the good ideas available were brought to bear both to structure the study and to carry it out, to decide what the issues were and how they ought to be set out for the President, and to decide on the recommendations that were made. I think that clearly would argue for a system in which there was no mystique about the special inventiveness of the NSC staff.

Over time, I add as a footnote, the perspective of the NSC gives you different insights into the various problems from those gained working in policy planning in State or in ISA [International Security Affairs] in the Defense Department. In fact, the last year has been a dramatic demonstration of that to me. Over time, it was possible for NSC staff members to do more integrating of ideas that they had been hearing from their counterparts in the agencies, and write the sort of memoranda that might tickle somebody into thinking of a new issue that we needed to address.

**YOUNG:** I think it's important for us to get Madeleine to talk about her part and how you got involved and why you were brought in. We have noted that this is historically unusual to appoint a congressional relations person for the NSC.

**ALBRIGHT:** I was brought on in March '78, which in itself is significant, because it was a year or two into the administration. My job was to develop congressional relations, and the fact that I was hired became sort of a cause, because Frank Moore's staff wondered why it was necessary for the NSC to have a congressional relations person. My original contact with Zbig had been that I was a student of his at Columbia, and I had come from the Hill directly from Ed Muskie's staff. I was his chief legislative assistant, so that I had a feeling for the Hill.

I think David Aaron, Brzezinski's deputy, wanted me to come on board. His reason was the feeling that Frank Moore's staff did not have enough of a sense of the importance of foreign policy legislation, and were very specifically tied up—necessarily—with pushing the Panama Canal. I think also, as one can see now from the [Ronald] Reagan administration, there is a feeling at the beginning of an administration that there are many

more domestic people in the White House, and their legislation takes priority because there are more interest groups that are pushing from the outside and the inside.

I think that the NSC felt that foreign policy legislation needed to have a spokesman on its behalf, and I was brought in specifically for that reason. The interesting thing was that Frank Moore's staff at the same time had approximately the same feeling that they needed help in foreign policy. At just about the time that I was hired, a man called Bob Beckel came on Frank Moore's staff. He was a political kind of person and had been hired for a while at the State Department and worked on the Panama Canal treaty specifically, and in about January 1978 he joined Frank's staff.

There was also a great misunderstanding about my role. I never really went to the Hill to lobby. My job was to do the same kind of thing that, as Les discusses as a coordinator, all NSC staffers are supposed to do, which is to coordinate an interagency legislative effort. My job was to get people with pieces of national security legislation to meet with other agency groups and plan a legislative strategy process. This went on all across the board on all the issues. For example, I ran an interagency group on the foreign aid bill and on the Middle East arms sales. On SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks] I didn't chair a group but I was a part of one.

It was a different set up for each one of the legislative issues. Additionally, when Les discusses arms sales, for instance, what would happen is that the memo that he would produce would come through me. I would often note what the congressional reaction to that particular arms sale might be, information that I would gather from my former sources on the Hill and people within the administration who also dealt with Congress. Brzezinski and then the President and Frank Moore's staff would get some sense of where this particular kind of an arms sale might go. The other thing that I did was to sensitize the other members of the NSC staff to the importance of Congress.

One of the accusations made originally about Brzezinski was the feeling that he didn't have enough of a sense how foreign policy issues played out on the Hill. Every week I wrote a legislative report on Saturday mornings to discuss what the legislative activities had been in our area over a given week, and then that would be distributed to the rest of the staff, so that there would be a feeling that they all had. You couldn't just create policy in a vacuum. I think Les and I, probably more than any other members of the NSC staff, he in his later role, dealt more with the rest of the White House.

My office was also in the West Wing, which makes a tremendous difference. I think there's no way you can overestimate the importance of proximity. My office and Bill Odom's office were in the basement of the White House, and it made a difference. It meant also that I dealt an awful lot with Frank Moore's staff and the relationship that I established with them, rather than being an adversary one, turned out to be, I think if you asked them, a pretty good one, in terms of providing them with background material on whatever the important foreign policy issue was.

In this deputies meeting, I would do what Les did later in the other meetings, which was to brief the rest of the White House staff on what the important issues were. They got mesmerized by Iran and then got mesmerized by [Marshall] Tito's imminent death or Poland and various events that I would report on. The role probably was not such an innovation in itself. Kissinger did have a legislative person, but I think, as those of you who have studied the NSC will find, the history of it is that an administration tries to do the opposite of what the other one did. So there was a great feeling that the NSC adviser certainly should not have his own congressional person.

Therefore, at the beginning, Jerry Schecter did press and congressional relations together. As any of you could figure out, that was impossible. So then that job was split and my role became somewhat larger. Not that I would have stayed, but I was dismissed by simply saying that my job had been targeted for elimination, and therefore my job no longer exists.

I think that the role of someone in the White House that is interested in foreign policy legislation is absolutely essential because as I said earlier, the domestic interests have so much more push in terms of getting their legislative interests through. It's important for someone who has a foreign policy background and has an interest and access to other agencies' processes to be able to discuss foreign policy legislation in an intelligent way.

The other thing that I did was to help in preparing briefing papers for the President whenever he met with a member of Congress on a foreign policy issue. This was done in conjunction with the NSC staff and with Frank Moore's staff, in terms of giving him the political background on the person he was meeting with and why this issue was important, and then also the foreign policy aspect of it. I was also involved in deciding as to whether we should have certain kinds of briefings for members of Congress, and I was present at every meeting the President had with a member of Congress on foreign policy except when it was a one-on-one arm-twisting session.

**YOUNG:** Did you have regular meetings with Brzezinski on legislative issues?

**ALBRIGHT:** I can't say regular, but I did see him all the time. This legislative report was the vehicle for it. At times he was asked to have conversations with members of the Hill to give his views. As you all know, certain members of Congress are more amenable to certain people than others, and Brzezinski was found to be useful with certain members of Congress, and in that way, I would give him a background on the issue. He had already gotten it, for instance, through this report, but then I would sometimes go to the Hill with him or we'd bring somebody in, but I can't say the meetings were regular. Certainly I saw him daily, as Les will attest to.

**YOUNG:** Could you go into a little more detail, perhaps with some examples, about your relations and co-working and whatever division of labor or responsibility there was, what the congressional liaison staff in the White House did, after the initial difficulties were

solved and settled down into a working relationship, particularly with Bob Beckel? Bob Beckel has been here.

**ALBRIGHT:** Two issues took a tremendous amount of time, and I think we worked very well on those. One was the 1978 Mideast arms sale, and the other lifting the Turkish embargo. Those were in some ways handled similarly. My role would be to work with the State Department and the Defense Department in terms of gathering material, which we would use on the Hill, preparing fact books and deciding what legislative strategy we would take on that particular issue. I worked very, very closely with the assistant secretaries for congressional relations in both the NSC related agencies. We all worked together in terms of getting vote counts and trying to see where we were going and what particular kinds of issues were going to be of interest to a particular member of Congress. Then I would work in terms of organizing staff briefings—those were for Hill staff people—in the White House, and sort of laying the groundwork in terms of informing those people on the Hill and being able to respond to their requests.

Bob Beckel spent his time on the Hill primarily, sometimes he came to these meetings that we had and then after we'd been through the initial facts and he knew them, he had them, and then he would go and actually do the lobbying. He and I would be in constant telephone contact as to whether he needed more material. Sometimes he dealt with the State Department directly, or the Defense Department, but on the whole we had this kind of teamwork where he was the front man, literally, on the Hill, and I manned the backup.

**YOUNG:** Downtown—

**ALBRIGHT:** That's right. Also, I was the telephone person, I was constantly trying to put people together, as we got tighter and closer to a vote, and you would find that Congressman X really needed to know what the specific aspect of one part of the Middle East arms sale would be. I would know to get in touch with Les who at that stage was handling arms sales, or with the appropriate person at State. We would quickly get somebody to the Hill who would be able to discuss just that one issue. I was there as an information source.

**YOUNG:** Did it just work out this way, or did you come to plan it this way?

**ALBRIGHT:** A little bit of both, because I think Frank Moore's staff really was sensitive to the fact that I did represent the NSC and they felt that the NSC should not be on the Hill because the National Security Adviser was not a confirmed officer. Also there was some feeling generally just about the fact that NSC had none of its own legislation, and that it really wasn't that appropriate.

I think it also was a matter of personality. Bob Beckel was a very outgoing person who was a political animal, wanted to be on the Hill, did a terrific job on the Hill, met a great many people, and he had a good reputation with them during Panama Canal. He knew a lot of people from before because he was head of the Committee for Effective Congress,

so he had helped elect a large number of people that he worked with. I had this sense about who knew what in the different Departments.

I can't stress enough the importance of the people part of my NSC job, that I would know which people in the Departments I could work with, what kind of information you were giving them, how close they were to the source. They would know that about you too, and you develop your own network. I think I may have done that better than Bob Beckel, who had his network on the Hill. Mine was a source of information within the executive branch.

**YOUNG:** We have two more questions: Did you find it a difficult problem at any point in the development of this coordinating activity, with Departments doing their own congressional relations and going off on their own? How did you deal with that problem?

**ALBRIGHT:** That problem came up most of all in terms of the foreign aid bill. This was the money that was needed to make a program run. We met every week, and that was my meeting, basically. We had representatives of AID [Agency for International Development] and Commerce and Ex-Im [Export-Import bank] and everybody that could have played part in it. We tried to lay out a coordinated strategy and give people particular members of Congress that they were most attuned to. In the end we didn't get our foreign aid bill and we went on continuing resolutions and tried to get supplementals. People would get very nervous about how the money was being divided, and you would find that you had been ambushed. And then we would have meetings about, "How dare you?" And people would say they were sorry and then they'd go do it again (*laughter*).

Mostly our problems were with Ex-Im. Ex-Im is a very interesting example. In terms of legislation, Ex-Im had a tremendous number of supporters. On the other hand, it took up most of the money that was left within our function for foreign aid.

**HARGROVE:** Your role in this kind of a tension was coordinating rather than authoritative; you couldn't lay down the law?

**ALBRIGHT:** I could at some times, but my job really differed from most NSC staff members because it was imposed later. A lot of it depended on personal relationships and a lot of it had to do with personality. I got more done by not laying down the law. I rather made suggestions of the time. My role, as Les can support or oppose, expanded over the years as people realized that I was not there in order to lay down the law, but rather as someone that was a facilitator. When I left, or when our term was over, the State Department representative, theoretically the person who would be most upset by an NSC action, said, "Would you please go and talk to these new people and tell them that someone such as you has got to exist because it's the only way that we will get our day in court, in terms of getting foreign policy legislation?" The way I saw my role was primarily as a facilitator.

**HARGROVE:** That gave you authority—

**ALBRIGHT:** It did. I could get things done. The proximity made a tremendous difference. Often Brian Atwood, who was the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations at State, needed to get quick approval on something. The personal relations are important here. The fact that I had good relations with both Les and with Zbig enabled me to get into his office quickly, get approval, and get something over to the President so that he would indeed make the telephone call to the Congressman or the Senator, a call that Brian could not have made by himself. This made me a useful person to him.

**YOUNG:** One more question: what about your working relationships with Anne Wexler or her people? Did her coming on the staff mobilize the outside support on the legislative agenda issued by the President? Did that alter your way of working? And how did you work with that? Did you participate in that?

**ALBRIGHT:** She came on just about the time I did. I worked quite a lot with her staff. They were very, very useful, especially on the Turkish embargo. We worked very hard. She organized her staff meetings with the Greek community, for which I had provided the briefers and made sure that the books were ready. She worked very hard on SALT and China trade. So we worked together very, very closely.

**YOUNG:** Did you participate in any of her task forces?

**ALBRIGHT:** Yes.

**YOUNG:** Did you ever chair any of them?

**ALBRIGHT:** No. I think in most cases people misunderstood the role of chairing the NSC. I think often the NSC staff member was there not to run the show, but just to make sure that people had a chance to have their day in court. The fact that we were there enforcing the law really didn't happen. Again, I think each NSC staff member played his or her role slightly differently.

**PRANGER:** You mentioned that you prepared briefing papers for the President and also some kind of regular report on congressional legislative status for Brzezinski. I've already heard about some think papers, pieces which may have been prepared by the NSC staff. Is it your impression that there was a fairly large volume of NSC-prepared papers produced on a regular basis for the President?

**ALBRIGHT:** Yes. There were. To support what Les said, there were different kinds of papers that came. The President I could tell when they came back, and would have paid particular attention to some of the remarks of the NSC papers, but that is a different kind of paper. The paper that I would prepare would be basically very much action-oriented and congressional, something that he needed for a specific meeting with members of Congress. That generally came from our office, with the support of other agencies. I often



worked with the appropriate staff member of the NSC because I was not an expert on arms transfers or on policy towards El Salvador.

**PRANGER:** There's a follow-on to that, just briefly— By the nature of those papers, they were privileged papers in the sense that no Department participating in the NSC saw that kind of paper. It wasn't normally circulated before it went to the President—it went directly via staff?

**ALBRIGHT:** The kind that I did?

**PRANGER:** You have mentioned that in cases you circulated them for inputs, but no one was really chopping on those papers in the Departments before they went to the President from NSC staff.

**ALBRIGHT:** The ones that I saw were usually a combination of agency inputs in the first place, and then in some cases, the NSC staff member would add his or her view, but the views of the other agencies were always very clear. In order to maintain this personal relationship that one had with the other agency members in things that weren't classified, I would often read the comments. Brian Atwood usually knew what it was that I was telling the President in terms of some particular congressional action. It was the way that we established the trust that was necessary, and I think there was probably less secretiveness because of this—that is, the NSC secret paper that went in to the President, giving an entirely different point of view from what was being recommended by a Department—than people think.

**DENEND:** Let me just add that it seems this avenue concerning the Assistant to the President's communication with a President is something that I think you probably ought to explore this afternoon, beginning with the meaning of the morning briefing and running through the whole range of ways that Zbig communicated with the President. The staff, in my observation of the bulk of the paper flow, rarely prepared papers for the President, covered by a memo to Brzezinski, to say, "You should forward this memo to the President, which is an informational memo." Generally they prepared memos which were informational memos to Zbig, and he would decide which of those should go forward.

Oftentimes the staff was asked by Zbig, "I need an informational memo for the President that sets out this issue." Always the bottom line was: Keep it brief and to the point. In some form or another they would perhaps be incorporated in another memo that Zbig would prepare for the President. In general, that kind of work by the staff was not an interagency product, other than the extent to which, when I got asked to do a memo on a subject like, "Where do we stand on this effort to achieve a multinational agreement to constrain arms sales?" I would surely not attempt that on my own. I would talk to the people at State and Defense who are involved and say, "What do we want to say at this point about that?" And then if it was a memo, I would sign it. I would reserve what I was ultimately going to say.

**STRONG:** You both talked about the kind of coordination you were doing among Departments and agencies with other White House staffs. Did the issue and regional experts on the NSC staff do the same sort of work, or were they doing something different?

**DENEND:** The work of the substantive staff in the Old Executive Office Building was very similar in kind across the entire staff. There were from 1977 to 1980 roughly 30 to 35 so-called professional staff members, a secretariat, an administrative staff, and secretarial support throughout that wing of the building. The work could be divided into fourths: attending meetings—interagency meetings, working group or higher, up to and including taking notes at PRC meetings and SCC meetings, and then preparing those notes and so on; talking on the telephone, just talking with people to try and coordinate what was going to happen; writing memoranda, either informational or issue—memoranda to cover other memoranda; and reading.

There was an incredible amount of information that you had to process and distill so that you could contribute your share to the 400 pages that Zbig got to read every day. In order to do that, I daily reviewed a stack of cables for as long as I could remember, possibly two inches thick and all of the intelligence material that would be generated on your issues of concern. I spent a certain amount of time coordinating with other people on the staff; obviously every arms sale that took place occurred in some country. So the NSC staff officer responsible for that country had something to say about that, and I had something to say.

I tried to present coordinated material, which we forwarded through the staff secretary, Christine Dodson, who played a key role in that whole process. If you look at it in those kinds of generic terms, most staff members, allowing for individual style, spent their time on similar functions.

**YOUNG:** Would you want to address part of the question to Miss Albright?

**THOMPSON:** Just briefly: You've given the example of an area where common interests were most likely to occur between NSC and State, namely congressional relations. Were there any areas where the coordination between those two groups of people was more complicated and required greater personal relations skills and effort going the second mile, in the way one wrote up reports of meetings that had occurred? Did you feel that what you achieved in the congressional relations field was achieved in every other area?

**ALBRIGHT:** I also would not like to leave a picture that everything was terrific in the congressional relations field. There were certain issues where we thought that the White House wanted to move our policy faster than was happening within the Departments. An example was aid to Morocco. It was something that the President felt very strongly about, but for some reason some people in the State Department didn't, and in many cases they

were the people that had to carry out some of the work on it; therefore they dragged their feet. We would have meetings and I'd say, "Why haven't we moved faster on this assistance to Morocco?"

There were obviously other areas where there were less good relations, and some of them had to do mostly with institutional factors. The fact is that the White House sometimes has a particular interest in moving a policy faster, or in a different way from the way that the desk officer or the regional people in the State Department have. I think there was less friction than people always imagine, and a lot of it again had to do with the people involved. It's the friction that gets in the papers, but more often it was the way Les describes our days. We were constantly working with people and working out problems and disagreeing, but disagreeing the way any colleagues do. You get your way through it. Some of it is institutional, because of the longer range or bureaucratic view that the State Department or Defense Department might have or with the way that a President feels he has to move an issue quickly.

**THOMPSON:** Could I do a quick follow-up? Did you talk about the friction and the way to deal with it? As one reads the articles and books on the Kissinger period, there seemed to have been a lot of talk within the NSC about "we" and "they" and a genuine effort or studied effort to build a sense of "we" as against "they." Was that fostered in any way?

**ALBRIGHT:** Certainly there were times that people felt that there was a "we" and a "they" thing. There was a certain mystique about working in the NSC, but I think that on the whole there were many staff meetings in which Zbig would make it very clear that he didn't like any "we" and "they" kind of thing, and all of us were aware that certain people were "they." Most of the people that I worked with most closely were in the State Department. You didn't have that kind of "we" and "they" feeling. Again, I think you have to break it down by individuals on the NSC.

For instance, Les also had a reputation for being someone who could work well with the other Departments, but there were certain people on the NSC staff who did not have that reputation, and who prided themselves on not having it. There were people in the State Department who prided themselves with not having a good relationship with the NSC, but I think given the institutional problems that will always exist, among all these different Departments, and given different personalities, there were few who strongly felt a "we-they" division.

**YOUNG:** Would it be fair to say that where there were differences that arise at staff level, they were more likely to occur with EOB people and the departmental people than in Zbig's immediate staff?

**DENEND:** At least in my case, as special assistant I had much less contact with people out in the agency than I had had when I was deeply immersed in a narrower range of issues. There was less of this sort of thing that went on. The people I talked with used to speak freely about how this issue was shaping up and why certain things were or were not

going to happen, but it wasn't in the sense that we were trying to resolve it. We were trying to make the system work and accommodate all the problems that arose.

**TRUMAN:** You've talked a bit about this interagency conflict coordination cooperation pattern in the area of foreign policy. To what extent did you have, either by yourself or with members of Frank Moore's staff, to take into account the ups and downs of congressional relations in areas that were purely domestic and had no bearing on foreign policy? Was this a compartmentalized process, which I would find it difficult to assume, or was there spillover that was in any way significant to the problems that you were confronting?

**ALBRIGHT:** You know this better than anyone. Obviously there were votes that were important to people on domestic policy. You would look at Senator X and say we really need him on the water project and the Panama Canal. When you got the President to talk to these people, he would be very much aware of what the domestic problems of Senator X in his district were, and so there was spillover.

One of the attributes I had which I brought to the job was the fact that I had been on the Hill. When I met regularly with Frank Moore's staff, I knew more about domestic legislation than anybody else on the NSC staff did. I knew how that all worked, and I also tried to give Frank's staff some background on a foreign policy issue, some facts that they might be able to work with. The problems really were, as I said, trying to sell foreign aid. That is like trying to sell leprosy. Therefore, it was a little hard to get the good trade-ups [laughter].

I would bring in more problem issues to the legislative interagency meetings than most, plus there really was a feeling—and I must say looking back on the Carter administration a legitimate one—that the President had expended a tremendous amount of political capital on the Panama Canal. People would say, "You foreign policy people are the ones that have cost us a lot of our political capital." And we did have a problem. Plus, as soon as we finished with Panama, we started on SALT, and the Middle East arms sales, and the Turkish embargo. I was always "bad news."

There was this kind of trade-off that one had to make. The thing, however, that I always found interesting was that members of Congress did love to come in to the White House to talk about foreign policy and get their foreign policy briefing. We would put on a lot good shows primarily to do with the SALT process, which I think when you get Lloyd Cutler in, you'll see. We really worked that issue to a point where we thought we could win. We had dinners for Senators and then we had fabulous briefings. There was this great show of Harold Brown and Zbig and [Cyrus] Vance. We'd get David Jones in, and you'd have maps and the President. He really knew SALT backwards and forwards. These were great evenings. I think in a lot of ways the domestic people appreciated the kind of stroking that we could do through the foreign policy briefings, which we put on for the Senators.

**TRUMAN:** So you think it was to a degree complimentary.

**ALBRIGHT:** Sort of, except that, as I said, I really meant trouble to the domestic policy people. There wasn't one easy foreign policy issue that came up.

**TRUMAN:** Did this confront you with the necessity to in effect subordinate in a succession of individual contacts the foreign policy objective to other objectives because there had to be some payoffs as a consequence of the Panama Canal?

**ALBRIGHT:** I think if it had been an ideal world, they would have liked us to have less foreign policy issues, but often the ones that we had to deal with we didn't make up.

**TRUMAN:** "They" meaning—?

**ALBRIGHT:** The domestic people—Frank Moore's staff.

**DENEND:** Let me comment on this just to try to put the two situations in perspective. I started right at the beginning of the Ford administration. In the fall of 1974 we immediately plunged into the worst recession since the Second World War, and the focus was almost entirely on domestic economics. Foreign policy was essentially being handled by Kissinger in both his hats. That's how I first learned how the President divided his time, between domestic and foreign issues, and that's the model I left with.

When I came back in 1977 after the system had been operating for approximately six months, I was amazed at the access that the President accorded to foreign policy issues. The amount of his time in terms both of meetings and in the amount of time that he claimed for paperwork, even from my limited perspective as a staff member sitting across the street, surprised me. Now it could be that I had an imperfect model from previous experience during the first year of the Ford administration, because the recession was biased in the other direction. But I would say that if you take the first year of three administrations—Ford, Carter, and Reagan—you would say that by perhaps in order of magnitude, Carter was more involved in the day-to-day details of foreign policy than the other two.

When you try to look beyond and say why did it happen that way, there are many reasons: personality, style, interest, the situation, the world, the way the staffs got organized. I think the NSC staff in the Carter administration got off to a quick start with some very, very bright people, and did good work, and good work had a tendency to reach the President. He was also interested in seeing a great deal of material, so he tended to see more foreign policy information.

**PRANGER:** Just to follow that, you both sort of agreed that relying on foreign policy as a way of making the Presidency is a pretty slippery slope, that's always out front.

**ALBRIGHT:** From my perspective, I think, and trying to get votes, there's hardly an easy foreign policy vote, and you really don't get much benefit from it in your district. You're either for or against Israel. There never was a way to waffle on them. I see that from a congressional point of view it's no advantage. As a political scientist myself, relying on foreign policy trips and all the pomp and circumstance that comes with a state visit and all that takes away from some of the horrors of domestic problems, you can see that is a plus.

**DENEND:** I would comment that the current state of economics, given our limited ability to really influence the economy and to understand what's going on, is in such a dismal state that foreign policy is one of the few ways that the President can show leadership and can make decisions which affect anything.

**PRANGER:** But your point of view is that that's a very tricky business. For example, would you say that the combination of Panama plus the Saudi F-15 deal was partly responsible for the erosion of congressional support for SALT?

**TRUMAN:** What is your response on the political pitfall of over-reliance on the foreign policy role as far as the President's electoral position is concerned? What about the reverse of that? Were there instances in which Frank Moore's staff on the domestic side took a few lumps with respect to legislation that was not foreign policy legislation? What, if anything, was the spillover from your perspective back on the foreign policy legislation that created problems for you?

**ALBRIGHT:** I was on the Hill during the first part of the Carter administration, working for Ed Muskie, who was very committed to the Panama Canal, but who also was being hurt by the President's water projects and by the President's \$50 rebate. And what you did find, as his chief LA [legislative assistant] at that time, you could feel the spillovers, whereas he was willing to support the President on foreign policy, he kept saying, "Why is he doing this to me? Why he is cutting the legs out from under me? Why should I keep supporting the President?" And in fact, there was a discussion about the fact of why did we commit our vote on Panama so early. People such as Ed Muskie, who I think was what you might characterize as a national Senator, would find that he wished, because there were domestic kinds of legislation that were hard, that the President wasn't delivering on that. He wished he were less national.

**TRUMAN:** Where did you see the focus of that problem? Was this a reflection somehow of the staff structure around the President? We school ourselves not to talk in critical terms about the President as a person because that's not our function here, but I'm interested in the structural view. Where was the power, why the dilemma that Ed Muskie had? His dilemma was not unique.

**ALBRIGHT:** No. Part of the problem was that Moore came in with a bad rap from the beginning, basically because the President had run against Washington. Here arrived Frank Moore, unlike how Washington lobbyists usually look and talk and act. I happen to

believe he was given a bum rap. I think he did a good job and his staff did a good job. You all know this about Washington as well as I do, once you get a particular type of reputation, it's very hard to undo.

**TRUMAN:** That's not just a Washington problem [*laughter*].

**ALBRIGHT:** Frank's staff delivered on a lot of pieces of hard legislation. I really do believe that Frank Moore got a bad rap because he was very close to the President. He was able to persuade him on a number of issues, and I think the President had a hard time on a lot of legislative issues not because of Moore's staff, but because he had run against Washington, because he had also gotten the reputation of running against a legislative body and sort of saying, "I'm going to show you." And he didn't do a lot of the oiling and stroking activity.

**THOMPSON:** A specific example of Dave Truman's question: Who decided, to the extent of your knowledge, that Panama ought to come ahead of SALT? That in fact you ought to get on the track and use Panama to warm up for SALT?

**ALBRIGHT:** I was not there at the very beginning, but I can tell you a regular process that did go on was that you set out legislative priorities at the beginning of each year. Whether that was done the first year I don't know. It certainly was done in 1978. For instance, the NSC staff was asked to collect from various Departments what their legislative priorities were for the year, and each Department was asked to divide them into categories A, B, and C, or a "Must," "Wish," and then "Extra" list. They would come in to the NSC staff, and then you would decide which ones had to have presidential involvement in them, which ones the Secretary could take the lead on, and which ones could be done at a lower level.

Domestic people did the same thing. The Vice President's staff finally coordinated this entire legislative priorities package, and each year for the three years that I saw, we had a list of things you worked on. One of the things that we talked about a lot was whether we would push Jackson-Vanik at a particular time; that was something that kept being pushed from "Must" to "Let's wait" to—that was something that I think was an organized process, to the best of one's ability within a moving political situation. Now Panama—

**DENEND:** It wasn't an area I was in. From the very beginning the operating rule was: no issue was too tough, the administration would take on all the issues, the entire spectrum from domestic to foreign policy, try to treat them all individually, decide them on their merits, and move on. There was a kind of a strange correlation that presented Senator Muskie with these confounding decisions whereas if you'd look at each one independently, it's different.

I asked at one point, "Why the water projects as an opening shot?" You couldn't do worse. The best answer I ever got—this was not something I researched in a scholarly way, but I talked to people, because I hadn't been involved— was that, "Well, it seemed

to be ready at that time.” The budget had been submitted and it was a pet project of OMB. Someone over there was prepared to send a paper forward that presented some of these arguments, and it got picked up as a priority and pushed, with the results that we’re all aware of. In large measure, I think the confronting agenda resulted from a consistent attempt, and I’m sensitive to your comment, Sir, that we try not to look at personalities, but a consistent attempt to take each issue as it came along, not to duck, and to give it the best shot.

**ALBRIGHT:** I think one thing we did learn as we went through—Anne Wexler had a very important role in this—was to kind of pick issues that you could win on finally, that you wouldn’t just have this laundry list of things that the President felt that he really could do, and people became more, for want of a better word, political, in terms of knowing that it was important to achieve a certain number of victories, and that you didn’t say the President had to be involved in this personally, if you thought that you were going to go down the tubes.

**THOMPSON:** As part of this process, nobody in your shop, nobody in the NSC, said, as this thing went up to [Walter] Mondale’s level, “SALT is more important for the survival of mankind than Panama.” Nobody made an objective—

**ALBRIGHT:** At that time, there was no question that we would have both. At the beginning SALT was not ready. Panama was. Panama had been a really thorny issue. I think the President’s victory on Panama was quite incredible—actually it did cost him a lot. You think about the number of years that that issue had hung around, and Carter got it. It was a great victory. I think eventually it’ll come out that way. Finally, I would say to foreign policy people, “Look, you’re asking for too many foreign policy priorities.” You can’t possibly have a lot of crazy things that various Departments had to have, and you just couldn’t get that many different issues passed. What I had hoped that I was going to be doing, and our staff, too, was saying, “You cannot ask every Senator to vote on six or seven of these kinds of tough issues. Let’s save that arms sale until later, let’s try not to do Jackson-Vanik,” etc.

**HARGROVE:** Somebody asked the question, “To what degree did the NSC staff initiate ideas that weren’t derived from the Departments?” And you talked about two kinds of papers. To what degree did the staff and Brzezinski play the policy formation role, and advocacy role, as opposed to the coordinating role? Were these papers that you characterized as political a vehicle for the advocacy role? And was there any critical content to those? In terms of strategy, did you say, the Panama Canal will strengthen the President in certain ways if he pushes it forward now?

**DENEND:** The question of advocacy vs. the honest broker role is one about which a great deal has been written, specifically about Brzezinski, and that’s something that I think would be a good thing to discuss with him. To characterize, which is awfully dangerous since he’s going to be here later—he was very careful about separating the institutional role of the coordinator or the honest broker with the role that he took very



seriously. He will tell you, “I was the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. I was his adviser; I had that responsibility; I took that very seriously.” He did provide advice, and it was advice that contained all of the dimensions that you mentioned: substantive, political, and anything else that he happened to feel was important. The memos that were prepared, that were part of the NSC process, were generally written by staff members. They were largely constructed with counterparts in the agencies, they reflected the various views, tried to summarize. Once you had written several of them you knew how to write them: the brief background, what the issues were, the options and so on. They looked very, very similar. They were not advocacy pieces other than to show where people stood.

**HARGROVE:** Even the ones that originated in the NSC itself?

**DENEND:** I’m talking about memos that were prepared for interagency use.

**HARGROVE:** It’s the other kind that I’m talking about.

**DENEND:** We must consistently separate the memos that the staff sent Brzezinski from those that were the information sent to the President. Those were beginning to serve this advocacy role. Zbig had a lot of different inputs every day, just tons of it that we went through. In those cases, I would say by and large the staff was remarkably substantive and did not make overtly political arguments or try and make arguments that ignored some particular aspect of the issue in order to sell a particular point. There were very few NSC staff members who, after a kind of an initial period of settling in, remained as a very, very strong advocate of a particular point of view on an issue. They were just forced to become more accommodating and to see issues in broader perspective.

I would say that the content of the memos coming from the staff to Zbig was remarkably substantive. I mean that in a kind of neutral-informative sense. In his role as adviser to the President, in some of the things that he did, he was trying to counsel the President to do certain things. They were markedly more pointed. He was, as I said initially, very careful—hopefully he will confirm this—he was very, very careful about separating his advocate role, his adviser role, from his coordinating or honest broker role.

**HARGROVE:** You saw no evidence that this distinction was confused in the agencies?

**DENEND:** To say that there was no confusion would be to deny all the stories and everything that has been written and the interviews that have been granted and the personal accounts that have been written since then by individuals who thought they had been wronged in one way or another. It would be naive for me to assert to you that this high goal was achieved in 100 percent of the cases. That wasn’t true either. The perception in the agencies was, I think, at least by some, on certain issues, that it was a stacked deck. That was part of what Madeleine worked at, and that’s a lot of what I worked on. I considered my highest call to duty, to try to make sure that the process worked, that those who were supposed to have a voice had a chance, that the paper didn’t

go in prematurely. We had certain rules. We didn't write them down, but certain rules in mind. There's no paper that I can recall ever signed by a Cabinet Secretary to the President that didn't go to the President—promptly. That can't be said of all—

**ALBRIGHT:** Secretary Vance did send evening notes to the President. He had a separate channel to the President.

**YOUNG:** Let me put this question to you about the impression I'm getting on this business of advocacy vs. honest brokerage as I listen to your distinction between your roles and Zbig's in this respect. Would it be accurate to say that Brzezinski's staff was not conceived of by him as an advocacy support group instructed to work for him in that respect, even though he himself would take on this role and you would get involved in the preparation of a paper for that role? Is that what you're trying to tell me?

**DENEND:** I would say so. I think the high number of detailees, that is, people brought in from other agencies expecting to return to those agencies, and the relatively small number of direct NSC hirees would certainly argue for that. I think the criteria that were applied in trying to find people when they were hired from diverse backgrounds and points of view and previous associations, and really looking for the fundamental quality of intelligence, wanting to be there and work on those kinds of issues, and that sort of thing, all argue for putting together the best possible staff in terms of agility and intelligence and knowledge of the issues—not trying to build an ideological staff. It was a very diverse group.

**ALBRIGHT:** I think that's the part that was interesting.

**DENEND:** I put it that way, too simply perhaps, just to try to nail down some things that were vague.

**ALBRIGHT:** Different people—again, I may be too people-oriented—but obviously different people play different roles. There were certain members of the staff who were fair, but also advocates and were interested in certain issues, the same ones that Brzezinski was interested in—China is an example. What I noted when I got there was this: Zbig really was very good about what he called collegiality, and I think all of you from an academic background would appreciate this. Our staff meetings were really like very high-grade seminars, and I would always have this sense of déjà vu with Zbig at the head of the table because I had been in his seminars where you would have very bright people disagreeing and you had a lot of disagreement and you also had people that were not experts on issues feeling very free to give their views on them.

There were people that Zbig disagreed with on quite a lot of issues, and since we're mentioning names, Les's boss, Jessica Tuchman, was a person that Zbig disagreed with. And there were people to the left or to the right of him, and you really did have a spectrum of views. I happened to have my own sort of views about that. I think that there should be some people on the NSC that are more politically attuned to the President they

were serving. This is my particular view of what the role of NSC should be: a combination of professionals who go from one administration to another, but then people who are specifically serving a President and will give a much more political viewpoint. What you have to do is present a President with a particular point of view.

**THOMPSON** Could I have one follow-up point? The *Washington Post* and other papers talked about somebody going to see [Henry M. “Scoop”] Jackson and [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan to press a point of view which seemed to be different from the President’s and the Secretary of State’s. Would you say either that that was bad journalism or that it was an exceptional case because the names and personalities were clearly identified—[Sam] Huntington and others of the very early period? Was that just something that was so exceptional that it didn’t happen often?

**ALBRIGHT:** I would say it didn’t happen often; it was exceptional. And I’m not sure that it was also done without the knowledge of the President. My feeling, and before Zbig comes, I really think that none of you can overestimate the closeness that he had with the President and the respect that the President paid to his views, and I think you should ask him about these morning briefings. There is something about the way Zbig presents issues that particularly appealed to the kind of mind of Jimmy Carter. Zbig would not have done the things that he did if the President hadn’t wanted him to. I think this is something you’ve got to keep in mind. They saw each other a lot during the day, and they worked together well, and whatever kinds of things that the NSC staff did for the most part were the kinds of things that the President was very well aware of.

**CLAUDE:** I wanted to refer to your reference to the unconfirmed status of the National Security Adviser as a factor in making it relatively inappropriate for you [Albright] to appear on the Hill. I wondered whether that status at all weakens the relationship of the NSC staff with the pertinent Departments, the executive Departments that you deal with. Does it give you a sense of being somewhat less legitimate than they are in dealing with them?

**ALBRIGHT** The question of confirmation is not an executive branch issue because the role of the National Security Adviser depends completely on what it is that the President wants him or her to do. I think that when it comes up on the Hill, which it does periodically, it’s basically a method by which the Hill wants to get some control of the presidential appointments. It has very little to do with the relationships between the National Security Adviser and the other members of the Cabinet because again that is a presidential designation. Brzezinski was Cabinet level, Richard Allen was not. I don’t think William Clark is as of this reading. It’s up to the President to really set the tone.

**CLAUDE:** It’s not pulled up by your fellow executive branch people as it may be by people on the Hill.

**ALBRIGHT:** No, and I think, on the Hill thing, it was purely because they could see that someone of Brzezinski’s stature had power that they could not get their hands on, and the

fact that they weren't able to get him to go up there and testify was something that really bugged them. The interesting thing is that the person who did go up and testify finally on the Zorinsky Amendment was [Warren] Christopher from the State Department, who said it would lessen the role of the Secretary of State if the National Security Adviser were confirmed.

**CLAUDE:** They like it then.

**PRANGER:** My question's very short, and now that I think about it, it does relate to Madeleine's experience on the Hill in the executive branch. Why is it, if foreign policy issues are so tortuous for Congress people and they really don't like to get involved, why is it that Congress insists on increasing its own role? Or is that really a function of the very piecemeal kinds of congressional actions?

**ALBRIGHT:** It's a historical kind of thing which came about because Congress, I think, believes that it got pulled involuntarily into the Vietnam decision and therefore that from then on they had to have a role in foreign policy. I think a lot of it has come about as piecemeal action because certain people feel that they would like to have something like the Harkin Amendment on human rights or whatever they feel is their way of getting at the action. Again I have to quote Ed Muskie on this, because he has had both roles. He was beginning to feel that as a Senator, there was too much micromanagement of foreign policy by members of Congress and that there were certain things they essentially could not understand or would not want to. So why were they putting themselves in this position of having to take hard votes? On the other hand, they do feel that they have a role because of the money aspects of it and the congressional oversight laws. It's a love-hate relationship, I think.

**HARGROVE:** Isn't there some political entrepreneurship by members of Congress?

**ALBRIGHT:** Some, I think.

**HARGROVE:** The Greek lobby.

**ALBRIGHT:** Exactly. Also, the Israeli issue and others. I think it's by accretion and I think that there's a feeling now that they would like to lessen that role. It's funny how your views change according to administration, but we were going to go up with a package of trying to get rid of what we called these barnacles and legislative restrictions on the President's power. Since I've already identified myself as political, I'll leave it there.

**STRONG:** I have a question for Madeleine. It's about a period before you came to the White House. You talked about Frank Moore's bad rap and some of the early problems the administration had in setting an agenda. In your opinion, do you think the President got good advice from the administration about the congressional and political consequences of Panama, water projects, and other controversial measures he supported?

If he did get good advice about how difficult those things would be, did he ignore that advice, and for what reasons? The press account is contradictory: some people say he ignored that kind of advice because he was naive about Washington. Other people say he didn't concern himself about those things because he was confident in his own abilities. A third explanation is that he simply wanted to do what was right on whatever issue came to his desk.

**ALBRIGHT:** I'd really just have to speculate on that because I don't know, but I'm willing to speculate on the quantity thing. Fritz Mondale did give him political advice, and he understood the Hill. I would just be speculating, but he probably told him earlier that he should not take on that many different issues. I have not asked anybody that question, and that is speculation. I think the record shows that he did not do the right things politically the first year, and that they cost him a tremendous price on the Hill.

**YOUNG:** I'd like to ask Bill Odom to start educating us about his role and how it evolved, some of the problems and collisions that occurred on the way in the evolution of foreign policy, and I think he would like to mention some important cases of process to look at as you study the Carter Presidency in depth.

**ODOM:** As it was suggested to me, I shall follow an agenda of first talking about my recruitment, then the role that I was assigned on the NSC, how that role evolved, and then a couple of cases of policy process. I first knew Brzezinski as his graduate student in 1961 at Columbia where I took his course in "The Dynamics of Soviet Politics." I came back there in 1967 for a PhD and knew him briefly again, although I wasn't closely associated with him at the time.

After finishing the Ph.D. and a teaching tour at West Point, I was posted to Vietnam, from where I returned with a manuscript I wanted to turn into a book. Brzezinski was gracious enough to offer me a visiting scholar position at Columbia, 1971-72, where I completed that project. I was next posted to Moscow as an Assistant Army Attaché, 1972-74. We stayed in touch by our occasional letters. Returning from Moscow to a teaching post at West Point, I also became a senior research associate in his institute of Columbia. For the next two and a half years I was closely involved with him at the institute.

My recruitment took place between Christmas and New Year's in 1976, I guess. He was carrying a large stack of papers, and I've forgotten precisely how the conversation went, but the conclusion was, "Would you like to help me work through this enormous set of papers in the NSC?" and I said, "I would." A couple of weeks later I was hired. I was given the job of "crisis management," a position not at all clearly defined, and not one that particularly appealed to me at first. I took it, deciding that you could make such a job title mean almost anything you wanted it to mean.

In the first six months of my experience in the administration, two general areas of activity emerged for me. First, I found myself very promptly thrust into looking into how

the President, in an emergency, would execute military operations, primarily the Single Integrated Operations Plan [SIOP], in other words, how he decides whether to respond with nuclear weapons to warning of an atomic attack. It was alleged that the procedures were in disarray, in poor repair. Therefore I spent about four or five months in a staff supervisory level over the White House Military Office, which is in the East Wing of the White House and actually controls all the operational assets for emergencies: helicopters, aircraft, communications.

I had no direct authority over the Military Office, so I had the ticklish task of getting them to accept my interventions and to let me become acquainted with the emergency procedures. We managed to work out a reasonably cooperative relationship and progressed quite rapidly, and in fact got the President, I think for the first time ever, actually to go through the procedures, getting the commanders of all the unified commands on the telephone and running through several scenarios which assumed that there would be incoming nuclear missiles, and discussing how he would respond. That led me to ask very serious questions, initiating some staff work on how we are really prepared to make the transition from peace to war under such conditions. That work pushed me into a lot more defense issues, giving me an informal but central role in the larger part of them.

My second area of activity was East-West issue. Shortly after the administration began, Presidential Review Memorandum 10 was signed. It had two parts. It asked the Defense Department to do a force structure review; it assigned an NSC-sponsored task—as Brzezinski put it to Sam Huntington, who joined the staff at that time to lead this process—“Go out and tell us how we’re doing in the world vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.” This is, make a comprehensive net assessment of East-West affairs.

I was told to join Sam in this project, particularly to provide military and Soviet expertise. We managed to get a couple of other assistants: Dick Betts and Katherine Kelleher. Dick came on the staff for about a year, and Katherine came for six months or so. They helped us enormously throughout the spring.

I think I should explain our approach briefly. We went back and reviewed NSC 68, NSC 162/2 “Flexible Response” of the JFK years, and finally NSSM3 [National Security Study Memorandum], which Kissinger initiated for a new look at the strategic relationships in the world. NSC 162/2 Flexible Response, and NSSM 3 had been more or less narrowly defined as military force posture reviews. NSC 68, as you all know, was a much more comprehensive assessment of U.S.-Soviet relations and competition. We decided that PRM 10 should be the lineal descendent of NSC 68, not of NSSM 3. Therefore it included not only a military net assessment but also a net assessment in all the major categories of power.

The interagency task forces were set to produce five functional assessments: military capabilities, economic capabilities, political institutions, intelligence, and technology. We tried to net out U.S. capabilities in regard to these subjects. Then we launched task forces

for six regional net assessments—not what U.S. policy should be, or how we were doing in foreign policy in particular regions, but how U.S.-Soviet influence and interests in those areas intersected, how we were doing in pursuing our interests vis-à-vis the Soviets in those regions. Those were: Europe, East Asia, South Asia, Middle East Persian Gulf, Africa, and Latin America. Interestingly enough, people at State told us we should not do one on Latin America because there is no real Soviet influence in that region. We managed to prod State to agree to participate in a Latin American regional assessment anyway. We got all those task force reports in and we synthesized the 11 task force assessments into about a 200- or 300-page overview.

The bottom line was: in the military area, we assessed U.S.-Soviet military capabilities as essentially equivalent. In economics and technology, we assessed the U.S. to have a considerable edge. In political institutions, we considered ourselves to have a rather significant edge. Although the 1977 military balance was judged as “essential equivalence,” all the dynamics trends for all categories of military power were adverse, very adverse in several cases. We’d had about a ten-year decline in U.S. allocations to defense, and in the meantime we’d had a rather steady rise in Soviet allocations to defense. PRM 10 reflected these comparative developments quite candidly.

We also did some special analyses of particular problems in East-West affairs. Perhaps the most important was penned by Sam Huntington. He called it “Crisis Confrontations.” We asked the question, “Where is the most likely point for a U.S.-Soviet crisis?” I reached the conclusion that it was Iran in a somewhat intuitive and subjective fashion. Huntington developed a set of criteria that eliminated all the countries except one, Iran. Having reached similar conclusions independently, we decided that Huntington’s criteria were worth a special section in the overview. Thus we became aware, as a result of PRM 10, that in the regional areas of East-West competition, the largest strategic stakes and the most fragile situation was in Iran and the Persian Gulf area.

In the military area, some special implications began to become very clear. The force structure that we had built to contain or deter the Soviets in the ’50s and ’60s was heavily dependent on nuclear weapons. Now the Soviets equaled us or perhaps were going to exceed us in strategic nuclear capabilities. How credible would our nuclear deterrent remain? It was pretty easy for us to answer in our minds that it would not be very credible. The implications of the changing military balance therefore appeared to be rather extraordinary.

This conclusion had immediate practical significance for the work I was doing on presidential emergency procedures for nuclear attack. It became clear to me that we had a very effective plan for how to deal with the war on D-Day. What we would do the succeeding days was less clear. I actually took Brzezinski on a trip to talk to the Commander-in-Chief of SAC [Strategic Air Command]. To get a clear view of our true predicament, I suggested that he ask the SAC commander what his plans are for D+3, D+10, D+20. Brzezinski did, and that question did not bring a comforting answer from General [Richard H.] Ellis. He had some smooth-sounding phrases, but not very much

substance to offer. Brzezinski, I don't really think, appreciated initially the full implications of it. But they became clear to him in time.

Another aspect of the White House emergency procedures began to raise additional aspects of our limited capacity to deal with the problem of a rapid transition from peace to war in a crisis and the bearing on our deterrent credibility of that limitation. You will remember that in 1974, [James] Schlesinger had enunciated a new targeting doctrine: "Limited Nuclear options." I went to some length to get the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and Secretary of Defense to come over and tell the President about these Limited Nuclear Options and how he would use them in a crisis.

I sent a memorandum to Brzezinski saying you've got to get these people to come over and tell the President the details of how he's going to shoot a small set of these nuclear weapons. Is he going to issue the order from the Oval Office? Will he go down to the Situation Room to do it? Is he going out of the White House somewhere to a bunker? When he shoots them and destroys a Soviet city, Kiev for example, what's he going to tell Jody Powell to say to the TV networks? Will he say, "I have just received word on the hotline from [Leonid] Brezhnev. 'We took that attack on Kiev, you're now going to take one on Seattle.' So you can tell ABC, NBC, and CBS to let everyone know that they can watch TV quietly tonight except for the people in Seattle. For them it's too bad!"

It became clear that limited nuclear options were patently absurd unless you were prepared to think of all the other things that must go with them for social and political cohesion under stress. That became a big problem in my mind, one that I believed we really had to address.

One other point I think that one should make about PRM 10 is that Sam Huntington conceptualized the post-World War II period into two eras, Era One and Era Two. Era One had been characterized by enormous U.S. military supremacy and a containment policy. We decided that as a result of our military assessments that we were entering a new era of East-West relations, brought about essentially by the Soviet military buildup. We were going to have to find some new kind of strategy in order to maintain both deterrence and containment, etc., into the '80s. We set forth the rudiments of such a strategy in PD 18, which was a directive based on PRM 10, promulgated in August 1977.

Essentially PD 18 directed that "military equivalence" be maintained with the U.S.S.R. It also said that we must use our economic, technological, and other nonmilitary advantages to compensate for shifts in balance of military power.

I think that I would like to add that in the course of the Carter administration three other things occurred that helped define the watershed between Era One and Era Two. First, the new strategic importance of the Persian Gulf is also a defining development for the change in East-West relations. The second additional factor was one which we didn't pay enough attention to earlier. I began to see the importance of it for the alliance relationships later on, and that is the relative diffusion of economic power in the world. In



the 1950s we had all the economic power and all the military responsibility. By 1980 it was clear that we had much larger military responsibilities than we had ever considered in the 1950s, and yet the economic power was more diffusely distributed in the world with Saudi Arabia, Japan, Europe.

To use a Marxist frame of reference, the “base” was out of tune with the superstructure. The NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] superstructure was built on an economic base of the 1930s. The economic alignments had changed rather radically, and therefore we should expect very serious tensions in the institutional superstructure of the alliance. It wasn’t very difficult to see that that was the case. You could see lots of symptomatic evidence that it was the case in our relations with Europe, Japan, and the oil-rich states. The final defining issue, it seems to me, for the transition into Era Two was the normalization of U.S.-Chinese relations. That meant that the East Asian theatre, as a strategic zone for the U.S., demanded less relative to Europe and the Persian Gulf in military requirements. It had enormous significance for the configuration of strategic power in the world.

**THOMPSON:** Could I interrupt to ask a question? One of these things that strikes me—you didn’t hear the first half of the discussion—is that the temper of the two discussions are quite different. This morning before you came we heard about the efforts of part of the NSC to get into the intangibles, to look at human rights, the most intangible of all, to look at arms transfers or nonproliferation, which has all the ambiguities that any kind of restriction policy has. Do you think that your institutional relationships and your tasks were much more clear-cut and had this character that I seem to get from you that I haven’t from the others of being off to a running start—for two reasons: one, that you were dealing from the very beginning with tangibles, or what seemed to be tangibles; secondly, that you all had in some way or another a doctrine of sorts. Huntington and Brzezinski, from what you have described, had a kind of a doctrine about military matters. Did that change the character of your operation and did it change the people you dealt with, which is what we talked about much more before you came? What were the lines of contact that the NSC had with Congress or with other agencies? You haven’t said as much about that kind of thing. ...

**ODOM:** Take the issues that I think you mentioned: human rights, arms transfers—those sorts of things. It seemed to me the administration hit the ground running, particularly in comparison to the Reagan administration—within a month or two we had almost 30 PRMs out—major Presidential Review Memoranda. I think the Carter administration essentially sailed in one direction for two years and slowly came back around to another direction the last two years, and what I suspect you’re talking about are some of those initial policy directions.

I felt a lot of tension, a lot of pressure. I did not particularly like the situation I found myself in in the early part of the administration, in that without waiting for these reviews, or without even rejecting what seemed to be emerging in some of the reviews, particularly in the Departments—State and Defense Department—we launched

vigorously off in other policy directions than PRM 10 seemed to justify. For example, we launched four policies that sort of intersected in the Persian Gulf and became self-defeating. First, Indian Ocean arms talks; two, arms transfer policy; three, the conventional arms transfer talks with the Soviet Union; four, nonproliferation as it affected countries like Pakistan. The first three convinced our friends that we were withdrawing from a major strategic role there. In the case of the fourth, non-proliferation, if you take conventional arms transfers away from a state like Pakistan, you increase its incentive to proliferate. That was one of the self-defeating features of this set of policies.

Another assumption that caused us difficulty with that set of policies concern the Soviet Union. I think the assumption was on the part of Vance—and I heard him make many statements at SCC meetings that I think would substantiate this judgment—that he did not believe the Soviets had any genuine strategic concept of projecting power into that region. What was happening in Ethiopia and South Yemen in 1977 and 1978 was largely a matter of spontaneity, opportunism, that would really have no significant consequences for our vital interests in the region.

Thus I describe those four policies as four intersecting, self-defeating policies in the Persian Gulf, based on fallacious assumptions about the strategic relationships out there. For the next two years, based on the kind of analyses we had done in PRM 10, we had to work slowly to try to bring the realities to the eyes of the President, the eyes of the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and make them realize that we had to tackle some of those policies from very fundamentally different directions. If that's what you mean by your question, then yes, there was a lot of tension. Yes, we had a rather clearly defined program.

Some basic fundamentals of my views were very crystallized from my previous experience. I served in Moscow from '72 to '74; I watched the high tide of détente; I watched Henry Kissinger tell the business community that there were billions of dollars to be made in East-West trade. I watched a number of what seemed to me to be absolutely silly and groundless policy lines put out on what could be achieved in relations with Moscow. Such policies were bound to exacerbate our own alliance relationships and at the same time facilitate Soviet alliance relationships. I brought the view to the NSC that the detente policy that Kissinger had designed was based on very fallacious assumptions about the nature of the Soviet Union and East-West relationships.

**YOUNG:** Could we let you finish going through the kinds of things you were involved in? And then we can perhaps come back to some of this outlook.

**ODOM:** I remained involved in following up on the military policy implications of the PRM 10 net assessment and the White House emergency procedures. The first was PRM 32 on civil defense. If you think that a prudent government should look after the people that survive in the awful event that somebody launched a nuclear war, civil defense is a serious issue. The first question we actually asked in PRM 32 was whether anybody would survive. It became clear in the analysis that a lot more people would survive than anybody had been willing to believe before. Harold Brown, who pooh-poohed civil

defense earlier, changed his view rather dramatically. Many opponents of civil defense said, if people move out of the cities like the Soviets say they will, we'll just retarget the weapons on the relocated population. In the Defense Department analysis, it became clear that we do not have enough nuclear weapons to do this. He had his analysts do that.

In a parallel effort, I became involved in concerns for other aspects of the civil sector in war, continuity of government, and industrial mobilization. I looked back at the institutional relationships as they evolved in the period after World War II. The old Office of Defense Mobilization had begun to disintegrate, eventually becoming the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and finally Nixon dealt it a deathblow in 1973, broke it up and tucked three little sub agencies away in HUD [Housing and Urban Development], in General Services Administration, and the Defense Department.

In the spring of 1977 I went up to the Presidential Reorganization Project and I told Harrison Wellford that we ought to put all those things back together. There's a bill in the Congress [Charles] Percy-[William] Proxmire sponsored that says they're going to do it anyway, and there are a lot of good national security reasons to do so. Wellford was being pressured by Governors and local officials who wanted to come to one pork barrel spigot rather than three. Thus there was a confluence of interest in reorganization; thus we launched the reorganization project that led to FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency]. A lot of people had various interests in why that came about. My interest, and I pushed that very hard, was to begin to generate some kind of infrastructure, some sort of organizational structure to look after industrial mobilization, manpower policy, and civil defense.

Another issue that I found myself involved in was telecommunications policy. The President disbanded OTP, the Office of Telecommunication Policy. But then it was discovered that there were a number of functions that that organization performed which were required by statute and could not be dropped. Because the SCC under the NSC structure had the responsibility for "crisis management," it was decided to make it responsible for the emergency telecommunications policy role. My eyes initially glazed over at the word "telecommunications," but then I began to discover that it is a truly fascinating area.

Back in 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis, President [John F.] Kennedy discovered that various Departments could not communicate with one another, that independent communication systems hindered interoperability. He therefore set up the National Communications System and made the Secretary of Defense the executive agent. The NCS was responsible to take as many agencies as members as wanted to be, and a number as mandatory members (I think it has maybe 15 or 20 member agency members right now), and to coordinate their telecommunications policies so that indeed they can communicate among themselves in a crisis. National Communications Systems has a staff and interagency membership looking for things to do. It was crying about being neglected. I decided not to neglect them. Already concerned with communications for White House emergency procedures and wartime command and control, I saw the NCS as

a structure to deal with the C3I [command, control, communication & intelligence] problem. From the NCS I eventually got out a very basic directive, which recommended, for the first time, some national objectives for national security telecommunications policy.

I became involved in another area because of PRM 10's emphasis on East-West economic relations and because of PD 18's directive that we should use our economic advantages in East-West competition. Sam Huntington, who had left the NSC in 1978, had pretty well developed a concept of "economic diplomacy." I worked with him on this and carried it on after he left. Our analysis of East-West economic interaction showed great Soviet needs in the energy and a virtually U.S. monopoly of key oil-production technology. I convinced an NSC ad hoc group to get interagency support for bringing oil production technology under licensing so that the President may bargain with Brezhnev at the upcoming summit on terms for a liberal licensing policy. Only the Department of Energy supported me. It appeared a dead issue.

But then came the [Anatoly] Scharansky case. There was much running around trying to decide what should be done in retaliation. Huntington and I happened to have these nice economic proposals, and one of them was to put oil technology under licensing control so that we would have a policy review on whether or not applications were approved. The President liked the idea and accepted it.

This somewhat irregular development caused great bureaucratic resistance, infighting, and the temporary collapse of further efforts at "economic diplomacy" until post-Afghanistan. In any regard, Brzezinski kept me involved in East-West policy for the remainder of the administration, a very rocky involvement because he did not agree with the liberal licensing desires of State, Commerce, some at CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and Defense, and in the White House domestic staff.

**DENEND:** If I can highlight what's gone on during your conversation, you talked for the most part about what your papers said; we talked for the most part about how we moved our papers, where they went, in terms of process. It's striking the difference in your focus, and I'll take some responsibility in that I excused myself from the room when you went through your initial briefing. You've talked almost entirely since you got here. This is fascinating; I haven't heard you deliver this way before. We almost entirely focused on how things worked; in other words, you confronted a number of problems from your particular perspective there, and all of this didn't happen without some bruises and so on in the way you work. I don't know what the group—

**YOUNG:** Bill Odom is describing, as I understand it, that you were a policy operative and an action officer.

**ODOM:** Yes—

**YOUNG:** Unlike the other two, and this is truly your role, that's why you're talking about these things; you're talking about the policy. I would like to hear the full range of this policy operative role before we go back and ask what happened in terms of process. I would like to hear this out.

**ODOM:** I'll try to bring it to a fairly quick close. You had a very strong faction in the administration and also in Congress who wanted to keep going with East-West trade. As I said, I had actually initiated a group, a study group, an NSC ad hoc group, to consider putting oil technology on the commodity control list. It was a disastrous meeting: nobody was for it except the Energy Department. Schlesinger was still there, and he was very much for it. I decided to plow on because Brzezinski was very supportive.

Very often you discovered if you just keep having those meetings, eventually they'll sign your proposals, but it was obviously going to be a long route with this crew. That Scharansky case came along, and because we had really worked out this option for oil technology fairly extensively, we were able to propose it for implementation. In early 1979, Madeleine began to coordinate the Export Administration Act rewrite. The 1969 act was valid only for ten years.

**ALBRIGHT:** '79—

**ODOM:** '79. Some of my nonsupporters in the Commerce Department were working with Congress to make sure that the presidential authority was greatly weakened in the new Export Administration Act. Since they could not carry the White House and NSC staff for their preference, they would carry the lawmaking process to insure them. It was very clear to me that Brzezinski, Vance, and Brown were in no sense in agreement on that issue. I think Brown was one day on one side of the issue, the next day on the other. I think his Deputy Secretary [Charles] Duncan was probably a little closer to Brzezinski, rather concerned about oil technology transfer issues and technology transfer issues across the board.

I was seeing from intelligence that we were essentially—and this was the advantage of inside intelligence—supporting the Soviet military modernization process through our transfers of technology. The way I saw the issue was that we had an ICBM [Intercontinental Ballistic Missile] vulnerability problem, and people were talking about a \$30 billion program to fix that vulnerability. In examining the PRM 10 assessment, why we had that problem, it became clear it was because the Soviets had acquired new accuracy with their weapons. Lo and behold, how did they get that accuracy? We tracked it down. It turns out that a U.S. firm sold ball bearing production technology to them that made them able to do it five to ten years earlier. The U.S. company made \$40 or \$60 million on that deal. Somehow I didn't think that that was a very fair trade to make \$60 million for a private firm that then in turn creates a \$30 billion dollar defense problem for the Defense Department.

Nobody really wanted to go back and examine that evidence very closely though, so I saw that the only way we could prevent that from happening was to engage in bureaucratic guerilla warfare, and to find those people who were willing to try to prevent the weakening of the new act. An informal network of people in the Defense Department and one or two in CIA and several staffers on the Hill fought a delaying action down to the last minute. Then we moved in and managed to get some language in the bill to retain enough of the authority so that if the President really wants to exercise it he still has most of what the old act provided.

Then the real opportunity to carry the technology transfer policy through occurred with Afghanistan. Suddenly after the Afghanistan invasion, the President decided he really wanted to do something about controlling technology. It didn't take much trouble to pull out the old means and go down the list of things that we'd been proposing for three or four years and say, "Here's a ready option." Many senior administrations still opposed us adamantly at the time. In fact there were three or four highly charged meetings in January, I think. Les, you told me to convene the first in the White House Situation Room—

**DENEND:** Yes, that's right.

**ODOM:** —and get them to sign up to our option, and this was after the President had said on national TV that he was going to embargo this high technology. The Secretary of the Treasury was willing to come over, the Counselor to the President attended uninvited, Anne Wexler came down and adamantly opposed doing anything. They effectively paralyzed my meeting. I had to get Brzezinski to reconvene it and chair later that day.

**DENEND:** If you hadn't done all the homework before, and had that stuff, it would have been impossible—

**ODOM:** We wouldn't have had a case without the earlier analysis. Then the next significant area that I got into was what we came to call the "Persian Gulf security frame." In 1977 Sam Huntington had come to the conclusion that the Gulf was where we were going to have our problems, for three reasons: economic instability, interregional wars, and growing Soviet power projections capability. The Soviet projection of military force in a compressed period of time to Ethiopia in '77 and '78 was a spectacular operation. We had never seen that kind of strategic airlift and sealift exercised by them over those distances.

I'm not sure whether our view was sharpened because we saw the intelligence reporting or because the press didn't report it, or what. I was staggered by that, and it became very clear to me that we were not dealing with the same Soviet Union who went around with leaflets and propaganda and empty aid packages in the 1960s, but now we were seeing tanks in large numbers transported to other continents in a very short amount of time. The Soviets over flew other countries without even asking their permission. They just came across Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, flew down there to Ethiopia.

Huntington and I tried a time or two in the fall of '77 to get people to begin to look at Iran as a special case, to do some real hardnosed analysis about the internal situation in Iran. I even went through a list of things we should do, an outline of a study of what to do on Iran. The group of NSC staffers who handled that area I think had good relations with State and key people in Defense. They really didn't want to understand that problem because it would have meant a big fight with State. I had other things to do, and so I gave up on it. Then of course, events unraveled the Shah's regime.

In the spring of 1979 Brzezinski got the SCC to recommend to the President that we should change our policy from the Indian Ocean Arms Talks assumption that we should seek only military equivalence with the U.S.S.R. out there. Henceforth the policy was that we are entitled to a lot more military presence because our interests in the region are vital—that is, oil—and the Soviets interests are not. I see that little, seemingly innocuous, conclusion from the SCC, which the President agreed to, as a watershed.

I never really talked in detail to Brzezinski whether he saw it the same way, but I think he did, because only a short time after that, he asked me to write a memorandum. I think I ended up writing two or three, to the Defense Department, asking the Secretary of Defense what he was doing about the Rapid Deployment Force [RDF], which had been directed in 1977, which the military services didn't want to allocate any resources to, and the Secretary was not forcing them to allocate any forces to. Defense's inaction was understandable in light of the shortage of resources and the emphasis on NATO. The President gave the Secretary of Defense a greater sense of urgency about the RDF in mid-1979, and you began to see a number of initiatives by Harold Brown and the JCS.

One of the major problems there was the command structure. Near the Indian Ocean, Pakistan belonged to the unified commander in Honolulu. All of the Mideast countries belonged to our unified commander in Stuttgart, Germany. There was no single commander responsible to the region. Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs formed a joint task force down in Florida, but it was not given complete planning authority over the very regions it was supposed to focus on.

The Afghan invasion came. In the fall before, I had sketched out, along with some other people, a strategy paper for the Persian Gulf. In the interest of the Iran rescue mission, Brzezinski took a couple of action items from it. One was the push to get bases in the region. To deal with Iran and later Afghanistan, an SCC meeting was held every morning.

**DENEND:** It started on November the 4th.

**ODOM:** It started with hostage—

**DENEND:** The reference before, you mean not the rescue mission but the hostage situation.

**ODOM:** On November 4th, either the morning of or the morning after, we started having these regular SCC meetings. They were “crisis management” meetings for Iran. By January, after Afghanistan, Brzezinski decided to split those meetings and have two crises. We’d have one or two a week on the Persian Gulf as a whole and then one each day on handling the hostages. To provide a basis for direction in the Persian Gulf security framework SCCs, I developed a four-component strategy, a component on the military issues, the diplomatic issues, the economic issues, and the intelligence issues. Then under each we began to develop some subcategories, finally working down to fine-grain enough detail to cite specific actions we needed to take under each component.

I would do a pre-SCC memo for Brzezinski each time, citing one or two or three actions, say, to be tasked for decision at the next SCC on the security framework. At that next meeting there would be discussion, and recommendations on each, to be passed to the President for decisions. And Brzezinski would task another set of three issues for the succeeding SCC. We got quick responses to them. They didn’t seem to be fundamental policy issues, and we would, at the next meeting, discuss them, get the principals’ views on them, get them out to the President in the summary and conclusions. The President would agree to or modify them. After we repeated this process once or twice a week over about three or four months, we had presidential decisions on a whole series of small issues. During that period we were condemned nightly by State and Defense for “advocacy,” for having no idea of where we were going.

There were demands that we should initiate a big PRM review exercise like PRM 10, and ask ourselves where we were going in the region. By May, I think it was May, Les, we did a sum-up, and we gave the President a summary of what he had done in the Persian Gulf under each of the four components. He liked charts, so we put the results in chart form.

**DENEND:** Matrices.

**ODOM:** Matrices. He then realized that a lot of little actions had been initiated, some of them fairly consequential, some of them not so consequential. When the President responded very favorably to this report, Brzezinski said, “We should get this out to the Departments.” So we put it out as a memorandum to the Departments. The staff level in Defense felt such a sense of chaos and directionlessness that they received it with enthusiasm. They said, “This is great. Now we understand how some of these things fit together.” They absorbed the framework and began to work their own ideas into it, at least at the working level. I think Harold Brown liked it, and [Robert W.] Komer came to accept it, particularly when the Defense staff grabbed it and they started putting their papers up to their Secretary in the context of the security framework components. State made one more big effort to stop the whole thing by starting a study, but we successfully resisted and put out another two status reports later in the year. Finally at the December 15th NSC meeting, the President insisted on a Presidential Directive on U.S. policy for the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia, which essentially was a statement of the security framework matrix.



To sum up, I look back at my own experience and I can see three very interesting kinds of policy processes. The first I would call an orderly, measured, analytical process starting with PRM 10, PD 18, and then PD 41, Civil Defense, followed by PD 53 on telecommunication policy for Defense of other studies—telecommunication PD 58 on continuity of government, and PD 59 on targeting policy. A second process was apparent in the East-West trade and technology transfer issue. The evidence was overwhelming in favor of doing something, but the opposition was enormous.

Not so obvious coalitions of colleagues in the government began to develop. They were able to block what looked like a bad policy and to take the opportunities to put sensible policy in its place. This process is very messy, and is very difficult to control or guide. The third is this crisis management process, where we started by small pieces and accumulated enough action so that all of a sudden it is apparent that we know where we're going and the policy has already been changed through incremental steps. By the summer of 1980, we had brought great policy changes so fundamentally different from '78 that I was surprised we had come so far. I think everyone except Vance and later Muskie was fundamentally supportive and enthusiastic for the policy by the fall of '80. Brzezinski's sense of strategic direction kept us from getting lost. And Huntington's intellectual power in the PRM 10 process gave us a strong analytical advantage.

**YOUNG:** They didn't know it until it was almost done. The small steps had been—

**ODOM:** I don't think they did. Many probably sensed it. I'm sure Harold Brown saw the way these things were going. Muskie, who came in after Vance, didn't like the way things were going. That's another story. Muskie didn't understand at all at first. He was very much behind in grasping the details. It's very understandable, he had to catch up on all these little details and learn how they related to the larger picture. It wasn't easy. When he began to understand, by September of that year, he made a couple of valiant tries to stop the train. He had some temporary successes.

## **AFTERNOON SESSION**

**TRUMAN:** One of the rules of this gathering as Jim mentioned before we went to lunch, is to get as many things on the tape, and not out there where we were having lunch, as possible. I am going to raise one that I raised at lunch, although not with you. It seemed to me on the basis of this morning's discussion, that we've got evidence of two NSCs, and I wonder how many more there were—

**YOUNG:** That's a question addressed to all three of you.

**ODOM:** There were several; there's no question there were several. There were several clusters of people in the NSC with slightly different outlooks on things. I think if I were to describe Brzezinski's style, I think it was what he thought was "creative tension." The victim thought of it as "creative destruction." Brzezinski seemed to believe that it was in

his interest to let one group move one way and another group in another direction. In the first two years of the administration the woman that Les worked for, Jessica Matthews, handled human rights issues, arms transfers, and those sorts of “global issues.” She was playing a key role in developing memos for Brzezinski. The same was true for arms control. One group managed arms control. Then as the agenda changed, Brzezinski turned to different NSC staffers.

**TRUMAN:** That would be in part substantive, which I can understand. What we were referring to was some sort of stylistic differences that—

**ALBRIGHT:** As I mentioned, I think an awful lot of it had to do with people and the roles that they thought that they could fulfill. I think that by listening to Bill you can see a different kind of function that he felt—and rightly—that he was supposed to do, from the kind of thing done by Les and I, whose role really was to keep things coordinated all the time. I think if you really could understand the NSC program, or anybody’s, you have to look at each individual, and then later particular relationships, with the National Security Adviser.

**DENEND:** The notion of collegiality came up before; I can testify there were 35 independent people that Brzezinski dealt with on issues directly. We were not a hierarchical staff in the sense that you have somebody in charge of regional issues who you dealt with and then it was further parceled out. Different people worked on different aspects of this same issue that was all brought together in the front office.

**YOUNG:** How should we label these aspects of NSC? We’ve seen that strong element of the policy operative, through your comments, laying out the areas, the problems, and in a sense you were involved in process management, but that was incidental to the policy operative roles as I see it. Whereas what we’ve heard from Madeleine, and to some extent Les, is the coordination of what you might call process management. There was a much stronger element of that aspect rather than the policy operative. If you can call these by license of tongue the two parts of the NSC, the two NSCs, were there more than two?

**ODOM:** I think Les would be in a position to verify whether my judgment is sound on this. The more I talked to regional staffers who followed substantive issues, their major role seemed to be writing cover memoranda on departmental papers that came in to the President. Memoranda came in from Secretaries, and they generally went along with the Secretary, or in other words they weren’t really trying to push a policy and provide a strong sense of direction about where they were going, but they knew the area quite well and they were able to more or less highlight what was significant and to trim down voluminous papers into terse, succinct prose. Is that fair, Les?

**DENEND:** Yes. That’s right. There were people—

**ODOM:** Would that be a third class? I assume the question you are asking is about typologies.

**TRUMAN:** We're talking really about a collector of functions. As Jim said, you, Madeleine, and Les helped us to identify two, and perhaps this indeed is a third, although it sounds a little as if it were more related to—

**ALBRIGHT:** I think it's interesting that we talked about the coordinator and the advocate, in Zbig himself, and I think that probably the staff—

**YOUNG:** I noticed a skeptical look on your face when I said earlier would it be fair to say that the staff—this was before you came, Bill—was not an advocacy support group, that it was more a coordinator group. I noticed that you felt constrained to agree. Now I see why—

**DENEND:** I think it's important not to lose sight of location, and that is that everybody you're talking to here today was over in the West Wing. Christine is not here; she was physically located in the EOB building. You couldn't pick a person who was more attuned to the West Wing. There was a different focus over there. You're less related to the agencies, which fall under the NSC structure, and more closely related or attuned to the policy process.

**ODOM:** There were some strong players in West Wing. Mike [Michel] Oksenberg.

**DENEND:** From my perspective, if I were to size up all the papers and put them into piles, it's hard to define productivity on a staff like that, but if you define productivity in terms of the policy terms and movement of policy, the bulk of the productivity came from a relatively few people on the staff. I think that's regardless of what issues happen to be topical. You happen to have here at the table the most productive member on the staff. When I say productive I mean the authors of papers. That's not to say that if Madeleine hadn't been protecting Bill's flanks he would be a voice in the wilderness out there, cut off from his support structure. There's a distinct difference, or grading, of people in terms of their ability to turn out papers that were actionable, that you could take action on and convert into a decision.

**YOUNG:** Who else was there in the West Wing staff, anyone besides those of you here?

**ODOM:** Jerry Schecter.

**DENEND:** Up in the front office there was David Aaron and Zbig, and I was in between. Downstairs was Bill and Jerry Schecter, who did press, and Madeleine, and—

**ALBRIGHT:** That was it. There were two assistants and then secretarial staff and the Situation Room, but that was really it.

**YOUNG:** Right, but this defines Brzezinski's immediate central staff.

**MELANSON:** Wouldn't there also be technical experts, certainly not coordinators, and certainly not policy advocates, someone like a Roger Molander for instance, whose incredible knowledge of things like SALT must have come in very useful.

**ALBRIGHT:** He was a coordinator.

**ODOM:** He was substantive in the sense that I think he knew all those issues, and maybe he could have done the differential equations for some of that analysis, but that I don't think was what Roger was largely engaged in. Is that fair to say?

**HARGROVE:** In terms of the professional competence of the members of the staff, was the spectrum of the staff able to handle the range of issues that came from State, Defense, Treasury, plus rather diffuse questions like energy and intelligence and economic issues that permeate all areas, or was their skewing toward diplomatic political competence? How do you characterize that?

**ODOM:** There was an initial very heavy skew I think toward foreign policy. I was drawn into defense policy partly by default. Brzezinski was not initially so concerned with it; later, as he periodically turned to it, he disliked the advice he got from much of the staff on defense. Thus he pushed me into it. Is that fair to say, Les?

**DENEND:** In terms of somebody over there who had a strategic view to conceptualize the kinds of issues that you'd call upon the Defense Department.

**ODOM:** The other area where I thought we made least effective effort was international economic policy. I think if I were putting together an NSC staff, I would really put a lot of competence in that area.

**HARGROVE:** In the White House did that competence fall between stools?

**ODOM:** Les was the best economist. Les was probably the only trained economist on the staff. He had some dealings with it and it soon became his responsibility.

**ALBRIGHT:** I think you have to explain the whole thing about the Henry Owen operation; it was an ad hoc kind of economic policy coordinating unit.

**DENEND:** Also there was [Stuart] Eizenstat, as I said at lunch. The EPB [Economic Policy Board] of the Ford administration, which was a good functioning economic policy staff, and the Domestic Council were merged together to form this thing called the Domestic Policy Staff, which encompassed all of those issues, and I don't know that there were any economists. There were one or two trained economists to deal with all of that, not that that's any qualification.

**ODOM:** We could get the competence. We could have used some more competence, I think, in the economic areas, and probably some more substance in some of the Defense areas. Having seen the old Ford staff go out (I wasn't with them, but I knew fairly well a number of those people), and having lived through the change of administrations for a couple months with the Reagan administration, I have to say this: There was no lack of intellectual power and analytical power on the Brzezinski NSC staff. In fact, I'd say, there was an enormous difference between Brzezinski's NSC staff and the two others. I think if you went back and read some memos you'd see it in the prose. I think you'd see the coherence, the gripping quality of some of the memos. The intellectual difference would be very easy to discern.

**ALBRIGHT:** I think that there's a general problem about how international economics has been treated in the White House.

**HARGROVE:** Or even defense issues, for that matter. How much role did you play in implementation? We have talked about the PD, whatever the number was—18—take you forever and a day to get—

**YOUNG:** Is this a question exclusively to Bill?

**HARGROVE:** No, it really is about the staff in general.

**ODOM:** Legally, as the staff secretary used to remind me, we had no authority to implement policy. I can only speak personally, but I think my experience was paralleled by a number of other people I can call to mind. The staff was interested in whether or not its policies were going anywhere, and it had to have a lot of informal sources of information in the Departments to find out what the status was. We used our position on the NSC to intervene, to cause the President to intervene, if we didn't think things were going the way we perceived the President desired that they go. I believe most of us tried to look after the President's interest. We were repeatedly reminded that we were his staff.

**HARGROVE:** But you wouldn't go directly to the President? We have had information from Les about follow-up and monitoring of arms transfer things. That's an area of what sounds to me like implementation and oversight, and it sounds to me also like Bill Odom was a policy operative, certainly seemed to see through to some implementation in the Departments of things that he was working on.

**ODOM:** The view I soon found essential to express in the NSC—because I was initially uncertain about the precise scope of my job—was, "How should the President look at this? What's in his interest?" It was very much in his interest, in my mind, to know what was going on in his Departments. But you couldn't tell him everything, you couldn't inundate him with information. Stripping down and deciding what should he really know or what you really wanted to give him through a memo, that's part of the responsibility, and you wanted to gather very accurate information on what was happening outside of his office because nobody else was coming in to tell him the bureaucratic realities.

**HARGROVE:** Most people have seen that as part of their responsibilities.

**DENEND:** I think so. The question of implementation is one of the criticisms that has been leveled at Brzezinski's staff. It is said there was insufficient follow through; it was an issue on the [Philip] Odeen Study, in that he suggested that the implementation could be better. It seems to me most staff members felt that it was important for them to follow up on the progress in making the PDs come to life, but there were a lot of other things that got decided short of PDs, a lot of other issues. There's a whole pile of memoranda, roughly on the average of three or four a day, that were signed out to the various heads of agencies, conveying presidential instructions and decisions. Almost every memo that went to the President, when it came back with a decision, oftentimes was not returned to the agency. There was a second memo that conveyed that instruction. Now there was no formal system whereby this then went into a management information system and periodically was reviewed.

There was no implementation in that sense, and I would argue that that's not the role of the NSC; that you have to appeal to this higher kind of implementation role. We tried from the front office to keep track of random instructions by the President in a regular sort of way. When the President said, "Do something," and it didn't appear in a formal memo, we tried to keep track of that and see that it was done, and we reported that to the President. That had mixed results. It was difficult, and it became very easy to provide answers to the President that had little to do with implementation.

**PRANGER:** Bill, this has to do with the relationship of the NSC staff to the President. To what extent do you think it's normal for NSC staffs to see the President as some kind of *tabula rasa* who is in a way written upon or remolded, as contrasted with someone who comes into office with rather strong inclinations, making the function of NSC staff to build, expand upon, and make workable his political inclinations? I suppose everyone would agree there's some area of self-fulfilling prophecy in whatever policies you take on. The policies have an impact on the real world as well as vice-versa.

It seems to me, maybe I didn't hear right what you were saying, that the view of the NSC staff, or at least of its leadership in the policy area, was basically either that the President's inclinations were really not those he hit the ground with—human rights, nonproliferation, even calls for drastic reductions in nuclear arms, these kinds of things—but surely in some of these areas this really isn't where the policy finally came out. This whole question of really ensuring the effectiveness of presidential inclinations vs. changing him or in some way making him a foreign policy actor—what's your view on this subject?

**YOUNG:** You want to make that not the view on the general subject.

**PRANGER:** The Carter case. You were there from the beginning.

**ODOM:** Take the case of SALT and the President's early *tabula rasa*. Although I had no part in developing it, I did agree with the Martin proposal of SALT. One could criticize the way it was handled as far as publicity was concerned. The idea of going in and asking for the cuts I thought was one of the quickest ways to smoke out the true Soviet assumptions on the rationale for arms control. Now, in fact, when the delegation went to the Soviet Union with that remarkable consensus of opinion—Scoop Jackson was as willing to support that proposal as [Paul] Warnke.

**PRANGER:** There was a fallback proposal, too, which people felt—

**ODOM:** They presented the proposal, and [Andreyevich] Gromyko threw a temper fit. Then everybody just fell back in disarray and began to blame the U.S. position. I did not have a substantive role in SALT, but I was interested in understanding the President's true views on it because they would tell much about his overall approach to U.S.-Soviet relations. The President's position on SALT wasn't all that clear to me at first.

Everybody thought they knew where the President was. I wasn't sure that I knew where he was, and the first year of the administration was for me one of searching to find where he was and what he really felt strongly about. I don't quite like the *tabula rasa* metaphor, but maybe it's accurate in the sense that no President can come in and know about every area. There were areas where he didn't know much, and he needed to be more informed. I felt an obligation to try and find the unvarnished truth and present it to him. Sometimes it was not a very happy truth. It was an effort to let him understand where the sandbars and shoals were in the waters in which he was sailing.

**YOUNG:** Can I put this in a little different way? This question that Bob asked has been raised in a number of ways with other members of the staff. It's been interesting for us to hear their responses. Some have indicated that it was very hard for them to know the President's mind, and you would know where he would be leaning, but you would never know where he would really come out, and this was an impediment to their effective operation on some things. I guess, picking up on your question, did you have that sense that because of Brzezinski's close and frequent contact with the President you never labored under serious doubts about what his decision was or would be? I'm asking that of each of you.

**ALBRIGHT:** I personally labored under doubts as to what his decision would be. Also, you've got to understand that most NSC staff members did not see the President. In contrast, I think domestic policy staff members saw the President more. Les and I to some extent were exceptions. Les saw the President and I saw him because of these meetings with members of Congress.

**ODOM:** I saw him a lot in the first year of the administration, and then it became less often later.

**DENEND:** Initially I didn't see him, and I labored under doubts as to what the decisions would be, because I came in and was given a charter to assist in implementing these three policies, and I had not been present during the policy debate, although I quickly got brought up to speed by going over the books and so on as to how these had come about. And so in good faith we went out to sow these seeds, marched off, and it was a very interesting experience.

**YOUNG:** Was it a painful one, too?

**DENEND:** Let me say that at a minimum there were some inconsistencies that one might observe. I had serious doubts about how things might come out on any particular issue, arms transfers or human rights or anything else. I think towards the end of the first year Bill and I had the first really candid conversation about what was going on. I had met Bill in '77 or shortly after I had arrived, but we didn't really work together on anything, and it wasn't until maybe three or four months later that we had a really candid conversation that tended to confirm my instincts about some of what was going on. I felt more comfortable from then on presenting the pros and cons of where we were heading. I had serious questions.

**ODOM:** I had the same experience, but I could generally know where Brzezinski was going to be on an issue. The only time I found myself out of step with Brzezinski was when he was trimming his sails for tactical purposes. I should make a point before Brzezinski joins us today.

**YOUNG:** You have about a half hour left.

**ODOM:** I did not intend to get into the confrontational roles that I was sometimes placed in. I saw very quickly that Brzezinski was pleased that I was willing to go out and beat the bushes about a policy and really make some people nervous about it, and yet give him plausible deniability of holding my view. I had to make a judgment on how far I could go without getting in trouble on that, where he would have to abandon me. I always went on the assumption that I might not be in the NSC another month. I thought you really had to take that view, you had to try to stay in tune with him to some degree, and you also had to serve the President in what seemed to be his interests.

Concerning the confusion on SALT, I knew clearly from talking to the Soviets over the years that they were not going to accept the March proposal, but the President signed up to it. He apparently strongly supported it. I wondered if he really knew what he was doing. I thought, *Well, maybe he's going to hold to the proposal.* We'd be sitting on a morally upright SALT position three years hence, still demanding deep cuts. Maybe the Soviets would retreat. If that was the case, then I saw he was a fellow who was going to have a sophisticated engagement policy toward the Soviet Union, and I could see a President who seemed to me to have a lot of promising possibilities in that regard.



I saw human rights as a brilliant policy. I saw it as the obverse to the Soviets' support of the international class struggle. They don't export revolution, but they feel morally obliged to applaud its success when it occurs due to internal dynamics in other societies. I didn't see why we shouldn't stand up and cry out against the oppression of human rights in the Soviet Union. We weren't causing oppression to happen, and I didn't see why that should interfere with proper and correct state-to-state relationships.

Brezhnev expects us to conduct regular state-to-state relations, and at the same let him come over and see Gus Hall, the leader of the Communist Party of the United States. I thought that that was a very neat tactic for human rights. It also allowed us to demand improvements in human rights by certain right-wing regimes. It seems to me it was a very pragmatic tactic, to really beat up morally on the Soviets. At the same time it offered some basis of a new domestic U.S. foreign policy consensus. We could also put people like the Shah and certain South American regimes on notice, saying, "There is a limit to how far you can go in getting the U.S. public to back your regime." That all looked to me like a very effective and a very brilliant strategy. But then the fallback began on SALT, undercutting my estimate of the President's position.

The really mysterious decision to me was the B-1 bomber decision. I thought at the time, *How can a man who wants a SALT treaty cancel the B-1 bomber?* The B-1 bomber was a coherent part of SALT. If you pull the B-1 bomber out and introduce cruise missiles, you infinitely complicate the SALT process. You essentially assure the paralysis of the SALT process. I could only conclude that this President is really a hardball player. He's going to put it to the Soviets. It looked to me like his strategy was emerging as one of a very stubborn line toward the U.S.S.R.

I think any President will always keep his staff to a certain degree off balance and confused, and I think effective presidential leadership is to discipline the staff through just the right amount of uncertainty. Once somebody becomes too confident in his position, you're really in trouble with him. On the other hand, the staff must have enough sense of general strategy and direction so that it can do supportive constructive things and look after his selected areas of emphasis.

**PRANGER:** Are you saying in this respect that therefore there was a coherent policy which emphasized confusing the staff? Or that in fact it was confusing as to what the policy was? It seems to me that Carter, in his own signing off on the Odeen Report, admitted that it was fairly confusing to him what the policy was because that word confusion was down at the bottom of the Odeen Report.

**ODOM:** I was interviewed for the Odeen Report, I watched the NSC having to deal with Odeen, and I assure you of one thing: It was far from disinterested. It was very clear that the Odeen Report was a bureaucratic gambit to weaken Brzezinski. The President responded to it in a way to try to keep Brzezinski a little off balance, but the Odeen Report really missed the point on substantive issues. I must say that a President will get

into real trouble if he tries to run an NSC following the strictures of the Odeen Report. I think it's a fundamentally misleading document about what went on in the NSC staff.

**YOUNG:** I'd like to turn from what was coming out of the White House in terms of explicitness of policy directives and what went behind that to you, Madeleine. You said you were with the President when he talked to Congress. What did you see go on there?

**ALBRIGHT:** I think his problem really was that his style was not such that it would persuade anybody that came out and talked to him that this was the right. He didn't play hardball. He was a brilliant person to brief, and when you sent in the papers, the talking points, always did come out that way and he was very good on his facts. Obviously, I wasn't there when he met with members alone, but when he met with a group he never really told them what he wanted. We all finally learned the trick, that when the President said, "I understand," that really meant he disagreed with a person, and so he had a way of not really coming to terms with members of Congress. They themselves would turn around and say, "I'm not quite sure what it is he wants."

In terms of facts, he always knew them, and he enjoyed displaying them in these evening foreign policy groupings. He did not like to be outdone by either Brzezinski or Vance or Brown, especially when it was on issues such as SALT, which he felt that he really did know. He certainly did when he reported on what happened at Camp David. Those of us that have seen the papers know that he was the person who drew the boundaries and did all the detail negotiating. Somebody said about him that he had SAT [Scholastic Aptitude Test] kind of knowledge.

**PRANGER:** In that respect, if I may just follow from what you just said about Camp David, this is frequently cited as one of his more important success stories. It's a case, as you said, that he personally drew boundaries and even drew up the agreements in some ways. Does this give one an indication about if a policy staff is really important for a major presidential foreign policy, or if any intelligent person in the job could score at least a few foreign policy victories without any support at all?

**YOUNG:** I'd like to keep away from general abstract questions and make it specific to the Carter administration, if you could rephrase that?

**PRANGER:** I'll rephrase it. Is it not true that at the Camp David Accords that the NSC staff support for that was minimal?

**ALBRIGHT:** My understanding of it is that he was given a tremendous amount of support. He did not know a great deal about the Middle East when he walked in as President of the United States. The NSC staff and the State Department provided an incredible amount of material. Finally, when he was at Camp David, he did it himself, but he certainly had been given the background over months.

**ODOM:** Bill Quandt?

**ALBRIGHT:** I don't think he learned all he knew about foreign policy at Annapolis or as governor of Georgia. I think that a foreign policy staff did provide him with raw material with which to work.

**ODOM:** He learned from staff, and therefore the answer is he very much needed a staff. I'd like to follow that point with a brief remark. His ability to get through written material was awe-inspiring. You would find his margin notes on the last page of lengthy memos. He'd correct your English or your spelling. He obviously read with enormous comprehension almost anything you put to him. One of the concerns I had when the Reagan administration came in was that there was no way to get that kind of presidential attention to the large number of issues that were piling up and demanding attention. Carter had an incredible capacity to get through paperwork.

**JONES:** I have a question about the doubts in regard to policy. When you had doubts, were these doubts that reflected doubts Brzezinski had about the policy, or were they really doubts that you had that Brzezinski could clear up?

**DENEND:** I doubt if Brzezinski could have cleared them up. When I had doubts about an issue, it related to the interagency process. I would be called upon to voice a view on a particular issue under consideration, which never related directly to the PD, which was the broad guidance. Each issue was slightly different and had arguments on both sides. I wasn't certain as to how it would in fact be resolved because of the policies involved and the fact there were good arguments on both sides.

The arms sale in the spring of '78 was the largest arms sale that had been considered up to that time. The sale of AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control Systems] aircraft to the Shah of Iran involved a promise given earlier, and so on and so forth. Things like that certainly were difficult to reconcile if you were blindly following the provisions of PD 13. There were numerous ones that were less clear than that where you'd try to assess how they'd turn out, whether they'd turn on the foreign policy issue, the importance of the politics involved, or whether you'd stand by the particular provision, no exceptions, of the policy.

**YOUNG:** Would it be useful to distinguish between the situation you described earlier with the SALT negotiations and later in the administration? One can expect a certain amount of confusion and doubt and apparent drift at the beginning as people feel their way, including the President. At the end of the administration, were these problems as considerable for you?

**DENEND:** No. My perspective changed dramatically. The number of issues on which the day-to-day focus came down to toward the end was a much narrower agenda than it had been earlier on. You're feeling your way, initially. Arms transfers—there was much anxiety at the beginning about the ceiling and whether or not it was a doable thing. When

Iran dropped out of the mix in December of 1978, the question of an arms transfer ceiling went away.

**ALBRIGHT:** I think, if I might just say, we used to give talks a lot about how there was a coherent Carter foreign policy, and there was. There were ten points that were set up early. There was a transition meeting at which members of Congress met at the Smithsonian in December of 1976, and those ten points were very general. I don't remember them now. They became filled in during the four years. As they became filled in, it became evident to people that in some cases they were contradictory. Nuclear nonproliferation as a policy, and also supporting regional allies, became the problem of Pakistan. We then began to readjust them politically. I think the doubts existed because there was a certain *tabula rasa*, but not quite. They were generalized points, and foreign policy and the world itself were not consistent.

Then we began to wonder, as these priorities slightly shifted, where he would come down on them. My feeling was that he was totally committed to human rights, whether for religious reasons or whatever. That was one of his really good things, and SALT was something he was really committed to. Also, arms control and nuclear nonproliferation. As the real world began to fill in on him, we all—other than maybe Zbig—didn't know how he would come down. That was the problem.

**ODOM:** I'd just like to make a point on Brzezinski's role in chairing the SCC meetings. I think he performed a function that probably will be underestimated by historians. Complete confusion could arise in those meetings. He could come in and structure the discussion, pick out the two or three key points with lightning-like speed, drive the meeting to a conclusion, get some actionable recommendations, and get them to the President.

With Harold Brown in the chair, you got a moderately disciplined result. You put Vance in the chair, he'd drift about, and provide much less focus. The most disastrous chairing performance ever witnessed in the Situation Room, I think, was with Muskie. He completely abandoned his staff's positions and went on to diffuse, non-conclusive directions. Brzezinski would stop the focus on trivia and current events and force the meeting to identify the key issues and the longer view. Even if he didn't carry the day, he would force the people who did carry the day to have a much clearer view of what they were doing and what the implications of it were.

**DENEND:** That's a very good statement of how we felt our way on policy. I should only add, as an attachment to what Bill said, that interestingly the other two Cabinet Secretaries would come to meetings with huge binders. I know now, because I've prepared some of those in the Department of Defense. Certainly you had to use numbers for the tabs because there weren't enough letters in the alphabet to list all of the papers and issues that bear on the meeting. I know that the NSC staff usually prepares a very slim memo which Brzezinski accommodated in a manila folder, and it often would get

there the morning of the meeting so that there was no opportunity to study overnight, and on that basis, the performance that Bill characterizes would unfold.

**HARGROVE:** I want to get back to the President and his SAT mind. I think this is just crucial, Madeleine. You said several things that lead to a tentative hypothesis as to why he was not decisive. I've got his cognitive style as 1) his assumption that rational argument speaks for itself; 2) no appreciation of congressional needs and perceptions, no appreciation of what these fellows were worrying about. Then, below the line, his personality was not forceful. He was primarily a listener.

**ALBRIGHT:** I think those all fit to a certain degree—

**HARGROVE:** They're not mutually exclusive; is it a cognitive style, a lack of forcefulness, not a desire to persuade other people.

**ALBRIGHT:** This sounds like a crazy thing to say, but a lot of it is style. All of us have listened to the man. He had a way of speaking; his voice would get quiet. Consider a Cabinet room with 20 people in it, and those of us who knew him knew that the quieter he got, the madder he was, and that didn't exactly help him to be forceful. Also his unfortunate speaking style in strange rhythms, where he'd go up at the ends of sentences and smile in the wrong places, about things that had nothing to do with what he was saying. I do also think that he did believe that rational arguments would carry the day, that you didn't have to be hysterical.

**HARGROVE:** That's what he'd do with these Congressmen. He'd make an argument, but he wouldn't try to couch it in terms of their prejudices.

**ALBRIGHT:** You'd have to ask Frank Moore if he saw more of this: I am talking to this guy from Kentucky, who knows that he's got a coal problem, and that's what we're going to talk about today, and in exchange for the coal thing I'm going to do this. I didn't see that, particularly.

**ODOM:** Remember one day the President came into the NSC staff meeting when we were discussing a couple or three issues including the Middle East? He was obviously going to have congressional fights over them, and he said, "Well, what I've learned thus far is that there'll be a lot of sound and thunder in Congress, but when it gets right down to the vote, they'll knuckle under and go my way."

**PRANGER:** Along the lines of this confusion thing, I did want to raise a point which I think has at least been made in the public media, and that I gather from columnists and others who were friendly with other participants in the NSC process, that the NSC staff and National Security Adviser himself were part of the confusion problem. That is to say, they had entered in as full participants in the NSC along with State and Defense, and were in fact not involved with clearing up the confusion, but actually created more confusion. I must say that when Carter signed off on the Odeen Report recommendations, he X'ed all

the boxes, which he didn't have to do, even if he sponsored the report, on clearing up confusion and better coordination. The way I'm hearing it here is that the NSC staff was the source of the coordination clearing up the confusion. How do you respond to this?

**ODOM:** First, you don't think Carter would have marked the boxes that said keep the confusion, do you? In the Odeen Study he had to mark the boxes that indicated that he was for order and clarity. I think you really have to see the Odeen Report as the bureaucratic gambit it was.

**PRANGER:** OMB, or what?

**ODOM:** Yes, OMB, the reorganization staff. There may have been a domestic policy person or two. I'm not sure.

**PRANGER:** These people were close to the President too, Bill.

**ODOM:** Then the next point I want to make on it is that on some things the President himself wanted clarity; on other things I'm not sure he wanted clarity, and I think, if you asked the President whether he wanted a well-coordinated operation, he obviously would have said yes. We got some lectures at staff meetings on coordination from time to time. But you soon got into cross-pressures, competing interests, where clarity was not to the President's political advantage, or to a Department head's political advantage. For critics in State and in Defense, when their policy was not doing well, they could always attribute the difficulty to the confusion and lack of coordination of the NSC staff.

Now, indeed, sometimes lack of coordination was the case. One could cite several reasons for that being the case. I myself contributed to that confusion in some of the economic policy. I saw David Aaron contribute to that confusion; I'm not sure what his intentions were. Sometimes he would launch a set of initiatives and then just walk away and leave nothing to follow up on. I'm not sure what the purpose was. Brzezinski himself would sometimes lose interest in something and not follow through in a close procedural way. People who were used to working in a highly structured environment would be horrified by the lack of structure and the lack of routinization on the NSC staff. I think you have to put those things in perspective. I think it is fair to say that we were pretty lousy in some regards on coordination in some areas. In others, we were pretty good at coordination. It depended on the policy and it sometimes depended on the staff member supporting it, and it depended on Brzezinski's own interest.

**ALBRIGHT:** Anyone who has never worked in the White House, and I don't mean to be snobbish in the way I say this, in no way can understand the pace. You think you're working on the world's most important thing and all of a sudden the world's really most important thing comes to your desk and you set that first one aside, and the coordination that we'd been working on then all of a sudden disappears. All three of us were under that kind of pressure, so in that respect we added to the confusion. We'd be working on

something and then all of a sudden it would be overtaken by events, and you'd be on to something else.

**HARGROVE:** Does that account for the four contradictions that you mentioned, Bill, earlier on? In your presentation you mentioned four contradictory policies, including Pakistan. Was that growing pains on the part of the administration and NSC, was it this displacement matter, or what happened?

**ODOM:** Those four policies probably made sense in the world outlook of Vance and Les Gelb and a few other people in the State Department at the time. It also was a view held by a number of people in Defense. I don't know whether Walt Slocum fully supported them. Lynn Davis was very supportive of them; I don't know to what degree Harold Brown supported them. Les Gelb made a speech at the Army War College in which he said the problem is that Brzezinski has a strategic world view, and maybe that's a dangerous thing; the best policy for the administration is no overall strategy, rather a series of ad hoc decisions.

I did try to understand the differences of view that beset us in the Carter administration. I finally penned an article in the *Washington Quarterly* in 1981 answering what I thought was the fundamental question that split us. It seems to me we split over whether or not the Soviet Union was a status quo power. Brzezinski and I thought that it was not. The power balance had shifted; if anything, the competition was going to be tougher; the possibility of maintaining the post-World War II international order essentially unaltered was going to be a much larger, more challenging task. Others seemed to believe that the U.S.S.R. was becoming benign and status quo, and accepting the international order. I think that's what got those initial four policies landed, the assumption of a status quo U.S.S.R., an assumption at odds with PRM 10 findings.

**THOMPSON:** Do you think it would have been different in the next term if there'd been one? Would most or all of you have been there? Would there have been a shift in emphasis? By some newspapers and comments, we've gotten the picture from some that there might not have been a Brzezinski in the next administration, that he'd become a political liability. What would the next Carter administration have been like, do you think, in your area?

**ALBRIGHT:** I think there would have been a Brzezinski and there would have been no political liability in a second term. If he had been gotten rid of, he would have been gotten rid of as a sacrifice to win re-election at the end of 1980. I also felt this very personally as someone who had worked both for Muskie and for Brzezinski and could see that there was going to be a shoot-out in the next administration, although I would have picked Brzezinski as the winner. I think, as I said to several of you, that Brzezinski really did have Carter's mind, have access to it, and appealed to him. Despite the fact that there were people in the administration, in the White House, who saw Brzezinski as a liability, the President did not. When it came down to it, he did not see him as a liability, and relied on him tremendously.

**JONES:** I just wanted to go back and connect a couple of things—that is, the matter of doubts and uncertainties about the President’s mind, and some comments on the Odeen Report. Are we to understand that the confusion may have started, actually, in the Oval Office itself and therefore no number of Odeen Reports could have solved that?

**ODOM:** Let me explain a couple of things that became very clear to me early in this administration. The President picked a 24-year-old young man to be his Chief of Staff. He gave the appearances of decentralization of power. We were going to get rid of that centralized Kissinger system. There was a Policy Review Committee that would be chaired by State and Vance as appropriate. Brzezinski was left with one NSC committee to chair. Each one of the Secretaries were to have direct access to communications daily and weekly. He got rid of the [H.R.] Haldeman-[John] Ehrlichman image. No strong Chief of Staff and all that. Everybody was pleased at this decentralization. The press’s view was that it was an excessive decentralization. In fact, the President was his own Chief of Staff. In fact, you had an extraordinary amount of centralization. In fact, Brzezinski had to coordinate things that were minute and almost embarrassingly small at times. I think the President, because of his ability to handle lots of minutiae and because he was a workaholic, actually enjoyed it. The Odeen Report could not change this arrangement.

**PRANGER:** The President was his own foreign policy maker too?

**MELANSON:** I’m sorry we don’t have a little more time because I wanted to ask this this morning. I wanted to ask Les about this global issues office and how important the very name of the office was, and whether it was significant that after Jessica Matthews resigned the functions, as I understand it, were broken up among a number of her successors, such as Lincoln Bloomfield and a few others. The global issues office as such did not maintain the kind of centrality that it had under her tenure. Was that an important bureaucratic decision insofar as it reflected a shift in Brzezinski’s own priorities to a more East-West strategic kind of perspective than had been true earlier in the administration?

**DENEND:** I think there are two dimensions to that. One was the very real question of if the staff was available at the time to handle the issues. I wouldn’t take issue the way you characterize the second one; it was a shift to a more central focus on the East-West condition and the realities that had been forced on the administration.

**MELANSON:** Had the global issues office been set up initially with that name in order to pacify those who were perhaps derogatorily called the “planetary humanists” early in the administration, or was it more a question of having a series of issues that fell through in a sense, and you needed something to accumulate?

**DENEND:** Global issues was a great idea, a terrific idea. If we had it to do over again, there’s clearly a role for something like global issues. If I were going to do it again, I would define those policies differently and I certainly would have implemented them



differently. There are overarching policies that are truly global in nature. They have to be made to be in tune with the relevance of that. You don't want to set up policies that, as Bill described it, come together in the Persian Gulf and leave our friends wondering what the hell we're up to.

**ODOM:** When you start trying to split up the staff functions, you end up with a number of things that don't fit neatly in the functional areas, of defense policy issues and economic policy issues, and into intelligence issues. Global issues became the receptacle for that set of odd issues.

**YOUNG:** Zbig, if you want to get your first crack in with any general remarks, you can, otherwise I'll read off a very general question. Obviously, you had a very special and close relationship to President Carter that goes back before the campaign. You knew him, I think, as a presidential hopeful, as a candidate, then as a President and as things changed and developed over those four years. I'd like you to start by talking about Carter as a presidential hopeful—your first connections with him. What qualities of mind, what approaches you saw him to have, and then how your relationship developed over these years. This is just a blanket question. I'd like to begin at the beginning, and then we'll have some questions about details as you go.

**BRZEZINSKI:** I got to know Carter in the middle of the '70s. At the time, I was director of the Trilateral Commission and in the process of establishing it. We the organizers decided to have at least two, maybe four—my recollection is two—Governors on it, one Republican and one Democrat. We chose the Republican from the far West because of the Japanese, and we were looking for a Democratic governor, and we thought it would not be interesting enough to have just a conventional Northeast Democrat, but to pick a bright Democrat from the South. I guess our first thought was [Reubin] Askew, and then someone mentioned that there was a Governor in Georgia who had opened up trade offices for the State of Georgia in Brussels and Tokyo. I remember saying, "Well, he obviously is our man. He fits the trilateral concept, let's invite him." And we did, and then discovered that it was his predecessor who opened up the trade offices. That's just a minor footnote.

He got on the Commission. What I was describing was '73, and then by '75 I knew that Carter was running for the Presidency and we went over to a meeting of the Trilateral Commission in Japan, and Carter at one point came up to me and said, "Would you come to a press conference with me, which I am having for my candidacy?" I said, "All right, I'll go." I was curious. It occurred to me that he was taking me along to some extent to show the newspapermen that he had somebody to go with him because at the time he wasn't being taken very seriously.

The American newspapermen gave him a very hard time, didn't treat him very seriously and laughed at him, said his objective was to squeeze in maybe as a vice presidential candidate. I remember him first of all not being at all rattled, keeping his cool, very pleasant, even though he had lots of reason to get mad. And then he said to them, "You

know, the first caucus in the country is in the state of Iowa, and I have worked awfully hard in Iowa. I'm going to win in Iowa, and you fellows are going to ignore it. The first primary in our country is in New Hampshire, and I have campaigned as hard in New Hampshire as I have ever campaigned in Georgia. I have shaken as many hands and more than all of my rivals combined, and I'm going to win in New Hampshire, and then your headlines will say, 'Southerner wins the North.' The next major primary after that is in Florida. I'm going to push Wallace down below 40 percent and thereby lift the scourge of Wallace from the Democratic Party—" (and remember Wallace was a real threat at the time) "—and I may even beat him. If I beat him in Florida, your headlines will say, 'Carter, Front Runner.'"

Then I walked out and I said to myself, *This fellow is not to be dismissed*. Then at the Trilateral Commission meetings he spoke up on the Middle East and talked about American national interests there, being made to promote peace between the Arabs and Israel so that American interests are promoted; the need to focus in so doing on the Palestinian question. I remember speaking up because I was chairing this very large meeting, that it's nice to hear a Democratic candidate for President with guts. He was saying things in the Middle East which were quite innovative for the time. I came back and told my wife about it, and she said, "Well, you feel that way about it, why don't you support him?"

I wrote him a memo, not offering to support him but outlining things he ought to raise in foreign policy matters, and he wrote me a long personal letter back thanking me and then I heard he was going around the country saying I was his principal foreign policy adviser, and so I became one. That's the situation.

**YOUNG:** After the campaign, after the election, when did he designate you for a position and what transition work followed from that?

**BRZEZINSKI:** After the election and during the election I did a lot of work for him. Once the process became more formal, in a sense that he was a nominee, I guess it was quite clear to all concerned that I was his number one foreign policy adviser. It was taken for granted that I was going to work for him. It wasn't clear what I would get, and there was a lot of press speculation and a lot of maneuvering. Once the elections had been won, a lot of people who had worked together became rivals for jobs. Of course those who were out front were the ones upon whom both attention focused and objections focused. There was a lot of maneuvering and I wasn't offered anything specific, I just was told you will be there, but I wasn't offered anything specific, and Carter phoned me up a few times to ask me for my nominations for slots, and who do I think ought to be Secretary of Defense, who do I think ought to be National Security Assistant.

The job I wanted was that of National Security Assistant, and when he asked me, I remember wondering whether I should nominate some people for the slot who were obviously not suited for it or whether I should nominate people for the best possible slots. I decided it would be silly to play games, and I nominated people for that slot who I

thought would be best, and I nominated two people, Henry Owen and Harold Brown, either of whom I thought would do a very good job as National Security Assistant. For Secretary of State actually I came up without explicitly nominating him, but in effect by describing different people, I came up nominating Vance. Towards the end he asked me. "What would you like to be?" I named a couple of slots that I would like to hold and I said either Deputy Secretary of State or Assistant for National Security Affairs. I never thought I was a serious candidate for Secretary of State. The press bandied me as such but I never thought I was.

He didn't come back to me until the middle of December and he phoned me up and said, "I'd like you to be my assistant for National Security Affairs," and then he says, "You know, you were my number one choice for that slot all along, but I couldn't tell you and I had to go through a routine of screening and searching for that slot as well, but there was no question in my mind that you would have that slot."

Now I don't know if that's true or not. That's what he told me. My guess is, it's probably true except that he probably had to go through a process of digesting a lot of opposition to me, the kind of rationalizing the reasons why he wouldn't accept the arguments against me, and I heard there were quite a few.

**YOUNG:** He was interviewing other candidates, was he not?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes, but not for that slot exclusively, although he was interviewing people for foreign policy, defense, national security, so that any one of them could have gotten that slot, but he never talked to anyone else about that slot, whereas he did talk to people about the other slots. That gives some support to what he said, and therefore my judgment is he was planning to have me in that slot, he thought he needed that, but he had to do what he said, go through the processes. Second, I think much more importantly, he had to somehow or other think through the objections that had been raised to me.

**YOUNG:** Were you the only one of what were called the key actors that he did appoint who had an already developed personal relationship with him, already knew him, or vice versa?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes, I guess so, because Vance supported Sargent Shriver for President, which I always thought showed a certain eccentricity of judgment. Brown came on board, not having supported anybody once Carter was nominated, [Michael] Blumenthal professes now never to have been enthusiastic about Carter anyhow. The only person whom he knew well whom he appointed in the national security area was Stanfield Turner, whom he chose to be CIA chief, but in the second round, because his first choice was Ted Sorenson, actually, whom he didn't know well either.

**HARGROVE:** Was there an intellectual affinity between you and Carter by this time, and if so, how would you characterize it? What did you do for him, and what did he do for you?

**BRZEZINSKI:** He appointed me to his administration.

**HARGROVE:** In terms of your mutual understanding of reality.

**BRZEZINSKI:** That's very hard to answer. What I liked about Carter was my feeling that this was a person who I thought would be reasonably tough and realistic in foreign policy and yet would be guided by certain basic principles which he would project to the world; principles which I have always felt were America's strength, namely the fact that this is a society founded in certain philosophical assumptions which have historical relevance. He therefore would conduct a foreign policy, which while realistic, would be derived from certain basic values. It would be an appealing foreign policy that would strengthen America's impact in the world. This is what appealed to me about him. I can't really say what he liked about me. I'm not a person to describe how the relationship with an intellectual affinity develops from his point of view. I imagine he needed me.

**YOUNG:** Would you accept a side comment on that?

**HARGROVE:** It's a very important relationship, and we'd like to understand it.

**ODOM:** Carter really did not know the international scene in any kind of depth, and I think the things that appealed were Zbig's intellectual clarity, crispness, and integrating strategic framework that he could bring to bear on the issues. The President may not have liked where they led him on some things, but I think they drove him to a conclusion that he expressed to you right after the election, which would tend to be evidence to support my judgment, wouldn't you agree?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Which things?

**ODOM:** Right after the election I remember you saying once that he had said that if there's anyone who can crystallize a clear Democratic foreign policy in the future, it's you.

**BRZEZINSKI:** I think it's also the fact, and that sort of came on gradually, that I could communicate to him crisply, to the point, and quickly, because we did it during the campaigns all the time. There would be no waste of time; I'd get in the car and say, "Look, four things you need to know, the things you need to do, the things you need to say,"—like that, bang, bang, bang, that's it, finish, okay, bye, that's it. Whereas a lot of people had a tendency to kind of sit there and try to talk to him, get to know him, and I just think in balance in that respect that didn't really appeal to him.

**YOUNG:** When you were chosen in December, I believe you said that was not much time.

**BRZEZINSKI:** It was the middle of December and I was getting real nervous.

**YOUNG:** When your nervousness ended, what kind of understandings were reached or what kind of guidance, if any, came from the President concerning the role of the Security Adviser, the kind of staff that should service that role? Or was that left to you entirely? Also, what kind of presidential guidance, if any, did you receive on what the agenda was in your area?

**BRZEZINSKI:** In terms of the concept of the National Security Adviser, I think there was an implicit understanding that we would try to avoid a situation in which he would predominate very evidently and notably, and I think Carter was also concerned about his own image. In his campaign speech or speeches he attacked the “Lone Ranger” style of foreign policy. I think there was some implicit feeling that we would try to low-key it if we could.

At the same time, I also very, very strongly remember, when going over different candidates for Secretary of State with him, describing a certain candidate and saying to him, “He’s the kind of Secretary of State who’d like to make and run American foreign policy.” And Carter made some comment to the effect, “Well, he’s not my type,” making it very clear that he wanted to make foreign policy, direct foreign policy, and the Secretary of State would execute his orders, which made it also clear to me that being an Assistant for National Security Affairs was the position to be with Carter. If the President is going to make and run foreign policy, then you want to be with him, rather than to be under the receiving end in the Department. That immediately conveyed to me the notion that the Assistant for National Security Affairs would be, at least to some extent, an initiator of policy as well as its coordinator.

As far as the staff is concerned, the only real guidance I got on that was that the staff was to be reduced from Kissinger’s size, and by some significant factor, though it wasn’t really made very clear by how much. In fact not so much initially but later, when we had to kind of juggle figures to satisfy his desire for cutting our operational needs, we reduced the full staff from about a 130 to 99, and the policy-making staff, that is to say, people like my colleagues here who came down in procession from Washington to approximately, if I’m not mistaken, 30 to 35, or less.

As we went on, we had to recruit people, to some extent, as detailees, because we found we couldn’t operate within these restrictions. We simply detailed and had people come over as detailees, but kept the staff officially small. We had also a discussion of how to organize the NSC, and this was a terribly important point. This is very well known here to everybody but not to many people who talked about the President more generally. Every President offers a special style, and that shapes the machinery. Carter wanted to reduce the number of committees and agencies, so we had to revamp the NSC machinery, and I spent some time with Carter, after my nomination and before the inaugural, drawing up a basic document on the organization of the NSC, and it went through a couple of revisions. He didn’t like my first version; he rejected it. Shall I go into that?

**YOUNG:** Please do.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Kissinger had certain committees under NSC, of which I believe he chaired four, and others chaired three. Is that right? Do any of you remember?

**ODOM:** There were seven committees, but I don't remember who chaired them.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Officially it was four to three. These were essentially undersecretaries' committees, and Kissinger never chaired a Cabinet-level committee. Since the President said he wanted to be engaged, I proposed a scheme of seven committees at Cabinet level, three of which would be chaired by me. I wanted to chair a committee on crisis management, on arms control, on covert activities. The other four committees would be chaired by the Secretary of State, for foreign policy issues; the Secretary of Defense, defense; CIA, CIA; and Treasury on international economics. Carter rejected that out of hand, and said, "That's too complicated. I don't want seven committees, the way Ford and Nixon had seven committees, I want something very simple."

I came back with a scheme for two committees. I sat down with him one evening and we worked on a formula for two committees. One committee would be called PRC—Policy Review Committee, which would deal with long-range policy issues and would be chaired by a Secretary. Prior to each meeting, the notion was that I would submit a memo to Carter informing him that a PRC is to be held on such and such a topic and that I recommend that the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense chair it. You approve it.

The other committee would be called SCC—Special Coordination Committee, and that would be for crosscutting interagency issues. I would chair that committee. The three crosscutting agency issues would be: covert activity, arms control, and price management. Carter loved that. I drew up with David Aaron, my deputy, a memorandum which we called presidential directive because we changed the names of the previous papers. I took it to the Kennedy Center, at the time of the presidential gala the evening before the inaugural, and during intermission got Carter out and had him sign it, and the next day at 3 p.m. right after the inaugural I had messengers deliver copies of it to Brown and to Vance and to whoever was acting before Turner to inform them of the new arrangements. They were surprised.

**YOUNG:** Was the President, so far as you knew, getting advice from anyone but you on the organization of the NSC?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I don't think he was. He announced at the meeting with the Cabinet shortly afterwards that he had worked out a scheme with me, and he was very satisfied with it, so the Cabinet expressed its approval for it as well.

**YOUNG:** Were you given a free hand in—beyond those guidelines—in organizing and selecting your own staff?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes. Actually, this was one of his weaknesses, and maybe it was inherent in his relatively limited political contacts. He took very little interest in second echelon appointments. This was not only in terms of my own staff, but also in terms of the Departments. He took very little interest in who the deputies and undersecretaries were in the national security area. This was much to my regret, because it meant that every Department head had a free hand, and I think that created some problems later on. As far as my staff was concerned, I had a completely free hand.

**YOUNG:** Others besides you also thought that that was a mistake.

**BRZEZINSKI:** He didn't fire people too much, so that was also a problem.

**YOUNG:** Another thing that has been said is that that choice by Carter to leave more or less to the Secretaries a free hand in their own subcabinet appointments was in pursuit of another guideline of Carter's, and that was that so-called Cabinet government. Did he ever talk to you about that and what his concept of that was and how it might impinge on—?

**BRZEZINSKI:** No, not really. I'm not sure he had thought it through, unless it was something in his Georgia state Governor experience which he took for granted but that the rest of us, the non-Georgia people, didn't know much about. The Cabinet government came to an end very quickly. We used to have Cabinet meetings once a week, and they were just awful. That was just two hours of wasted time. This was Monday mornings, I started bringing the Monday morning new issues of *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *U.S. News and World Report* to Cabinet meetings, and since he made me a Cabinet member, in the first Cabinet meeting that meant that I sat around the table, unlike previous assistants for national security affairs who sat against the wall. I had to be careful, so I always had these magazines on my knees—like this (*demonstrates*)—and I read the three magazines in these two hours because it was a waste of time. After a while we had Cabinet meetings every two weeks, and then after a while I think we had them on the average maybe once a month or so.

**HARGROVE:** In the January 6, 1982, interview in the *New York Times* you complained that you were probably not given sufficient authority in terms of an ideal system, and in part this was Carter's desire to avoid an appearance of the previous system. Would you explicate that a little bit?

**BRZEZINSKI:** That gets to the more basic question of how foreign policy can and should be made. What I was expressing there is the view that if you are going to have a system which is highly centralized in the White House under a very active President, it's much better to be open about it and not to create the illusion that something else is operative, by references to the primacy of the Secretary of State, or first adviser, first spokesman, so forth, which then creates tension even if on a personal level there is no tension between a Secretary of State and the assistant, as there was not between me and

Vance for most of the time. We can talk about that, but there really wasn't. There certainly was between our staffs. In part because there was this conflict between illusion and reality.

I think it would be much better for the President to make it very clear he's running this system and whoever speaks in his behalf does so from the center of things, the White House, and runs it for him, when he cannot do it. Then the President can decide whether the person is also a public spokesman or not. He wanted me to speak up. The reason I appeared on these shows is not because I was irresistibly drawn to the doors of television studios, but because the President would tell me to go, he would phone me up after the show and tell me whether I did well or not, and generally he approved what I said.

On the one hand I was made a spokesman; on the other hand, I was never designated as a spokesman and I was therefore attacked for speaking up. I think that created a lot of confusion. Now the other system, which I think is perfectly acceptable, perfectly reasonable, and has worked well, is that of a President who holds back, who says I'm only interested in the broad strategic issues, the commanding heights of policy, but otherwise it's a Secretary of State who is my principal officer, he speaks for me, he articulates policy, he initiates it, and he dominates coordination. That was the case with [John Foster] Dulles and [Dwight] Eisenhower, [Dean] Acheson and [Harry] Truman, and for two years, Kissinger and Ford. It's a very respectable system. The problem was that we never clarified that we didn't have that system to the degree it was necessary. Under Reagan, I think the situation is even worse because I think we have neither the one nor the other at all now—it's a more stalemated system.

**TRUMAN:** Did the President indicate to you why he wanted you to become spokesman? Because if I remember correctly, this occurred somewhere along about halfway through the administration. In the early years you were not visible on talk shows.

**BRZEZINSKI:** A little earlier than that. It started, I would say, let me make an estimate and ask my colleagues—'77?

**TRUMAN:** Did he indicate to you why?

**BRZEZINSKI:** He wasn't satisfied with Vance's ability to articulate and to present the case. I think, though he never said, that there was also some feeling that the nuances weren't quite right. Even though Vance was saying what the President meant to say, somehow the tone and the nuance came out slightly different. In any case, he never explicitly said, he simply encouraged me and wanted me to do it, and he had me do it, not just publicly but he let me do it with the congressional leaders, he set special briefings in the White House to which he invited the congressional leaders, and I did the briefing. I think Vance was there once, but I gave the major briefing on American foreign policy strategy, and if I remember correctly, Vance talked about the policy in the Middle East or on Panama. It was something narrow.



He even had me set up a meeting in the Cabinet Room for his family. He had me do it for the Cabinet. I remember that very well because he first had me do it for his family, then he asked me to do it for the Cabinet, and after we did it for the Cabinet, I said to him, "You'd better have a briefing by Vance so that there's no hurt feelings." I was worried that Vance would be hurt, so he then set up a meeting at which Vance could give the briefing.

**YOUNG:** There was one part of my question that I think got lost, and that was in the initial period, talking with the President about the nature of the foreign policy agenda that he wished to emphasize, or the nature of the work. Did he have explicit ideas about that, definite ideas, or did he wait to be educated by you as to what should be done and what the issues were that should be immediately addressed?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I think he himself was instinctively drawn toward and maybe to some extent gave the impetus for such issues as nonproliferation, where his own nuclear background was important to him, and in a way an electoral asset and to some extent, but less so, human rights. More generally, I think there are specific antecedents for the agenda, namely that during the campaign I asked Henry Owen and Richard Gardner to join me in drawing up the kind of basic foreign policy document for the President-elect, drawing on some of the campaign themes but trying to systematize what he ought to think about when he becomes President.

We drew up such a document. It wasn't very long. He was sort of interested in it and used it as a basis for discussion at one of the post-electoral meetings with the emergent Cabinet, and I then suggested to him that before he becomes President he hold a meeting with the leadership of the Congress, on foreign policy, and use that document as a basis for his presentation, which he did. That's in answer to your question, Dave. I went to that meeting deliberately intending not to speak, and I remember Vance made some comments and then all of a sudden the President calls upon me and says, "Zbig, outline our objectives." That really surprised me. That was somewhere around the tenth or twelfth of January.

After the inaugural, he and I talked about it, and I told him it would be useful to use that document as the basis for something more formal that I would draw up, namely the foreign policy agenda for the administration. He says, "That's a very good idea, don't tell anybody about it, just do it." I didn't work very hard; I brought a colleague down from Harvard, Sam Huntington, to help me, and Sam worked on it and then I worked on it, some others here worked on it, Bill worked on it. And I gave the President a 40-page memorandum with a very brief cover note, two or three pages, in which I outlined ten major objectives for the administration to achieve in the course of the four years, and I broke up each of the ten objectives to the extent it was possible into annual substeps, indicating when roughly we would try to reach sublevels, so that there would be some cross cutting sense of balance as we moved forwards. Anybody would have a sense of how we were moving on the Middle East, how we were moving on the Far East, and so

forth. For example, goal number four was normalization of relations with China, and the target date for that was 1979.

Carter liked the document very much, and he and I discussed it at some length and he told me to show it to, but not leave it with, Mondale and Vance, and I showed it to them and then he told me to get some comments from Vance on it, and I gave a copy to Vance to keep. Then later he told me to show it to Brown and to Turner, and I did. That emerged as a basic document and guided what we did, particularly in the initial phase. After a while events asserted themselves. But at the end of the administration I reviewed the document, and if I'm not mistaken my conclusion was that we by and large did what we wanted to do on seven of the ten goals, and three we didn't.

**YOUNG:** The Middle East—did that figure in one of the goals?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes, but that was one that we didn't achieve. We wanted to have a comprehensive settlement by the end of the administration, and we obviously didn't. We obtained a partial settlement, and the framework of a comprehensive settlement, but not the comprehensive settlement, and there we changed course after one year. We discovered after one year that what we were doing was not practical, not attainable.

**PRANGER:** I must say this assertiveness of President Carter in foreign policy surprises me a little, particularly because I think you're indicating it begins very early—even, as you say, inaugural eve this new system was presented without any consultation with Brown and Vance. Did he have reasons for this kind of assertion, for wanting to be his own Secretary of State? Also, were there reasons for trying to mask it behind some of these other appearances of consultations, cabinets, and so on? What was the rationale for this? Was it discontent with his predecessor's performances in this area, or what? Or was it just personality?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I think he wanted to be an active, dominant-type President. I think he felt that Ford was too passive, and too dominated from the outside, probably by Kissinger. I think it was perhaps a reflection of his own personality and his concept of leadership. Apparently that was the kind of Governor of Georgia he was. I'm not sure of that; I wasn't there, but that's what his associates said, that he liked to make decisions himself, to involve himself in them. That was just his style of leadership, for better or for worse.

**PRANGER:** Following that up for a moment, would you in making a judgment, looking back on the four years, say it was for better or for worse in terms of assertiveness of this kind?

**BRZEZINSKI:** When I compare Carter's foreign policy performance, let's say in the course of his first year, to Reagan's, I think it's far better, because it did get the United States going on a number of issues which otherwise might have gotten out of hand—whether Panama or the Middle East, China normalization or revival of NATO, multinational trade negotiations, majority rule in Africa. Things didn't drift the way they

otherwise might have drifted, and the way they appear to have drifted lately. It seems to me that if you are going to have an activist foreign policy, then presidential leadership is very important. If you're not, then I think it's easier to maintain control and domination by someone other than the President.

**CLAUDE:** When we have a presidential-NSC foreign policy system, as in the case of the Carter administration, what do you see as the proper role for the Secretary and the Department of State, and to what degree do you think that role was approximated in the Carter administration?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I would say institutional implementation more than anything else. I think it's very difficult for the Department generally speaking to initiate and innovate, because of its size and complexity and style. I would say loyal execution of policy—and in a sense that was the case, by and large, except on two issues, about which in time significant divisions developed. Such major issues as in the Middle East or Africa, later the normalization of China, the Department worked very loyally, carried out instructions, and there was no friction or conflict.

The conflicts developed on two issues: How do we handle the relationship between arms control, SALT, and the effort to stabilize the American-Soviet relationship, and peripheral Soviet expansionism, which at least in the judgment of some of us, touched and potentially threatened our vital interests. On that we had a disagreement. The second, of course, in the latter phase of the administration, was Iran, and how do we handle that. There, I think, there were sort of basic differences of judgment and maybe even of values, and on these two issues the Secretary has strong feelings, and the Department contesting White House primacy I think also tried to assert itself.

**YOUNG:** How would you characterize the difference?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I don't think I would have much to add to what is generally known. My view was that we should very early on make it very clear, both verbally and otherwise, to the Soviets that if there's going to be serious movement towards detente, which we want, there's got to be Soviet restraint and reciprocity in terms of the use of force and particularly the use of force in areas where our vital interests were involved, such as the Middle East. In Iran in view of the situation I favored a military coup before things fell apart.

**MELANSON:** During the 1970s, *Foreign Policy* magazine served as almost a Democratic government in exile in terms of the sorts of things that were being written there on foreign policy. You contributed a number of pieces, Tony Lake, Leslie Gelb, etc. Can you talk a bit about that Carl Gershwin article in *Commentary* a couple of years later talking about the rise and fall of the new foreign policy establishment and trying to link you with a number of other people in *Foreign Policy* magazine? Can you address yourself to this issue of *Foreign Policy* magazine, the outlook that you shared or did not share with a number of people who wrote for that magazine, and then later showed up in the

Carter administration? People who knew or were rumored to have some conflicting views with—

**BRZEZINSKI:** I think that part of it is the people in the administration—

**MELANSON:** Yes, right—

**BRZEZINSKI:** I'm not sure that magazine had much to do with that, though. I'm really not sure how to answer you on the magazine because I'm not really sure what you're asking me about the magazine.

**MELANSON:** There was an attempt on the part of your opponents in the administration to lump together all of those who had written for the magazine in the 1970s, meaning that they did not have much of a belief in the utility of military force, claiming that they had repudiated containment, claiming that we have fewer interests than we have—

**BRZEZINSKI:** That may be true of some of the people who wrote in that magazine, but I wrote for that magazine, I also wrote for *Foreign Affairs*, *Encounter*, and elsewhere, and I didn't have those views. As far as people are concerned, the people you have mentioned I think by and large ended up in the Department of State, under Vance and Christopher, and I think they did represent a homogeneous perspective, shaped very much by the cumulative impact of Vietnam, maybe Watergate, on that particular generation, and I think you described it correctly in terms of its predisposition to eschew force and to be perhaps too optimistic about some aspects of the American-Soviet relationship.

**YOUNG:** Can I follow up by asking a different question? You've noted Carter's views about his own role in foreign policy, and the models he wished to avoid. Was there any view that you ever got that he wished to have a system of competing advice with very different points of view, and that these were reflected in his appointments?

**BRZEZINSKI:** No, I don't think that he deliberately sought that in his appointments. I think once he started getting conflicting advice, he might have found it useful. To some extent he rationalized it the way you have stated, namely that that is the thing that Presidents should have. I sort of said to him, "Why be so worried about the press reports, why don't you just say, 'It's natural the people who advise you are bound to disagree, what's so unusual about it?'" Obviously the press reports about dissension and so forth were disturbing; the question was, how to cope with it? One way to cope would be to fire half the people involved, which was the source of dissent or disagreement. And if you're not ready to do that, the best way to do it is to say, "Well, I'm not bothered, I'm getting conflicting advice, that's what I want them for. If they were all saying the same thing, then perhaps I ought to fire all of them but one and save the taxpayers a lot of money." That was, I think, more of a rationalization. He certainly didn't hire them to get conflicting advice.

**YOUNG:** After Camp David in '79 he did fire some Cabinet members. Was this a step, do you think, he ever contemplated in the foreign policy field?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Maybe, but I never had any indication of it. I think he was quite dissatisfied with Vance towards the end, and I think Vance was quite dissatisfied with him. I think there was mutual disenchantment towards the end. I sensed the rupture coming quite independent of the rescue issue, somewhat earlier. I just had the feeling that that relationship was coming to an end. Maybe he thought of firing me, he never indicated that to me. I thought there would probably be a fight if he was reelected, and maybe pitting Mondale and Muskie against me. And I took that into account. On the whole I felt that I would win. I thought I knew pretty well where I stood with certain key people, but I thought there would be perhaps a rather difficult phase after the election, because I thought that he might then be forced to make a choice.

Muskie stood very high with the President, but at the same time I think there was some resentment on the part of the President, certainly his people, that there was at least the impression of a flirtation between Muskie and the possibility of nomination for the Presidency. That's a thing that political leaders don't easily forget. Maybe there would have been some kind of a showdown after the elections. I don't think Carter ever really contemplated firing either me or Brown or Vance, as such. In fact, when that series of firings took place, there was an absolutely embarrassing episode in which everybody sort of resigned, and there were stories that the Cabinet resigned and the President gave instructions saying that the National Security people would stay put and in place to eliminate any ambiguity on that. Until then and in the early phases, Carter liked Vance very much, got along with him extremely well. He respected Brown. He had, particularly in the early phases, extremely high regard for Turner, who was number one in his class at Annapolis, and I guess that makes a difference in that very competitive military environment, so Carter thought extremely highly of his foreign policy appointees.

**YOUNG:** At some point I'm sure you're going to be asked something about turning points, if there were any as you saw them in the administration, and also some more questions about—aside from the Mondale/Brzezinski/Muskie affair—what changes you might have seen taking place—

**BRZEZINSKI:** Let me just add on that last point that I don't want to leave the impression here that there was some ongoing feud between me and Muskie and Mondale. I got along extremely well with Mondale. We were neighbors; we visited with each other several times a day. On a number of key issues we worked very closely together. For example, he was very instrumental in my going to China when Vance wanted to stop that. I think towards the end, when there was a split within the Democratic Party, between liberal and less liberal or more moderate groupings, that some people around Mondale saw me as an embarrassment, a source of political cost.

As far as Muskie's concerned, I think his political advisers were really egging him on to make an issue of the primacy of the Secretary of State vs. the Security Adviser, and much

to everybody's embarrassment, particularly the President's, he kept pumping up the issue in the middle of the campaign. Those stories saying Muskie's unhappy, he's been demanding changes, and so forth were leaked, deliberately leaked, from his office in the middle of the campaign, and that was another reason why I didn't think I would lose in a showdown after the elections if we won. These stories were not very helpful.

**THOMPSON:** This may be wrong, but somehow one gets the feeling that something happened in the first or second year that at least changed your emphasis on this inevitable conflict. Remember in the interviews you were asked when you came in if there would be a conflict between you and Vance, and you minimized that, and yet almost everything you've said today about showdowns and about these two models—having to choose one or the other—about the role of the Department as implementer, suggests that there was an inevitable conflict. Were you concealing something in your original answer to the questions on this issue, or were there things that you learned as you went along that led you to see that division as being more fundamental?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I think I was to some extent naive in the beginning. I genuinely believed that we could work as a team, and I derived a great deal of pleasure. You can see in some notes that I have taken of different stages that I derived some sense of satisfaction at that time that we were working well as a team. We were congenial. I thought we could perhaps maintain that during the four years. What happened was that first one, and then another, rather fundamental issue surfaced, and disagreements arose which were never personally unpleasant.

I cannot think of a single occasion in which there was anything unpleasant between Vance and me, and I cannot accuse him of a single untoward act, directly or indirectly. I know at least in my own conscience that seeing the President alone many times a day—and Carter will confirm this—that I never said anything about Vance that was personally derogatory. In fact when Vance was slipping very early in the press standings and so forth, I was the one who suggested to the President a couple of times that he go to the airport to greet him, to show his support for Vance and to give him a morale boost because he was taking such a beating.

I think once policy disagreements surfaced, then all of the institutional rivalries and resentments—which always are there, particularly when a small elite staff dominates a Department—also intensified, and that became sharper and sharper. The press got on to it, and I think the press pumped it up a great deal. Then gradually things began to get more competitive, and in a way, one was almost driven to keeping score to see who wins and who loses, and that's probably never too good in a power setting, especially if you feel strongly that you are right. If there is something very important at stake, you feel you have to make sure that your point of view prevails, and on some issues I felt that way. I felt very strongly that way, that if we don't become tougher sooner two things will happen: detente will fall apart because the American people won't support it; and the President's standing will fall apart, because the country won't support a President it perceives as weak.

**TRUMAN:** Aside from the change that you have expressed that is reflective of your changing relations with Mr. Vance, consequent upon these issues having arisen, how would you characterize the changes, if any, in the role he played in the White House in the course of time? Was it in fact uniform throughout the time, in particular in relation to the President? Or was there an evolution in the role?

**BRZEZINSKI:** That's very hard for me to answer, Dave. I thought about that, and I don't have a good answer. Let me grope for one, but it really isn't very good, and I'd be interested in having Madeleine and Les, who were close to me, or Bill comment on it. Bill was there for four years. Madeleine, you were there for what? Three? Two and a half? Les, you were—

**DENEND:** From almost the beginning.

**BRZEZINSKI:** You were there from the beginning almost, but you were closer to me particularly the last two years, right? I would hazard a guess that first of all, I started with a close personal relationship with him because he knew damn well I was one of the very few more visible people who endorsed him at a time when we had two percent national recognition. Secondly, I think he knew he learned a great deal from me. Even when I was being sworn in he made a speech to everybody which was along these lines, and I remember feeling kind of awkward because he was so explicit, and he's learned everything from me, etc., etc. He kept referring to me as the eyes and the ears through which he sees the world, and I think that kind of lasted for about maybe six months or so after the inaugural.

Then there was a kind of leveling off in the sense that Vance became more established, more comfortable when they got to know each other, and Brown became more established, and then I became, I think, more a kind of prime interpreter but increasingly on par with the others in relationship to Carter. I'm talking about the evolution in my relationship to Carter now, since it's very hard for me to generalize on it. I would like to hear Madeleine or you or Les comment on what I say or you give your impressions of my relationship with Carter.

Phase one would be, both closeness and predominance, and then there was also closeness in that sense that I would say things to him both privately and in a small group which were sometimes very sharp and very direct. I thought I should. After a while I stopped doing that because after a while he became more of a President, even to me. We once talked privately, he said to me, "Privately, you can call me Jimmy." I never did. I just couldn't do it somehow. Because after a while he became more and more of a President. After a while I felt that I really wasn't quite as close to him, and that the others were closer than they used to be. I also decided very early on, and I have a note to myself on that, to maintain a very professional relationship to him, that is to say, go in, give my briefing, go out, that's it. No chat, nothing personal. He sometimes initiated personal conversations, about children, family, his problems, and so on, but I wouldn't.

The second phase was more one of equality and more balanced, and I think even in that phase maybe there was a time when Vance was maybe more primus than I. Then the fights started, and the disagreements, and I think Carter initially was inclined to be more empathetic to Vance's line, or be uneasy with the line I was pursuing. Maybe there was even a period when I felt I was dipping with him, and particularly in the initial phases of the Iran problem. That was late '78.

Then I think the normalization of relations with China, which I pulled off, impressed him a great deal, and he referred to it several times—that he got me to do something and it got done, whereas in other things it is endless litigations, the Middle East, he has to do it because otherwise they're just going to be negotiating legal documents for the rest of his term, and he's tired of this legalistic approach. Also, Soviet behavior, I think, had a great deal to do with my position rising and becoming closer to him. I think throughout he knew that he could trust me, and he could rely on me in a personal sense and he did, on a number of occasions, which I really can't talk about. That remained the case. What has to be added to all of this, as we speak very frankly, and I take it there are real controls on the confidential nature of all of this.

**YOUNG:** Yes.

**BRZEZINSKI:** This really works?

**YOUNG:** Pardon?

**BRZEZINSKI:** This confidentiality? It really works?

**YOUNG:** Yes, it certainly does.

**BRZEZINSKI:** A very important factor in all this was Rosalynn's [Carter] attitude towards me. She liked me, and in fact she told me when we were leaving the White House that I was her special person. That was not unimportant with him, so I had that additional relationship, and that had something to do with my earlier sense of confidence that if we ever had a fight with Mondale or Muskie I felt pretty confident that I would win.

**TRUMAN:** As these little ups and downs occurred, were there any changes in actually what you did for him, or did that go along on an even keel?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Oh yes, always on an even keel. There were two major attempts, one by Muskie and one by Vance, to alter the actual patterns, and particularly my control over the system, because not only did I chair that one committee with three functions, but I also controlled the flow to the President for the committees that Vance had. That is to say, any minutes from Vance's meeting were written up by my staff, sent in to the President by me, without Vance seeing them, with a cover note by me. Both Vance and Muskie



tried to change the system, and Muskie eventually succeeded, only to the extent that he was able to see the minutes of the meetings he chaired before we sent them to the President, and could make changes in them. He still couldn't see my cover note, and when he sometimes made changes in there, I wrote in a covering note saying, "Mr. President, the Secretary of State has amended the minutes to read as follows. I want you to know that these emendations reflect changes of mind since the meeting, since the original minutes of the meeting said the following." He gained nothing from it.

The procedural part didn't change at all. I think that, by and large, Carter felt that he stood preeminent, which he very much wanted to be. He wanted to be President. I don't know whom he modeled himself on. He used to say increasingly Truman was his model, but I think it was more a combination of Kennedy and FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt]. He needed someone like me to do what I was doing. That was important. Of course he could have found somebody else to do it for him, but until he had somebody else to do what I was doing, he needed someone like me. He didn't want to share his power with Brown or Vance. Let me just ask Madeleine or Bill or Les about whether what I said deviates from their understandings. I'd be interested in their perceptions.

**ALBRIGHT:** I would say that I agree completely, and one of the additional things that I think Carter felt very strongly about Zbig was that Zbig's loyalty was very important and that he had stuck his neck out for him. I know that during the Medal of Freedom ceremonies, where all three were given a Medal of Freedom, Muskie and Brown and Brzezinski, Carter did make a specific point of saying that Zbig had been subjected to a certain amount of abuse on his account, and that he appreciated that.

**BRZEZINSKI:** He was rather moved.

**ALBRIGHT:** Those were all extemporaneous remarks, and I think very important. I also think there's no doubt in my mind that other members of the White House staff did say to the President that Zbig was a liability to him and that, as I said earlier, had he wanted to get rid of Zbig he would have done it at a different period. I think I am in a different position having worked both for Muskie and for Brzezinski and liking them both.

I think that in a lot of ways Carter, when he appointed Muskie Secretary of State, was horrified at what he'd done. He'd recreated a political figure that had in fact been quiescent, and I will never forget the look on Carter's face when Muskie had his own press conference immediately after having been appointed, and Muskie, in contrast to Carter, was good with the press, and all of a sudden Carter and all his people were there and thought, *God, what have we just done?* Zbig was not a threat in that particular way. Plus, I do think that the President was very, very dependent on the ways Zbig presented material to him.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes, because very often I'd say something to him and he would repeat it in the same words the next day. He had a fantastic memory, and I'm not sure he even did

it consciously, but I would talk to him before a press conference and then he would stand up before the press conference and say word for word the same thing.

**ODOM:** I'm amazed at the number of similar points we're making. Very critical is that Carter statement at the Medal of Freedom ceremony. I remember it in much more detail because I was really struck by it. He said, "A lot of people have criticized Dr. Brzezinski, criticized him for speaking out. I just want to say that he has never spoken out without my permission, and anything he said I have approved." Given the context in Washington, that was a statement demonstrating a kind of loyalty that went beyond anything a President has to make. If anybody had any doubts about the solidness of the relationship, that should have removed them. The other point that Madeleine didn't make—if you could see the TV film of Muskie's acceptance statement—when he was appointed Secretary of State, he just upstaged Carter, walked up there and delivered not an acceptance of being appointed Secretary. He delivered a presidential inaugural and it was clear the people in the room were almost amused by it.

**ALBRIGHT:** We were all in the Cabinet Room.

**ODOM:** I remember very consciously, I walked out of that room and I said, "Muskie and the President are already at odds."

**BRZEZINSKI:** Let me comment on this because it's really pertinent and tells you something about my relationship with Vance. When Muskie was holding forth there, upstaging the President, Vance and I went to my office together. We sat in my office together, laughing, and saying, "Gee, when is this guy going to get off? Look what he's doing to his relationship with Carter." Both Vance and I—and this was at Muskie's "inaugural."

**ODOM:** Zbig, I said earlier, before you came in, that I think your tight conceptualizations brought a sense of structure into the departmental materials that became crucial. Nobody in the administration was doing it, and Zbig was doing it with incredible speed, incredible accuracy, and as time went on, Soviet behavior tended to vindicate his views on the issues. Those two factors, it seems to me, pinned the President to Zbig's position.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes, I think so. I sensed his intellectual interest. Here I ought mention something, namely that Ham and Jody and I were increasingly very close.

**ODOM:** That's another thing.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Jody from the very beginning felt the President was too soft, and Ham has said to me, "What's the matter with him? I don't recognize him. He wasn't like this in Georgia. What's the matter with him?" He very much supported me when I wanted to see some people fired. We got them fired, in the end. He generally wanted the President to take a tougher line, so Jody and Ham became very important. Also [Robert] Strauss, to some extent.

**ODOM:** I know less about that.

**YOUNG:** This was after Camp David?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Ham and Jody used to—

**ODOM:** This was from the very beginning, but we wanted him to be more assertive by '78, '79, and '80.

**DENEND:** There were two points I would have made. One was the Medal of Freedom episode which I think is singular, and the second is, and Bill has made this point before on other occasions, that there was some element of this during some part of the middle when you might have dipped. There was some part of this shooting the messenger. You were bringing bad news and he began to internalize and realize that. Much of what he had held out for the administration was not going to come to pass, and there were some really serious problems, that in fact events were dictating policy. It took him a while to come to grips with that. You, in a sense, bore the brunt of that.

**ODOM:** I'd like to say another thing, as far as it bears on my relationship with Zbig, and also I think his relations with the whole White House. I can say no matter what the fights were, how much tough infighting there was, I never felt once compelled to do something that I thought was wrong. There was basic integrity that I could stand up and live with. I think that very much characterized your relationship with the President and the whole relationship with NSC staff, so I think there was a kind of integrity and moral underpinning to the relationship that gave it balance and cohesion that perhaps other people don't perceive. It's hard to assess from the outside.

**BRZEZINSKI:** When we said goodbye to Carter, he said, "You know, in the four years neither you nor anyone close to you did anything unethical." And it's quite true, and there was no insistence on unethical conduct. This ranged from even such little things as not wanting to tape people's conversations—not just not taping them, but not having the secretaries listen in, take notes. He just couldn't do it; he just considered it unethical.

**TRUMAN:** Going back if I may to the question I was going to ask you, you talked earlier about having taken a more public role as advocate at the President's suggestion and request.

**BRZEZINSKI:** I don't want to give the impression that I was fighting it.

**TRUMAN:** No, no, I know you well enough to know that. What I was going to ask though was whether you or the President at any time when this was occurring thought of this as perhaps inviting the possibility of forcing the President's National Security Adviser to become senatorially confirmed, and if so whether that would have any negative impact and injure his relationship with the President.

**BRZEZINSKI:** It gave him [Vance] certain statutory powers vis-à-vis the Secretary of the Treasury and others which were helpful in asserting himself. Since I wasn't going to be affected by it, and didn't feel strongly about it either way, I saw in it actually possibilities of enhancing my role and letting me do more openly what I felt that I should be doing.

**STRONG** I have a follow-up question to Mr. Truman's earlier question about the relations with the President. I was wondering if you could tell us something about your routine contacts with Carter. Did you typically meet with him alone? In groups? Was he interested in brief, businesslike discussions of the day's agenda? Or did he want long, far-ranging conversations? And generally is there something you can tell us about the character of his thought and work habits on foreign policy problems?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Of course it varied from time to time. There were periods of very intense and frequent contacts and there were periods of more limited contacts, but there probably wasn't a day in the four years in which I didn't have some kind of contact with him, maybe not always at Camp David. Even then I talked with him on the phone. But the usual routine was that I would come my office fairly early and it could be any time from six to seven on—seven would be late, and I would brief him. The earliest time I briefed him would be 6:45, and the latest would be 7:30. Sometimes 8:00, that was very rare.

I had a half hour allotted for me to brief him in the morning, and I would therefore prepare myself before coming in, look at the intelligence statements, decide what was important, write out a few sheets of paper, three or four points that I would orally mention to him, and these points would be either to highlight some intelligence information I felt he as President ought to take note of, or to tell him about some meeting that would come up that day involving me or the NSC or the Secretaries of State and Defense, to tell him what line I intended to take or what I would push. Or I would take the opportunity to say, "Here is a policy dilemma, you have to really think about it, and this is the way I would perceive it and approach it." I would typically take some five to fifteen minutes to brief him. I would rarely take a full half hour. I felt to be brief and to the point was to his advantage and to my advantage.

When I found him particularly relaxed and feeling he wanted to talk, then I would make conversation. I found the best way to engage in conversation would be to tell him something he didn't know. Then his real craving for education would assert itself. Or alternatively to ask him to explain something to me because he loves to teach, and he welcomed an opportunity to explain something to me. Then he would talk for a long time. Sometimes we talked about music, occasionally about people, but not too much, and I never gossiped about our team, I just stayed out of that.

Then, during the day, he'd phone me up several times, and sometimes the relationship was so jocular and so relaxed that he would pick up the phone and say, "Zbig isn't here." And he was always out loafing or playing tennis or whatever. He would come into his

office or we would talk on the phone. I was one of three people, I think, who practiced the right, and it was not even formally granted, of walking into his office any time we wanted unannounced, if we needed to. Obviously if there was a meeting you stuck your head in and pulled it out. However there were several times when I thought it was important enough that I interrupted his meeting. I would go and see him during the day in his office. I would say on the average probably I had four or five contacts with him a day, including personal or telephone conversations.

He would never see the Secretary of Defense or State or the head of CIA without me present, except on very special occasions, particularly when the relationship with Vance became difficult, mutually, and there were times when they needed to talk, but I think essentially to huddle and to almost repair the relationship, or at least to maintain it. Then there were a few times when Vance saw him alone, and I guess a couple of times when Vance went in to complain about me and saw him alone. Other than that the practice was always for me to be present. The practice was also for me to be present whenever he saw any foreign visitor or any visitor dealing with foreign policy. A couple of times he saw some of them without me and I complained to him. I said, "Look, you reach a decision with somebody else, a foreigner, unless I know about it, and implement it, it's not a decision. So what's the good of you talking to him? You can't write minutes of your meetings. Since we didn't tape these meetings, where is the record?" and so forth.

I would meet him in those settings. Then we would play tennis occasionally, and that, you know, provided a social setting, and from time to time he wanted me to jog with him, once he took up jogging, although I didn't think too much of that. I jog with Les and Bill, who jog two miles, and he sort of worked himself up to a frenzy jogging eight and ten miles, and he wanted me to come along. So he offered me as an incentive the opportunity of jogging with Rosalynn who jogged, he said, two miles, but I think she was keeping up with him and I once jogged with the two of them in Cairo and found it difficult to keep up with them. I didn't pick that one up too often.

**ALBRIGHT:** The Korean story.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Oh yes, in Korea. In Korea he insisted I jog with him. As we were flying to Korea he said, would I like to jog with him? I said I would love to, but I didn't have any trunks with me. And he says he has an extra pair. I say, "Gee, it would be nice if we could do it, but I didn't bring any running shoes." He said that's no problem. I went back to my quarters and in a few minutes an officer appears with a pair of trunks, shoes, from the President. The next morning at 5:30 a.m. he was out there. He had a company of Marines or something, a General in an outfit, all ready to jog, and I had my press secretary with me.

So I started jogging and went on a 10-mile jog with movie cameras and television cameras parked on the side of the damn thing. And so, increasingly, Chet and I faded behind, and Carter made a point of running ahead of the entire military and came back to leading first with his General behind him and the Marines and then the female Marines

and then in the end me and my press secretary—all this being filmed. I made a point, as I ran by the cameras, by raising my hands like this and announcing to everybody that my press secretary and I had done an extra lap.

I'm citing all this because the relationship most of the time was a very easy-going relationship, while at the same time very frequent. I would send in papers to him, and that's probably much more important, directly. I could decide which of my papers would go through the system in the White House, which means that someone sat there and decided whether the paper to the President from me should also be shared with Mondale, Jordan, Eizenstat, domestic affairs, or maybe even someone in the Department for concurrence or comment. Or it would go directly from me to him and no one would see it.

That was my decision. I made it a point of course to send the routine papers the other way, but anything I felt strongly about I took myself to the President and made sure he saw it. He would send it back to me with his comments. I would also send him periodically commentaries on the state of the world, the state of our foreign policy, his own performance, criticisms of things he had said or done. These were very, very candid personal papers, which just went from me to him and came back straight to me. What else can I tell you about the relationship with the President?

**YOUNG:** Did he ever talk politics with you or you with him?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes, we did. We did, for example, when [Ted] Kennedy challenged him. We talked about that. We talked about Reagan. On trips we talked a lot, but it varied. There were times when I felt that the relationship was quite distant, and I think Bill put it quite well, there were periods when I was coming in with nothing but bad news, and there was a kind of distance for a while occasionally.

**CLAUDE** Was your foreign birth an asset to that relationship?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I suspect it was. In a way I think we were both kind of strange birds. He was a Georgian and very conscious of the fact that he was a Georgian, and he was the first southern President in a long, long time, and very conscious of the real or sensed hostility of others toward him as a Southerner and Georgian. And maybe my sort of strange origins and mixture was kind of curious and interesting to him. I once gave him a page from *Sophie's Choice* by [William] Styron. I don't know how many of you have read the book, but the book is about a love triangle in New York involving a kind of mixed-up terribly assertive sexually charged Jewish guy, then a more reticent Southerner who comes north and then goes back south, and a Polish refugee girl right after World War II in New York.

In it he has a marvelous page—Styron writing the book spent some time in Poland—describing the similarity between Polish history and Polish values and the values of the South, in the sense of tragedy, of victory being unvanquished in defeat, defeat being more often the reality than victory, the curious cult of male chivalry towards women and at the same time a certain degree of insistence on physical domination of the women, and also

the love of the horse and things of that sort. I once read it and I was really struck about how much it told me about the relationship, and I gave the book to him and Rosalynn to read and they both found it very interesting. In a speech one day in Mississippi I read that to the audience and I was struck by how that Southern audience reacted to it, very kind of warm and understanding. Maybe there was something to that, you know, you can never tell. I may be reading much more into all of this than it deserves, but the relationship certainly wasn't a usual one.

You have to take into account something else. It often struck me that Carter had no peers in the White House. He had subordinates, who were to some extent vicarious sons, Jody Powell and Ham could say things to him, four-letter words and things like that, which I would never use. They were sons. I could say things to him without four-letter words, which they could never say, and I did. I have to say this: I've heard him really get mad at Vance and Brown. I've heard him be mad, personally. I've heard him be terribly mad at Ham and Jody. He never once was nasty to me, never said anything unpleasant. Once he wrote me a note which is slightly unpleasant, but that was the most he ever did, and that was actually something to do with handling the papers on his desk. I was struck by that, that in the four years he never once either raised his voice or growled at me.

He was once very concerned that I had said something about the American-Soviet relationship which threatened the relationship, and it got into the press. Vance went to complain, and he was very upset about it, especially since the *Washington Post* has a huge headline, "Brzezinski Draws the Line." A huge headline. I came into the office and he was sitting there with a big smile on his face and I could tell the big smile was the "I'm really pissed off as hell" kind of smile. But it was still a smile, and he said, "Well, you have really done it. I wonder whether you should have said it that way, put it that way," all with a big smile. I said, "Well, if you feel that way, let's talk it out, because I thought I was saying what you were thinking. Obviously you don't feel that way." He said, "I don't want you to feel bad about it, but perhaps you went a little too far." Then the next day he said to me, "I thought about it further, I think you were right." That got washed away.

I'm sure he was just furious at me at times, because I would insist on things. Once Vance was very worried that the Shah was going to go to Egypt. Vance wanted to get rid of the Shah, but Vance at the same time had to sound concerned for our national security, and he said this would be the wrong time to go to Egypt, and he told me the President needs to be told that, but I should be very careful because the President's furious. I said, "That doesn't matter." I phoned him up and he really got mad at me and I said, "Well, it's too bad, I have to tell you that." He finally got so mad he slammed the receiver on me, but that was the most, even then he didn't really hit me. In the four years I never had one unpleasant exchange with him. And I think that is somewhat unusual, and that was related to the fact that I was the only peer he had. That was the central point I was going to make. Everybody else, Stu Eizenstat, Ham, Jody, Moore, were not really peers, and the Cabinet members were always at a distance.

**YOUNG:** Zbig, do you think if Bert Lance had stayed he would have been a peer?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Absolutely. I should have mentioned him. Bert was the only other peer. We used to play tennis together, and it was very interesting to watch them together. They were very close and Bert was certainly closer than I, much closer. Carter lost a lot losing him.

**YOUNG:** Yes, that would be my guess.

**BRZEZINSKI:** You're absolutely right. I should have mentioned that. He was his peer and losing him he lost a peer and a real friend, a real friend, someone who was really very close to him in a way that I certainly wasn't.

**YOUNG:** Somebody who apparently was looking very good in Washington politics.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes, and who was right on inflation. The rest, the President and Mondale and Stu Eizenstat and [Charles] Schultze were wrong.

**MELANSON:** I just wanted to ask a little bit about this diversity of your own staff. A number of your assistants mentioned that you were self-consciously desirous of maintaining as diverse a staff as possible in outlook and priorities, etc. Were you able to maintain that diversity throughout the four years? Or did you find that despite personnel you found yourself listening more and more to certain people, and less and less to others? And did the messages that you were listening to become perhaps more homogeneous than they were earlier in the administration?

**BRZEZINSKI:** First of all, you're right, I did very deliberately want to have a very catholic staff. That was very deliberate, it's to some extent part of my intellectual tradition, I always did that in the institute that I directed, it never bothered me to have people disagree with me. Therefore I wanted a staff in which I had people to the left of me, to the right of me, as well as people sort of in the middle, and I had such a staff. I never had any problem throughout the four years of what I would consider to be serious personal indiscretion or serious personal disloyalty, not to my knowledge, at least. If there was, I didn't know about it. In that case it must have been masked.

I made a point of sharing with staff a great deal about my relationship with the President, as I knew that this staff was working extremely hard. People were really working extraordinarily hard. I don't think anybody can have an idea what hard work is like until they work in the White House, especially when people are motivated. People worked extraordinary hours and not all of them had the kind of contact with the President that I had, and I wanted them to feel that they were the President's elite. I tell them, "You are the praetorian guard, you are working for the President. You are special." I wanted them to feel involved with the President, because I know that in Washington being with the President is part of the reward, it's part of the status symbol, and even if they couldn't be with the President I wanted them to feel that they were partaking of the relationship. I would tell them anecdotes, accounts, my discussions with the President, the President's



mood, the President's interests, the President's policy preferences and in the four years I never had any indiscretion on the subject. Nor did I ever have any leak from the NSC which I could consider to be personally, disloyally directed at me. That's part of the answer.

Now obviously over time I think there did develop a more homogeneous group within the staff with whom I would meet more often, with whom I had more personal relationships, with whom I would consult on some of my own personal vicissitudes when I became very much a target, and these were people who were not only colleagues but personal friends. In a sense they were political allies, in that there was a certain shared philosophical communion. That didn't mean that the others became irrelevant. They just didn't become part of this inner core.

**MELANSON** Did you feel that that later system was more or less effective than the earlier one?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I don't think I can make that judgment. The circumstances really were different. To some extent it was a function of experience, to some extent a function of policy battles, to some extent a function of my own embattlement.

**JONES:** What's it like being a target? Did that affect you in your work?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I don't know. Maybe the others would like to comment. I don't think so. I don't think it did. I didn't like it in the beginning, but over the years I discovered after a while that press attacks don't bother me so much. They did initially, but after a while they stopped bothering me. I don't know, you can't tell. I don't think it bothered me much.

**ODOM:** I used to think about that a lot, and I was amazed. I think they did bother you for a while although you did a pretty good job of concealing it, and I do think maybe they began to bother you less. There was one period in which I thought you were very seriously hurt by the press. That was the Sally Quinn piece.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes, that was more because of its rather vicious impact on my family.

**ODOM:** Yes, that wasn't a policy attack.

**BRZEZINSKI:** It was a kind of smear.

**JONES:** It must be at that point that the stability of your staff operation becomes very important.

**BRZEZINSKI:** It was also at that point that I discovered all of a sudden that I had very good friends, and I will always remember that. Various people knocked themselves out, including some that I hadn't expected. For example, Jody Powell just absolutely knocked himself out to browbeat [Benjamin] Bradlee into getting over to the White House and,

“Get your ass over here,” and stuff like that. “We’re going to show you things that are going to make your hair stand up, and some others as well.” That was of course very gratifying.

**JONES:** Let me ask my original question then. Did the President have other sources of foreign policy advice in the White House?

**BRZEZINSKI:** In the White House? No.

**YOUNG:** Turner, for example.

**JONES** Mondale?

**BRZEZINSKI:** A couple tried.

**PRANGER:** Back to Carter’s assertiveness, or maybe aloofness, to some extent. He was his own foreign policy adviser, that is to say he was on certain tracks that in policy terms seemed to be rather steady tracks, for example the SALT process or this meeting in Vienna of the Austria Treaty celebration. There also was a rather strong arms control position, was there not, which was present throughout?

**BRZEZINSKI:** He was very involved in nonproliferation. Absolutely.

**PRANGER:** In those areas, do you have a sense that he was also sort of communing with himself?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I think also in those areas he and Vance shared very much some of these aspirations, and that helped to reinforce the relationship between them. I think Cy was very much committed to nonproliferation, very much committed to the SALT process, and saw in it the central area of American-Soviet relationship. I think the President to some extent shared that view. In that respect, the relationship between them was cemented.

**YOUNG:** One of the many unchanging portraits of Carter that became fond to the press was that he was an indecisive person. Did you see that, or did you see something very different?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I certainly didn’t see that.

**YOUNG:** How did that arise?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I don’t know, frankly, and maybe it was because of the dichotomy perceived or exaggerated between Vance and me. If you look at his policies in the area of foreign policy, he was as steadfast as any President in personally pursuing a Mideast settlement. He was steadfast in obtaining normalization of relations with China. He was

absolutely steadfast and sacrificial in getting the Panama Canal treaties ratified. This was at some expense of relations with the more domestically oriented associates. I would say ranging from Mondale through Stu Eizenstat to others, he was prepared to go for a high defense budget at a time of stringency. I think in these sort of larger issues of foreign policy he was quite decisive, and maybe it was Iran and the enormous complexity of that issue and the absence of any good choices that contributed to that inaction, because I didn't find him waffling.

**THOMPSON:** We've been told somewhere along the way that you saw your role not as personal advocate but institutional mediator. Some of this has come out a moment ago when you talked about different points of view in the NSC and willingness to hear different views. Is that too neat a distinction? It's a little hard to understand how within a group which has a fairly evident point of view that we've listened to most of the day, that there could be a total absence of advocacy in that group. And it's equally a little difficult to think that you on every issue would be an advocate, as in the memorandum summary kind of thing you referred to, but that is a distinction that we've heard.

**BRZEZINSKI:** I wasn't an advocate on every issue. I took a position on every issue, because it was my job to take a position. On nonproliferation I tended not to be involved—supportive but uninvolved. Even in passing a recommendation on nonproliferation I have to say the Secretary of State recommends the following, I concur, or I disagree, so the President will know where I stand, because he would ask me. That, in a way, is advocacy. There were times when I said, "I disagree." I suppose that is an advocate. Beyond that I think it's important to realize that I spent a great deal of time making sure that there was a great deal of coordination and smoothness in the relationship between Vance and Brown and Turner, so that the President wouldn't have to adjudicate, so that a lot of issues would be disposed by us, and I would call meetings with them very frequently.

One thing that's missing in the system nowadays is this systematic adjudication of issues on a Cabinet level, not pushing them up to the President. That required both advocacy and some willingness to compromise or shift sides occasionally—siding with Brown, occasionally Vance, when to lose Vance or Vance wouldn't see me, adjudicating always by creating a majority against him. That was a very important role.

**THOMPSON:** Were the two roles equally easy for you to perform?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I can't judge that. I don't know. I think the system worked reasonably well, at least that's what other people seem to have said about it. I was told by some people in the JCS that the system worked well.

**THOMPSON:** One last follow-up: Do you think if you had not been a personal advocate, then you would have been given more credit in the public and within the government for this mediation role with Brown and—

**BRZEZINSKI:** Yes.

**ODOM:** I had a point with the distinction between advocacy and coordinator. It seems to me that each of the Departments inherently has a parochial departmental view. When issues come up, they are referred to the Departments. They are returned with a Department bias. There's a kind of viewpoint, which requires some policy perspective, advocacy, or articulation that you're not going to get bubbling up when you have three or four major Departments interacting. I thought it was the crystallization of that presidential view, which integrates, but is also advocacy because it transcends each one of the Departments. Now that was the way I'd describe the advocacy role; it adds another dimension that just simply isn't found by summing up the whole of the parts. Is that right?

**BRZEZINSKI:** I think it's fair.

**PRANGER:** The Department heads are also synthesizing those views, like Kissinger's describing [Melvin] Laird as representative of the bureaucracy, he's more politicized than anyone else in the Nixon Cabinet, basically, and already the Cabinet Secretaries are in a sense in some cases transcending their own departmental views, aren't they, on behalf of the President?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Sure.

**ODOM:** They may on occasion. There'd be many occasions on which they do not.

**YOUNG:** Zbig, in some of the testimony we've had from people outside your area, in the domestic policy area, they suggested there was a real problem on many occasions with too much detail getting in to the President, the President being called on to decide matters that should not have been decided at the presidential level. This relates to their felt need for a Chief of Staff in the White House.

One of the difficulties they saw in this was that the President was the sort of person who welcomed detailed information, and he had the kind of mind or working style that invited that. I'm understanding from the way you described your role and your relationship with the President, and the systematic adjudication of certain issues, that this was not a problem in the NSC. Between honest advocate and honest broker advocate, you were also performing something comparable to a Chief of Staff role in the National Security area.

**BRZEZINSKI:** That is certainly the case, but it doesn't mean therefore that the President was free from a great deal of tactical involvement, nor that he was prevented from injecting himself into it. He liked that; he wanted it. For example, when he found that I was making decisions on his behalf on other issues, he wanted to know why I did that. This meant that all the time saved was wasted because he had to be told that I decided this, I decided that. In most cases he approved, but the whole purpose of relieving him was to some extent undermined. In order to devise a system of informing him in writing

what decisions were taken on his behalf was even worse, because then you were asked for details. Then we went back to the old system of taking decisions and not telling him. He'd discover it was done.

**YOUNG:** That's a very old system.

**ALBRIGHT:** We should talk a little bit about the informal kinds of ways like VBB [Vance, Brown, Brzezinski] luncheons and that kind of way that you all worked together, that most people don't know about.

**BRZEZINSKI:** That's right, a lot of those decisions were also disposed, so to speak, in a trio. That is to say, Vance, Brown, and I. I think it was my initiative that we set up the lunch. It wasn't particularly an invention because I think others before us had done it, but I proposed it, and then a few weeks after, we started it. We did it regularly. At first we just met and talked. Then we quickly discovered that a lot of things could be resolved, so we started resolving issues. Then we discovered that it would be better to formalize it, and if I'm not mistaken, we were the center. We would send a memorandum, didn't we, telling them what we decided at lunch? It was my duty after lunch to come back and say to Brown and to Vance, "The following decisions were reached by us, and this is for your information, so you will have it on file." It was my duty to do it that I would word it, and that's very important how you word it, and I would then tell the President about it, once a week, I think. Didn't I? He more or less tolerated that.

**DENEND:** We got to the point where we worked up an agenda.

**BRZEZINSKI:** That became quite an important mechanism, relieving us of the obligation to hold special PRC or SCC meetings, which always took more time. Also, if you didn't have your associates with you it was easier to resolve disputes because personal prestige wasn't involved. In a group we would argue too often.

**HARGROVE:** I gather that you don't think the fact that you were controversial impaired the credibility of your staff in working with agencies, and their need for credibility with the people they worked with.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Why don't you ask them? I don't know. I don't think it did. I suppose it did to an extent, because probably at times it stimulated resistance, but I'm not sure.

**ODOM:** Two things make an NSC staffer powerful. First, he's got to be able to hold a meeting which he chairs at the working level, and because of a control system for getting into the "17 acres," he can control who attends. At the open meetings of the State Department and Defense Department, people are chasing them like they chase fire engines, crowds show up, and you don't have much control over the door. In the NSC you can control who comes in, and you can say what the meeting's about.

**BRZEZINSKI:** There's an incident with the JCS Chief of Staff standing at the gate, saying, "I'm the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, I'm invited to this meeting." The policeman said, "You're not on the list."

**ODOM:** That's the first procedural element, and the second thing you have as an NSC staffer is meeting results. The attendees have got to see that the issues that you raise and discuss are likely to get to the President for decision, that it is likely something will happen as a consequence of the meeting. After you've held a meeting or two, and things happen as a result, they really want to come to your meetings; they want you to come to theirs. There is no problem with authority, and the fact that the NSC is attacked by the press is wholly irrelevant because they know there's going to be decisions.

**HARGROVE:** Nor is there a problem of cooperation in terms of your hearing from them.

**ODOM:** Right.

**HARGROVE:** They want to educate you.

**ODOM:** They can't wait to get to you.

**HARGROVE:** A question I wanted to ask: Did Carter think about foreign policy politically? Did he think of his political resources when he was ready to take initiatives, his stakes?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Probably not enough. Towards the end obviously he had to because events were forcing him to, but not enough early enough. Ham Jordan worried about it, I think Mondale worried about it, but Carter was not sensitive enough to it. Or at least acted and talked as if he wasn't.

**HARGROVE:** Would you cite any mistakes that were made early on?

**BRZEZINSKI:** On foreign policy—

**HARGROVE:** Foreign policy decisions that were taken because he thought—

**BRZEZINSKI:** I know they're debatable, but you could say he could have saved himself a lot of capital by not trying to get the Panama Canal treaties ratified. It cost him a great deal. He probably didn't have to get into a fight with the Jewish community by calling for a comprehensive settlement, which he did. That reoccurred in a different way in the fourth year, and with others. Other things he did were controversial. I suppose even China normalization, which is accepted as a great achievement, cost him something with some people. By and large most of the successes were politically costly. Camp David was a political benefit. That's almost the only one.

**YOUNG:** Hamilton Jordan has been with us also, some time ago, and he talked about some of the things he was doing with respect to Panama, his relations with [Herrera Omar] Torrijos, and without the specifics, of course, his involvement during the campaign with the Iranian business. What did you think of this role? Was it a troubleshooting role? Was it helpful?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Ham's? I thought it was helpful. It didn't bother me in the least. For one thing, I never thought he would in any way diminish my responsibilities and authority, or my standing with the President. I had no anxieties generated by his—

**YOUNG:** Were these assignments generated principally by the President for him?

**BRZEZINSKI:** Usually in conjunction with me, though. I knew about them. We were talking about them. When Ham reported, he reported to the President and me. I thought it was useful. I have some personal reservations about some aspects of these activities. I wasn't sure that, particularly in the Iranian case, the effort was going to get anywhere, and I was worried that if it did, it could result in arrangements that could prove humiliating to the United States. I had substantive worries about that, but not because Ham was doing it. With Torrijos, he was awfully good. He and Torrijos struck a personal relationship, a buddy-buddy relationship, which was extremely useful to us, and so I didn't have any problems with that at all.

**YOUNG:** Can you say something on Carter as a President thoroughly embattled, how he reacted to deep difficulties in terms of his relations with staff? I'm thinking of the Iranian hostage situation, for example, the effects this must have had on him and upon his work.

**BRZEZINSKI:** I must say he reacted with extraordinary serenity. That impressed me enormously. He was always extremely conscious of the feelings of other people and very balanced, didn't go up or down, didn't show excitement. He was quite willing to say, "This is my fault. I'm responsible." I have to say that I can't recall an incident in which he was really crushed or upset, demoralized. Obviously, there were times he was very disappointed. The rescue mission was the prime example, and then of course there were the elections.

What always struck me about him was this quality that I have described with the word serenity, and I have wondered at times what is the root of it. I suspect that it must be religion, because he really is a religious person. I wondered about that initially when I was getting to know him, I wondered whether the religiosity wasn't to some extent external because it was politically useful at times when Americans were again seeking some particular roots for themselves. The more I got to know him, the more I became impressed by the fact that this is a genuinely religious person who is extremely serious in a thoughtful way about his religion.

He wasn't simplistic, either. We once had a discussion about what does it mean to believe in God and what is the difference between feeling one has found God or feeling that

religion is a search for God, and that the search itself is a definition of religion. He compared that argument to Kele and identified himself with it to some extent, and I was struck as I got to know him that religion is a genuine part of his make-up and that it is a source of genuine strength.

Secondly, I think his relationship to Rosalynn was a very important source of reassurance. She was terribly important to him in a personal sense. They clearly were very close, very close, and she was a very strong person. I suspect, I've never seen it, but I suspect that in moments of particular difficulty and pain she probably gave him a lot of sustenance, made it easier for him to do what he was doing externally vis-à-vis the rest of us. I recall some occasions in which he showed real emotion and including disappointment, but those were one-on-one occasions, I'm not going to talk about them because they are personal. Even there, it was dignified; it wasn't like some other incidents involving other Presidents. I have very great respect for the man. I think he is not only an extremely intelligent person, but fundamentally a very decent person, a genuinely decent person.

When you work for someone that closely for four years you get to learn a person's shortcomings as well as strengths. He really is a decent person, and I think that decency perhaps was too strong. For example, I think he would still be President if he was willing to take a position that at stake in the Iranian hostage issue is national honor, national security, and not lives, and therefore we will preserve national security and national honor, but not lives, and at some point bomb the hell out of Tehran and have the hostages killed. There would have been such a surge of patriotism and support for an embattled President; he would have been elected. But he wouldn't do that. I think he knew he was losing the election in part because of that. He wouldn't do anything of that sort in order to win, even though he was very ambitious and wanted to win very much.

Now obviously he had shortcomings. He wasn't, in a curious way, political enough. He didn't want to subordinate certain central objectives to political tactics. He may not also have had a good sense of the difference between strategy and tactics. He believed in moving on a broad front, massive attack, with all your forces all of your objectives at the same time. I think that dissipated a lot of his resources.

Last, he didn't use people well at times, and certainly didn't know how to discipline them. I felt for example in my area you would do much better by purging a number of people, and I was quite prepared both to identify them and to propose alternative arrangements. He just wouldn't do it. In some cases it was even a matter of my saying to him, "Look, the guy's disloyal to you, you'd better get rid of him," and he would say, "Well, you prove to me he's politically disloyal." I'd say to him, "We are not a court of justice, and I'm not in a position to provide evidence."

I'm giving a political judgment and recommending a political action, not a judicial sentence. Why this request for evidence? Is it politically necessary to do it? Then don't do it, it would be unjust. I remember there were relatively few people that I managed to get fired. I managed to ease out four or five people, and each time it was quite a battle to get



it done. To some extent, that is a shortcoming, I think. But by and large these shortcomings in my judgment are very much outweighed by the positive qualities of the man, and I think he demonstrated that on a number of critical foreign policy issues.

**YOUNG:** Our time has come to an end. Thank you very much.

**BRZEZINSKI:** Thank you, I enjoyed it.