

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY ROUNDTABLES

China Policy and the National Security Council

November 4, 1999

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

Shakira Edwards and Josh Pollack, *Rapporteurs*

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

The Brookings Institution
Washington, DC

The National Security Council Project

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

Research Assistants: Shakira Edwards
Karla Nieting
Josh Pollack

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The Oral History Roundtables

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, no area of U.S. foreign policy has been more dramatic than the opening and development of relations with the People's Republic of China. And on no policy subject has the National Security Council played a more central role. From Henry Kissinger's secret journey to Beijing in July 1971 to Anthony Lake's trip a quarter century later in the wake of military confrontation in the Taiwan Straits, the assistant to the president for national security affairs has personally played a leading role. All governments take it particularly seriously when the American president sends his personal aide to them on a negotiating mission. The Chinese government has particularly invited, and welcomed, such White House engagement in diplomacy.

This pattern has created particular problems, however, for the secretary of state, the State Department, and the overall coordination of U.S. policy – both toward China and toward relations with other countries that have strong stakes in how Washington and Beijing interact. With these policy and organizational concerns in mind, the Brookings Institution and the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland convened this Oral History Roundtable bringing together officials from the National Security Council, the Department of State, and other government agencies to discuss how China policy was actually made over the past decades. We were delighted with the quality and range of policy players who were able to join in the discussion. When we learned that Ambassador Winston Lord – a key policy participant over twenty-five years – could not be present, we invited him to provide comments at appropriate points in the discussion. He did so, and these have been inserted and highlighted in the text. (We would refer readers also to Lord's discussion of the China opening in our Oral History Roundtable on the Nixon administration.¹)

This is the fifth in a series of Oral History Roundtables carried out as part of the National Security Council Project, co-sponsored by the Brookings Institution and the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM). We are grateful to the participants who gave freely of their time and insights. We also wish to express our appreciation to Shakira Edwards, who served as the primary editor of the manuscript, to Josh Pollack, who helped organize the meeting and worked with the original transcript, and to Karla Nieting, who brought the project to completion.

Ivo H. Daalder
Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution

I. M. Destler
Senior Fellow
Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland

¹ National Security Council Project, "The Nixon Administration National Security Council," *Oral History Roundtable* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland and the Brookings Institution, December 8, 1998), p. 8.

PARTICIPANTS

MICHAEL H. ARMACOST, U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, 1982-84; undersecretary for political affairs, Department of State, 1984-89; U.S. ambassador to Japan, 1989-93; president, The Brookings Institution, 1995-present.

WILLIAM H. GLEYSTEN, JR., career Foreign Service officer, 1951-81; U.S. ambassador to Korea, 1979-81; director, Asia Society's Washington Center, 1981-84; director of studies, Council on Foreign Relations, 1987-89; president, Japan Society, Inc., 1989-95; guest scholar, The Brookings Institution, 1997-98; non-resident senior fellow, The Brookings Institution, 1998-present.

JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE, staff member, National Security Council, 1969-73; deputy chief of mission, U.S. embassy to the People's Republic of China, 1973-75; U.S. ambassador to Singapore, 1975-78; assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, Department of State, 1981-83.

ARTHUR W. HUMMEL, U.S. ambassador to Burma, 1968-71; assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, Department of State, 1976-77; U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, 1977-81; U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic of China, 1981-85.

JAMES A. KELLY, deputy assistant secretary for international security affairs, Department of Defense, 1983-86; special assistant to the president for international security affairs and senior director for Asian affairs, National Security Council, 1986-89; president, EAP Associates, Inc., 1989-94; president, Pacific Forum, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994-2001; assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, Department of State, 2001-present.

SANDRA J. KRISTOFF, deputy and then assistant U.S. trade representative for Asia and the Pacific, Office of the United States Trade Representative, 1985-92; deputy assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, Department of State, 1992; director for Asian affairs, National Security Council, 1993-94; senior director for Asia Pacific economic affairs, National Security Council and National Economic Council, 1994-95; U.S. ambassador for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1995; senior director for Asian affairs, National Security Council, 1996-98; senior vice president for international government affairs, New York Life International, Inc., 1998-present.

HERBERT LEVIN, staff member for East Asian affairs, National Security Council, 1970-71; deputy director for Japanese affairs, Department of State, 1971-74; assistant national intelligence officer for East Asia, East and South Asia, National Intelligence Council, 1981-83; member of the policy planning staff, Department of State, 1983-85; staff director, Subcommittee for Asian and Pacific Affairs, House of Representatives, 1985; special assistant, Office of the Senior Representative for Strategic Technology Policy, Department of State, 1988-90; special assistant to the secretary for non-proliferation and nuclear energy affairs, Department of State, 1990-91; special adviser to the undersecretary-general, United Nations, 1991-94; executive director, America-China Society, 1994-99.

JAMES R. LILLEY, national intelligence officer for China, National Intelligence Council, 1975-78; director, American Institute in Taiwan, 1982-84; deputy assistant secretary for East Asian affairs, Department of State, 1985-86; U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Korea, 1986-89; U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic of China, 1989-91; assistant secretary for international affairs, Department of Defense, 1991-93.

*WINSTON LORD, staff member, National Security Council, 1969-73; special assistant to Henry Kissinger, National Security Council, 1970-73; director of policy planning, Department of State, 1973-77; president, Council on Foreign Relations, 1977-85; U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic of China, 1985-89; assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, Department of State, 1993-1997; co-chairman, International Rescue Committee, 1997-present.*²

J. STAPLETON ROY, minister-counselor, U.S. embassy to Thailand, 1981-84; U.S. ambassador to Singapore, 1984-86; deputy assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, Department of State, 1986-89; executive secretary, Department of State, 1989-91; U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic of China, 1991-95; U.S. ambassador to Indonesia, 1995-99; director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, 1999-2000.

W. RICHARD SMYSER, senior staff member, National Security Council, 1970-71 and 1973-75; deputy assistant secretary and assistant secretary for refugee programs, 1980-81; assistant secretary-general of the United Nations and deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1981-86.

RICHARD H. SOLOMON, senior staff member, National Security Council, 1971-76; head of the social science department, RAND Corporation, 1976-86; director of policy planning, Department of State, 1986-89; assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, Department of State, 1989-92; U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, 1992-93; president, United States Institute of Peace, 1993-present.

ROBERT L. SUETTINGER, director, office of analysis for East Asia and the Pacific, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, 1987-89; deputy national intelligence officer for East Asia, National Intelligence Council, 1989-94; director for Asian affairs, National Security Council, 1994-97; national intelligence officer for East Asia, National Intelligence Council, 1997-98; visiting fellow, The Brookings Institution, 1999-2000.

² *Mr. Lord was unable to attend this roundtable. He was invited to provide comments, which are inserted at appropriate points in the discussion and italicized for distinction.*

TRANSCRIPT OF THE ROUNDTABLE

DESTLER: Welcome. I'm Mac Destler, and together with Ivo Daalder I am co-directing, researching, and writing up the results of the Brookings/University of Maryland project on the National Security Council. This is the fifth in a series of oral history roundtable discussions that we have organized, and we are delighted to have such a distinguished and representative group here to discuss what has certainly been one of the most important and contentious issues involving the NSC staff and the State Department. We have had four previous roundtables, two of them involving particular administrations. They include, respectively, people involved in the Nixon administration; people involved in the Bush administration; international economic policy across administrations; and several former national security advisors talking about their role.

It would be useful if we went around the table and had individuals speak briefly about themselves. Please summarize your involvement in U.S. policy toward China, and tell us if it in fact is more or less synonymous with your broader involvement in or outside of government. We will go around the room and then Ivo will lead off by posing questions we'd like to have people talk about, which are related to the questions you received earlier this week.³

LEVIN: I'm Herbert Levin. I served on the NSC staff when Holdridge and Smyser were there, and had a minor role on the outer fringes of preparations for changes in China policy. I had similar responsibilities on the National Intelligence Council, the State Department policy planning staff, and at various posts in Asia.

ARMACOST: I'm Mike Armacost. I was over at the NSC in 1977-78. I was not principally the guy on China policy, like Oksenberg,⁴ but was involved in it to a degree and involved in the East Asia informal group of which Bill was a member. I worked on these issues at the Pentagon, the NSC, and at State back in 1980.

HUMMEL: I'm Art Hummel. I was ambassador to China from 1981 to 1985, and before that in Pakistan for four years. So the last eight years of my service were not directly involved in Washington battles, only indirectly as an observer. I was assistant secretary for a brief period in 1975-76, and in that time I had a lot to do with State Department embassy affairs.

HOLDRIDGE: I'm John Holdridge. I was unfortunate enough to have stuck with Henry Kissinger⁵ for four years as a senior staff assistant for the NSC on Asian affairs, 1969 to 1973. Then I went off and became ambassador to Singapore. I later came back as assistant secretary at the time when we were finally trying to consummate the arms-sales-to-Taiwan arrangement, of which Art Hummel was a very necessary part of the whole program in Beijing. I was the fellow in Washington, and he was the one in the Beijing. So we were going back and forth.

³ See appendix A.

⁴ Michel Oksenberg, senior Asia specialist on the Carter NSC staff.

⁵ Assistant to the president for national security affairs (national security adviser), 1969-75, and secretary of state, 1973-77.

LILLEY: I'm Jim Lilley. I was the CIA's national intelligence officer from 1975-78, on the National Security Council in 1981 on China, in the State Department from 1985 to 1986 as deputy assistant secretary on China and Taiwan. From 1991-93, I was assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs. I was ambassador to China from 1989-91, director of the American Institute in Taiwan, the unofficial mission in Taiwan, from 1982-84, and station chief in the United States Liaison Office in Beijing from 1973 to 1975.

SMYSER: My name is Dick Smyser. I know nothing about China compared to Jim Lilley, but I have written about China and have studied it. My main reason for being here today is that I was involved in Asian affairs in the first Kissinger White House incarnation, from 1969 to 1971. I did some work on China and I did accompany Henry on the famous secret trip.

KRISTOFF: Sandy Kristoff. I started on Asian economic issues at the United States Trade Representative [USTR] in the mid-1980s. Then I went to State in East Asia and the Pacific as the deputy assistant secretary for economics, and then was the ambassador for Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. I moved over to the NSC in the first year of the Clinton administration, spent a year at the National Economic Council, went back to State in 1995, and then back to NSC in 1996, 1997, and 1998 as senior director for Asia, where I had the great privilege of working with this person right next to me.

SUETTINGER: Bob Suettinger, career intelligence officer, started on China work in 1975, was bounced around from the CIA to a couple overseas posts. Also in State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research [INR], 1987 to 1989, deputy national intelligence officer 1989 to 1994, and then I went to the NSC where I worked for Stanley Roth and Sandy Kristoff in the Asian affairs directorate. I was director of Asian affairs, which means I was deputy director. And then I finished up in 1997 and 1998 as the national intelligence officer for East Asia.

ROY: I'm Stape Roy. I was on the [State Department] China desk from 1976 to 1978 during the pre-normalization period when Bill Gleysteen was the deputy assistant secretary. I then was deputy chief of our mission in Beijing from 1978 to 1981. I came back and replaced Jim Lilley as the deputy assistant secretary covering China in 1986 and stayed there until 1989. Then I also replaced Jim in Beijing as ambassador in 1991 and served there until 1995.

KELLY: I'm Jim Kelly. I was the Pentagon deputy assistant secretary for East Asia from spring of 1983 to March of 1986, and then I moved over to the White House. I was NSC senior director for Asian affairs from March of 1986 until April of 1989. I worked for five national security advisers. I was hired by a sixth. And I've been away from Washington for ten years and am now president of Pacific Forum-CSIS [Center for Strategic and International Studies] of Honolulu.

GLEYSTEEEN. I'm Bill Gleysteen, career Foreign Service officer. My earliest China policy tug-of-war was over Chinese representation issues when I was deputy director of Office of United Nations Political Affairs in the State Department. I also dealt marginally with China policy as director of East Asia in INR. In 1974 I went to Taiwan as deputy chief of mission when Kissinger's secret negotiations became public. I returned to Washington in 1974 as the deputy

assistant secretary dealing with China, replacing Art Hummel. I spent six months at the end of the Ford administration at the NSC as the East Asia person and then came back to the State Department as deputy assistant secretary again, where I was the China honcho under Holbrooke.⁶

DAALDER: We would first like to discuss the relationship between the NSC and the State Department regarding China policy. We would like to focus on the following questions: Is there something unique about the China experience? Or is it really that the personalities that happened to be involved in this policy enhance conflict? Is it something that has to do with the president? Is it that the president just happens to be very interested in China and, therefore, wants his people heavily involved in the making of China policy? Or does it have to do something with the politics of the issue on the Hill?

These issues will be the thrust of our first discussion. We will begin with how it worked chronologically. One note of caution - we are primarily interested in the process, in how the policy was made and executed, as opposed to what the policy actually was. It's an important debate, not always easy to separate, but we are less interested in whether a particular policy was right or wrong as opposed to whether the process by which it was crafted and the process by which it was executed was likely to be the best or most productive process.

The floor is open to start off with the early Nixon-Kissinger period and perhaps Ambassador Holdridge would be a natural starting point.

HOLDRIDGE: I'm probably the only person here who sat in on the follow-up to the Geneva Conference talks beginning in July-August 1954 in Geneva.⁷ This was at the ambassadorial-level talks in Geneva, which began in August 1955. I was there in 1956. One of the things we were trying to do was to work out some kind of a solution. This is after Zhou En-lai⁸ at Bandung⁹ had proposed that the two countries get together to see if we could not reconcile the differences between us in a peaceful way. He said this on the way out of the Bandung Conference. After a certain amount of due deliberation, John Foster Dulles¹⁰ took him up on that.

We did get together in Geneva and had the beginning of the ambassadorial-level talks there, which went on interminably with not much result. But the thing that we really got floundered on was the whole question of Taiwan from the very beginning. Somewhere along the line the United States posed the idea that we should resolve all differences between our two countries by peaceful means, and the Chinese bought that. But then when it got back to Washington, D.C., John Foster Dulles added, "including the dispute in the Taiwan Strait." [*Whistles, mimicking a plunge through the air.*] That shot the whole thing down. We tried like

⁶ Richard Holbrooke, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs under President Carter.

⁷ The April-July 1954 Geneva Conference was the first in a series of major international diplomatic conferences held in Geneva, Switzerland, between 1954 and 1959. The 1954 conference dealt with the restoration of peace in Korea and Indochina.

⁸ Zhou En-lai, premier of the People's Republic of China under Mao Tse-Tung.

⁹ An international conference of Asian and African states was held in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955.

¹⁰ Secretary of state during the Eisenhower administration.

mad over the ensuing years to find some formula that would elude this problem, which would shove it aside, but we were never particularly successful. I would say the only really successful period that we had in terms of the ambassadorial-level talks in Taiwan occurred at the time of the attacks by China on the offshore islands of Quemoy, particularly the shelling and, of course, these little episodes in the air that took place.

This goes back to 1957-58, and the United States came within, I might say, a whistle's blow of being involved in a direct conflict with China because we had not yet resolved this question of the status of Taiwan as far as the United States was concerned. As far as Taiwan – or China – was concerned, it was Chinese territory illegally occupied by the United States. But we did hold off from having a major conflict because I think Zhou En-lai stepped in. Somewhere along, in September 1958, he proposed that the two sides get together again and see if we couldn't work out a formula in the context of the ambassadorial-level talks, which we did. This, in turn, shoved aside this immediate confrontational atmosphere. But I might say that this begins the whole, long history of Taiwan as being a major issue of contention between our two countries.

LEVIN: I was thinking about the preparation for Kissinger and then Nixon going to China. Obviously, Nixon and Kissinger wanted not only to handle China policy themselves but arms control, the Middle East, and a lot of other things. To that extent, I don't think China policy was unique. William Rogers, a very gentlemanly figure, when he first came to the State Department as secretary of state under Nixon remarked that he'd never had occasion to visit the building before, even when he was attorney general. Nixon knew what he was doing when he appointed Rogers, because he intended to do these things himself. I don't think it had anything in particular to do with China. That's the way he started off.

HOLDRIDGE: Remember, Kissinger didn't get into the act that early, but the Taiwan question was very much on the table well before Henry A. Kissinger came along.

LEVIN: I think Henry was still eating his Chinese food with a fork at that point. Nixon and Kissinger were extremely sensitive to the need not to be wiped out by their own constituency – the conservative Republicans. Therefore, when they got started, they didn't want this to leak. Perhaps unfairly, they felt that Rogers didn't have much to contribute personally; they kept it to themselves and they hid it from the Chinese and Soviet Communists.

However, Nixon and Kissinger did believe in thorough staff work. People on the outer fringes of the preparation, like myself, drove exercises in the pre-word processor days to find out everything that was on the government's books about China, what there was in law, what there was in the Federal Register, what there was in letters to chairmen of congressional committees, what there was in communications with other governments. We developed these encyclopedic books. Amazingly, it didn't leak that we were doing all this. Many of my colleagues in the State Department and the CIA believed that this was Henry simply having everyone else spin their wheels, wasting their time so they wouldn't get too curious about anything that might really be happening. In fact, their work was the mortar and the bricks of what happened when the grand policy designs actually took form. They heavily influenced policymaking by the information and analysis they provided, though they had little opportunity for formal policy advocacy.

DESTLER: Are you speaking particularly about responses to National Security Study Memoranda [NSSMs], or more generally about preparatory materials?

LEVIN: Across the board. They were good quality. They were used. The NSC staff played a useful role. If a president wants to be at the center of policymaking, then he will use the NSC staff to be at the center of it. If he, or she, is not particularly interested in the world, does not want to have his or her imprimatur on decisions, then the NSC staff can spend lots of time writing birthday messages to the Crown Prince of Thailand. These things then stay at stasis or are argued out at lower levels. I go back to the NSC as distinct from the staff, because from the Cuban missile crisis to the WTO fiasco of this spring,¹¹ it's quite clear that presidents do what they want. They may call in a few buddies, but the mechanism doesn't really influence the actual decision. Presidents decide; it is their decision.

DAALDER: I think the current vice president¹² might know a little.

LILLEY: On process, Mac, what I think you're talking about is two NSSMs – 106 and 107¹³ – that were done in 1971. They were chaired by Al Jenkins¹⁴ and were large interagency groups. And as Herb says, an awful lot of paper was cranked out. I'm glad to hear that something was useful, that we weren't just a cover.

GLEYSTEN: Very briefly on the opening remarks that you made - China policy was rather unique. It was a very, very ideological issue, going way, way back. We had fought a war with China after World War II, and we had been in semi-combat for quite a long time after that war in Korea. Taiwan was part of that confrontation. The White House, the bureaucracy in all its glory, and the Congress were all highly sensitive to China controversy. So China was an issue that any strong president and any sensible secretary of state had to be very careful about.

In addition, by the mid-1960s a major turn was taking place in American thinking on China. The change hadn't been filtered into policy, but the argument about policy had been opened up. People were no longer put in jail for mentioning the subject. Beginning with the Fulbright hearings¹⁵ and resisted very strongly by a very powerful secretary of state, Dean Rusk, changes in China policy were debated in the bureaucracy. Those NSSMs that you mentioned really were rewrites of the transition team papers prepared for the 1968 elections. They were sent to the White House as well as to Secretary Rogers, who didn't know anything about the subject. And then came the NSSMs. I think they were of pretty high quality. They were very

¹¹ This refers to President Clinton's decision in April 1999 not to accept a new agreement concerning the entry of China into the World Trade Organization. A slightly revised agreement was approved later in the year, and endorsed by Congress in 2000.

¹² Vice President Al Gore, candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2000.

¹³ National Security Study Memorandum 106, "China Policy," November 19, 1970. National Security Study Memorandum 107, "Study of Entire U.N. Membership Question: U.S.-China Policy," November 19, 1970.

¹⁴ An Asia specialist on the National Security Council staff.

¹⁵ The 1966 hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concerning U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia.

conservative, considering what happened in 1971.¹⁶ But everyone thought the danger really was in the other direction when the Nixon administration came in.

DESTLER: You mean the danger of moving in the other direction on China policy.

GLEYSTEN: The danger of losing momentum for change. A few clever people, one being Henry Kissinger, saw the election itself and the outcome as a chance for change. But my personal reaction was that the danger was the possibility of slipping back – even though I still hoped for some change.

The institution of the national security adviser and the NSC or something like it is inevitable in our political system – if you have a president who wants to run things. For very obvious and to some extent good reasons, the State Department, Defense, and other agencies are reluctant to yield to this White House dominance, but they eventually have to. It was most interesting to see Kissinger monopolize the process of control when he was at the NSC, but he also monopolized it just as effectively when he was secretary of state. So, it wasn't just the president; it was the style of Kissinger himself combined with the presidency. The president he served in the State Department was very obliging.

ROY: I endorse the view that's already been expressed that the China issue from the beginning was an intensely sensitive foreign policy issue because of the absence of relations between us and mainland China and the fact that we officially recognized Taiwan as the government of China. So that leaving aside all of the other factors, this was always going to be an issue that required a certain amount of sensitivity in how it was handled because of the domestic political consequences and the international ramifications of them.

Having said that, the specific way that China has been handled over the years has had very little to do with those issues. During the early Nixon years, I was working on Soviet affairs, and the same pattern of secrecy being used as a policy power tool was applied in Soviet affairs as was applied in the China issue. Later, during highly sensitive periods of the relationship, including the normalization period, essentially the NSC and State were working hand-in-glove, although with considerable personality friction. But it was a common, team effort in terms of both the policy formulation and the implementation of it. And that has persisted through much of the other periods where it has reflected personality, presidential proclivities, and capabilities of top leaders in the various areas, rather than something intrinsic to the China issue itself that has defined how this has been handled.

HOLDRIDGE: I'd like to add that in my own personal opinion one man had a lot to do with changing the whole approach to China and that man was Richard Nixon. But you go back to the *Foreign Affairs Quarterly* piece,¹⁷ and that was part of the approach that he had. After he had been elected president, but had not yet taken the oath of office, he began to worry about what to do to change the China policy. He brought Henry Kissinger along as part of that whole apparatus to try to see what he could do.

¹⁶ Henry Kissinger's secret trip to China in July, and the announcement of Nixon's forthcoming visit.

¹⁷ Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 46 (October 1967), pp. 111-25.

And there were changes made. Matter of fact, I guess, Mort Halperin¹⁸ had something to do with this and probably Paul Kreisberg¹⁹ as well. Neither of whom are here. Paul, I'm sorry to say, will not be with us anymore. But the idea was to take a look at China policy and see if we can't find some ways that we could ameliorate it, make it look better. Certainly, the attitude of the American people had begun to change. Why should we keep ourselves isolated from this massive entity on the other side of the Pacific? So there was some feeling that we ought to do something to try to modify policy. NSSM 14,²⁰ as I recall, came along, and that called for a completely new look at China policy. As a consequence, we dropped some of the trade restrictions. We dropped the certificate of origin; we dropped the restrictions on travel; and we made other adjustments. I think that credit goes right to Nixon. I used to sit in on some of his conversations with visiting Chinamen and one of his favorite expressions was, "With a country as big as China is, with that population, with that strategic location, it's far better to talk to the Chinese than to fight them." And that was the truth throughout the whole period.

ARMACOST: I think it reflects Nixon's influence, but it was also a broader issue of how major policy shifts are accomplished in a big government. Centralizing authority in the White House facilitated major changes of strategy in the Vietnam War and in our relationships with both Russia and China. It would be hard to have accomplished those major changes so swiftly had they relied on the usual bureaucratic process. It was not particularly surprising that once the major strategic shifts were effected, Henry Kissinger went to State. Part of his purpose there was to move and exercise the formal responsibilities of that job – institutionalize those changes in strategy through the bureaucracy. I think it was the urgent need to adjust strategy fundamentally and fast that prompted the NSC's dominant role during that time.

HOLDRIDGE: There were changes in China, too, which were important. In China the Sino-Soviet problem had come to a point where the Chinese, I think, were probably quite worried about a Soviet attack and what to do about that. And there was some effort then to reduce the tensions with the United States so that if they had to fight, they only fought one enemy, not two. And that, I think, also contributed to this whole atmosphere of moving.

GLEYSTEN: That's a very, very important point. The public changes had already come, but within the administration that issue was a very central lever.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, when they came out with an editorial in China and said that it had always been the policy of the People's Republic of China to maintain friendly relations with all states regardless of social system, it caught our attention, especially the Department of State.

ROY: I agree with both of the points of John Holdridge and Mike Armacost, and Bill Gleysteen's comment. The point I would emphasize is this: I joined the State Department at the

¹⁸ Morton Halperin, a member of the Nixon transition team, and a member of the Nixon National Security Council staff in 1969.

¹⁹ Foreign Service officer and China specialist.

²⁰ National Security Study Memorandum 14, "U.S. China Policy," February 5, 1969.

time of Walter Robertson,²¹ who was dead set against any changes in the way we dealt with Taiwan. Bill, I think, made the valid point that Dean Rusk was dead set against altering our China policy. It took Nixon's leadership to, in fact, reorient us strategically the way that was carried out over subsequent years. You did have to have presidential leadership for that. But Dean Rusk was no longer secretary of state. The China bureaucracy [in the State Department] was as amenable to change as any of the Foreign Service officers who were staffing Kissinger at the NSC. So the control from the White House didn't reflect the need to overcome bureaucratic resistance from the State Department. It rather reflected an effort to control policy from the center.

SMYSER: I'd like to give credit to Ho Chi Minh for two reasons. First, because the long war in Vietnam and American popular exhaustion with it gave an opening toward China that would not have existed otherwise. Second, it also gave me an opening to go to China because Kissinger knew he would have to talk to the Chinese about Vietnam. The fact that we had this war and this mess on our hands made an opening to China as part of a solution to Vietnam appear acceptable. Also, the Chinese wanted to talk to us because the war was giving Moscow greater influence over Hanoi as Moscow could supply weapons that Vietnam wanted. So I think we should not forget about the Vietnamese dimension of this trip.

I'd like to say something that I find amusing as I listen to the discussion here and the people involved. Some of the key NSC players were Foreign Service officers, who were theoretically supposed to be loyal to the secretary of state. Phil Habib²² never forgave me for participating in the negotiations with Le Duc Tho²³ without telling Phil, which would, of course, have been a disaster. And there were men like Holdridge and Levin on the NSC who were not running to Marshall Green²⁴ to tell him what Henry was doing. One of the interesting phenomena of American bureaucratic functioning is how persons who were career Foreign Service officers would take the coloration of the White House when they were on the NSC and manifest the loyalty they had sworn to observe to the president and to the U.S. government as a whole, not necessarily institutionally to the State Department.

ARMACOST: I agree with Stape. The diplomacy required a measure of discretion and secrecy if it was to succeed. If it were carried out in the normal way, it would have leaked to the Hill, allowing others to get into the act.

GLEYSTEEEN: Quite right, but there is a halfway house for loyal bureaucrats between conflicting demands of the White House and their own departments. I can give a very practical example. I'd been in Taiwan as DCM for one week when the Kissinger trip was announced, and major things had to be done in Taiwan as a result of it. It happened that the ambassador strongly disagreed with the changing policy, and it often fell to me, an advocate of change, to carry through with unpleasant tasks. In fact, neither the ambassador nor I was alerted in advance that something important was going to happen. Moreover, my subsequent efforts to get adequate

²¹ Assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs under Eisenhower.

²² Foreign Service officer, member of the U.S. delegation to Paris peace talks.

²³ North Vietnamese diplomat and Henry Kissinger's counterpart at the Paris peace talks.

²⁴ Assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs during the Nixon administration.

instructions were frustrated. My point is that the White House can – and must – engage adequate numbers of experienced bureaucrats to ensure that its policy is implemented, and that bureaucrats are willing to do so.

LEVIN: I thank Smyser for the Vietnam angle. I was going to bring that up in terms of the Soviets moving down to Vietnam and this motivated the Chinese to move toward us. I hadn't thought of talking about the Foreign Service. But since you want to talk about process, Alex Johnson,²⁵ a former boss, and Marshall Green, a former boss, never pressured me to do anything or tell them anything when I was on the NSC staff, but we did meet privately. You should also note that neither myself nor anyone else ever got anything *good* from the State Department as a result of service on the NSC staff. This was different from the military officers on the NSC staff who were threatened with their careers being terminated unless they advanced service or departmental needs and who were marvelously rewarded if they achieved something which somebody back there wanted. They were told all the time, "Remember where your home is and remember where you're coming back to when you finish over there." The best ones handled this well.

If you're going to have a NSC and you're going to have a president who wants to use the staff, you could do worse than to have your NSC staff clusters run by Foreign Service officers, military officers, and intelligence officers. Probably Foreign Service officers will conclude they might as well do the job in the national interest where they are because nothing turns into a future reward in the State Department.

One of the things that I think drove President Nixon and Henry Kissinger was the need to split the domestic conservative opposition. Support for change in China policy in the United States was a mile wide but an inch deep. "All those people in China. We should be talking to them." The opposition of the conservative Republicans had to be split. They split them by saying, "We're not doing this to be kind to the Red Chinese. We're doing this to screw the Russians." The point was to split the Sino-Soviet bloc, and so they managed to split the conservative opposition. How do you build support for this? Doak Barnett and the Committee on Scholarly Communication with China²⁶ and other things flowed in the same direction. Henry was very interested in what the scholars thought – he had spent 20 years at Harvard. "Herb, go to those meetings. You know them. Go to those meetings and encourage them."

The point is that at that time the scholars took the lead. There was no effective U.S. government contact, the intelligence community was trying, and the military was just patrolling. So the scholars were in the lead. As things changed, the scholars became a little bit less important. The intelligence guys developed a whole industry out there. The military decided that if they weren't enemies then they had to be allies and wanted to sell them everything. And the business community was there. As you go through these periods, you will see a shift between diplomats, intelligence, the military, and the business community. They play different

²⁵ U. Alexis Johnson, under secretary of state during the Nixon administration and lead U.S. negotiator at Geneva in 1955.

²⁶ A. Doak Barnett, professor of government at Columbia University and later a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, was involved with the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations (NCUSCR), and then the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China (CSCPRC).

roles and, therefore, State and the NSC are handling different parts of the domestic constituency for and against the policy.

HOLDRIDGE: All very well if you could co-opt these people, but I recall a meeting which I was in, about November 1969. The whole NSC senior staff trooped into the cabinet room and sitting in the center was the president and on his right was Henry A. Kissinger. And the president went on to say – and in no uncertain terms – that policy was going to be the privilege, the area of concern of the National Security Council. And he went on to add, and this is a direct quote, “If the Department of State has had a new idea in the last 25 years, it is not known to me.”

So that set the stage for what we were doing. We were running foreign policy. We could call on the assets of the various different departments or of the military or of the Department of State or what have you. After all, communications or intelligence or whatever had to feed into this mean machine. But the people that made foreign policy were sitting around that cabinet table in the cabinet room in November 1969.

HUMMEL: I want to try and grab some of the reminiscences back to the process that you’re interested in. Let me make one statement first. Secrecy – having a small group which has to be in the White House for new initiatives of the Nixon kind regarding China – is absolutely essential. If you put it into a State Department normal review of brand-new policy toward China, it would have leaked all over the damn place and we know it. We just have to face that. Therefore, as much as I would like to see the State Department playing its role in every case, I think sometimes it just cannot.

Let me say something else about personalities. Yes, personalities make a terrific difference in the relationship between the State Department and the NSC and we all know that. This is one of your questions. One illustration of this is at the time when Al Haig²⁷ first came in as secretary of state and Richard Allen²⁸ was the NSC guy. There was great tension there. Allen was moving a policy that Haig was not comfortable with. It was to try to sell a lot of weapons to the PRC so that they would not complain very much when we sold a lot more to Taiwan. There was great tension there between State and the NSC at that period. Fortunately or unfortunately, Richard Allen had to resign that first year. And Haig pretty much had it his way, as I see it.

Another example is Brzezinski²⁹ and the way he threw his weight around on a whole slew of issues. These are simple illustrations of how personalities matter.

DAALDER: We’re transitioning from Nixon/Kissinger into the later part of the 1970s to describe the State-NSC relationship.

KELLY: I’d like a quick sidelight on bureaucratic loyalties because I think that’s an important question. First of all, no White House ever wants to admit how many employees it has and so it becomes highly dependent on obtaining people who are on somebody’s government payroll.

²⁷ Alexander Haig, secretary of state during the first half of the first Reagan administration.

²⁸ First national security adviser during the Reagan administration.

²⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser during the Carter administration.

Second, I do agree that the Foreign Service officers are usually more task-oriented but part of that is because their selection usually is related to particular duties. In the case of military officers, when individuals are identified by the NSC, they're going to be quite as loyal to the president and national security adviser as anybody else. But if you just call over to the service chief for three bodies, you will get bodies fully equipped with reporting capability. So it makes a difference on how you staff the NSC.

The only generality I can make about this is that the close-knit services, like the Marines, and to a degree the Air Force, tend to be a bit more inclined to look at their flagpole. The only organization I know of that always looks at its flagpole is the FBI.

SOLOMON: Since I arrived after others introduced themselves, let me do so briefly. From late August of 1971 through late June of 1976, I was on the NSC staff. I did some consulting during the Carter period, particularly in 1978. I had a little dealing with the NSC between March of 1986 and 1989 when I was running the policy planning staff at State and then had other kinds of deals when I was assistant secretary from May or June of 1989 through the summer of 1992.

Much to everyone's surprise, probably Henry Kissinger's more than anyone, most of the documentary record is now out in the public on all this activity. Jim Mann and Patrick Tyler³⁰ have in various shades of Technicolor laid out an awful lot of "who-struck-Johns" and the interpersonal dimensions of dealings with China for most of this period now. Seeing the most recent edition of *Foreign Affairs*, Jimmy Carter and Zbig Brzezinski have letters reacting to one of the Pat Tyler chapters.³¹ We can talk about all that. But I'm just saying you have an evidentiary base that really should make this study value something you have to play against even if everything that's been published is not quite right.

DAALDER: This is a good time to move into the next period, which is the Carter administration. Having done the deed under Kissinger, how did the relationship develop between State and NSC during the Carter administration?

ARMACOST: I was over there from 1977 to mid-1978 and was involved subsequently at the Pentagon and at State. There were contradictory trends. On the one hand, that was the period in which the East Asian "informals" started. And in my experience that was the best informal interagency foreign policy coordinating mechanism for any region. We had meetings every Monday afternoon about 3 o'clock in the assistant secretary's office at State. They included the NSC senior Asia hands, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs-Pacific, and the deputy director for operations in the Agency.

SUETTINGER: Who initiated it?

³⁰ James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Knopf, 1998); Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China: An Investigative History* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999).

³¹ Letters from Carter, Brzezinski and Richard N. Gardner, former United States ambassador to Italy and Spain, appeared in the November/December 1999 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, responding to an edited Tyler book excerpt published in the September/October issue as "The (Ab)normalization of U.S.-Chinese Relations."

ARMACOST: Dick Holbrooke initiated it. I think it was his way of centering that policy coordination function in State, but it was very effective. It happened that the people who were initially involved were good friends and had enjoyed a long professional association. And it was a very congenial and efficient way of sharing information – pretty open and candid. I believe it has continued, perhaps to this day. It certainly continued through the Reagan administration, and I believe through the Bush administration. That institutional change occurred, and it was a great contribution.

DESTLER: Was this State-led or at least State-chaired throughout?

ARMACOST: It was always held in the State Department.

GLEYSTEEEN: It was a very personal thing. Holbrooke was the creator of it, and the maintainer.

ARMACOST: It included the deputies of the East Asia bureau plus the other key agency reps. On the other hand, the rivalry between State and the NSC on the China issue grew. State had the lead on the China issue in the early days of the Carter administration. But Zbig Brzezinski began in late 1977 and in the spring of 1978 to use Mike [Oksenberg] to take initiatives, which put him more prominently into the “China game,” particularly through his trip to Beijing in May 1978. From that stage through the completion of normalization, he, like his predecessor, played a central role.

GLEYSTEEEN: I’d like to add that I was very much a part of that process as I had been in the latter part of the Kissinger period. I think the nature of the China problem was different in this period. The need for secrecy across the board was no longer there. The issue was laid out; it was very public. The new president had declared his intentions toward normalization and so on. The point that Mike made was an operational issue and a matter of personalities between the secretary and Brzezinski. It was complex and added a great deal of unhappiness.

But professionally – and I think this is the point Stape was making earlier – a team of people including Stape worked on all the substantive issues during this period and laid the basis for what Brzezinski did. The State Department was central and Mike Oksenberg was part of the process. He was cut in all the way. It was still a very close hold, and some people weren’t happy with it – Jim Lilley among others. There was a lot of confidence in the process, and it worked pretty well at the early stage.

We were very unhappy with the personality issue. It tore us in very complex ways and was ultimately very damaging. At the same time this was going on regarding China, we were dealing with an equally controversial problem concerning Carter’s plans for our troops in Korea. In that case, although Brzezinski was very well placed and Mike was deeply involved, the bureaucratic maneuvering was less centered around the White House because so many institutions were involved. The EA [East Asia] informal group that Mike described played a central role in building the democratic consensus that finally won the day. This was against the president, and against the national security adviser, but with the approval of his assistant.

LILLEY: I would suggest that in the 1975 to 1978 period, as you've suggested already, there was a large personality factor in there that made it work. That it was people like Bill Gleysteen, Mike Oksenberg, Morton Abramowitz,³² Nick Platt,³³ rotating between those jobs at Defense international security affairs, NSC, State, etc., and it was under control of talented people with long histories of being involved. I think that's what makes it work because you see that pattern repeating itself in a different form. Let's say between 1983 and 1986, with non-FSOs. You had Rich Armitage,³⁴ Paul Wolfowitz,³⁵ and Gaston Sigur,³⁶ forming the same kind of close, personal bonds. They had the confidence of their superiors and were able to work out policies that affected China across the board. They found that the East Asia informal had become too large, too informal, and too garrulous. So what did they do? They formed a small group and they took it over to the NSC. That small group would do the real work while the East Asia informal became sort of the babbling session for other issues.

ARMACOST: Who was in that small group, Jim?

LILLEY: I'd say Dick, Gaston, Paul, Rich, Jim [Kelly], and Carl Ford, the national intelligence officer from CIA. When I came back to State, I was in it, and the PM guy³⁷ was in there, too.

ARMACOST: Was the PM person a participant only on China-Taiwan issues?

LILLEY: Yes, but it was very effective and it got things done. It had, as you saw in that period, major breakthroughs between Taiwan and China. That was the outcome of that whole consistent policy of balance. You see Taiwan in 1987 with the unprecedented breakthrough with China. You had done the right thing on the either side of the Taiwan Strait, and I think that's a very important lesson.

I would say finally, just in the period 1975 to 1978 as the outsider at CIA, I would get interventions from people asking, "Would you please work with us and not tell the other guys?" NSC was particularly doing this – not Dick [Holbrooke], but Mike Oksenberg. I worked with Mike and was under strict instructions: "No, don't tell State." This was on two very significant issues. The first was arms sales to China, through Europe, on which we did a whole series of papers that described the kind of weapons systems. We gave it to him and eventually this played into the arms business in China, which Haig then opened up in 1980 [1981] and blossomed in the

³² Foreign Service officer who served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs under Carter.

³³ Foreign Service officer who served in China and Japan and subsequently as deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs after Abramowitz.

³⁴ Rich Armitage, deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs and later assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs under President Reagan and deputy secretary of state under President George W. Bush.

³⁵ Paul Wolfowitz, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs under President Reagan and later deputy secretary of defense under President George W. Bush.

³⁶ Gaston Sigur, Wolfowitz' successor as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs. Previous to that, Sigur was NSC senior director for Asian affairs.

³⁷ Director of the bureau for political-military affairs, General John Chain.

mid-1980s.

The second thing, which really became significant was Chestnut, the northwest sites.³⁸ This came from the Agency into NSC and that was all handled strictly without State's informed involvement until 1981, when State comes into it. And John [Holdridge] was aware of it.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, when I was assistant secretary, we had the same kind of a relationship. We would get together once a week in my office, a small group of people who were quite senior. It wasn't held in the NSC, by the way. It was still being run by State. But it also worked very well in coordinating policy and making sure nobody stubbed his toe.

HUMMEL: By the way, this institution in the assistant secretary's office existed, to my knowledge, as early as 1972. I was deputy assistant secretary and acting assistant secretary off and on for a long time, from 1972 to 1975. This institution already had been started by Marshall Green. Also, when I took over as assistant secretary in 1976-77, this institution still continued. So it is not a recent invention. It dates back a long time.

DAALDER: What is the historical record? In the Reagan administration, did they continue through 1987?

LILLEY: No, they continued until Tiananmen.³⁹ I would say that there was a cohesive policy that was functioning.

HOLDRIDGE: I remember we worked the two things out, Jim and I together, about who was going to represent Taiwan, if anybody, in the inaugural ceremonies for the new president in 1981.

KRISTOFF: But the unit, the East Asia informal, continues to this day. I mean, it came down from 1972 from Marshall Green; Stan Roth⁴⁰ still does it today. Part of the problem today is that it is larger than it should be. It includes many more State office directors. It is pure sharing of information. In addition, the economic issues have gotten sufficiently strong – we actually ended up doing a political-military informal and then an economics informal, which was very unsatisfactory to a lot of people. I think it was under you [Dick Solomon] and then under Clark.⁴¹ I think it has merged back, but it still exists as a unit. It's just not very effective at this point.

ROY: While we're talking on the process issue, I'd like to just introduce one additional factor. Picking up on Bill Gleysteen's point, during the Carter years, that 1976-1978/79 period, there was a collegial approach on the policy, which then became heavily affected by personality

³⁸ U.S. listening posts placed in China after the Iranian revolution to monitor Soviet missile tests.

³⁹ The massacre in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, on June 4, 1989.

⁴⁰ Stanley Roth, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs during the second Clinton administration.

⁴¹ William Clark, Jr., Foreign Service officer and assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs during 1992.

differences between key practitioners, particularly the breakdown of the Brzezinski-Vance⁴² and the Brzezinski-Holbrooke relationship. But behind that there was a policy difference. Vance's commitment was to pushing the Soviet agenda. There developed a disagreement over the sequencing of how we should approach it. Vance had reservations about the China initiative because of the danger that it would undercut his efforts to push forward the SALT agreement.⁴³ So this contributed to the breaking down of the collegial relationship, which actually continued unaffected below that level. For example, even on the secret CIA initiatives and other things that were being done, I was the DCM in our liaison office at that time and knew all those things. I was also involved in the negotiations in Beijing, where the reporting was done exclusively through CIA channels, not through State channels. This was the beginning of 1978.

HUMMEL: Using CIA channels, though, is a normal practice for a lot of very sensitive information, and not necessarily to keep the State Department out of the loop.

KELLY: Some of the sites were lost in Iran in the fall of 1978.

LILLEY: And you wish the proposal was originally made in the fall of 1975, and then it was acted on 1978. After normalization, because Deng⁴⁴ wouldn't do it until we normalized. That was 1979.

LEVIN: I'm grateful for Mike having brought up the informal, because I don't know of other geographic areas that had that sort of thing. I participated coming over from the National Intelligence Council and then from the Policy Planning staff for China. I had occasion to see this function. It was envied by people working in other areas of State and, of course, had an interdepartmental character to it as well. In terms of your examining processes, there's another thing as to collegiality. Everybody did not always love everybody, let alone agree, but most of the time almost everybody who was involved in this process had gone through the mind-numbing exercise of having tried to master the Chinese language. Everybody had this kind of a scar.

SOLOMON: What's interesting in some ways is the layering process. I want to talk about the layering and then the lateral issues. If you read this Carter letter in the current *Foreign Affairs*, it sounds like you could put Richard Nixon's name on it. It could be classic Richard Nixon.

And I suspect what Carter is playing back to you is stuff he got from Zbig about, "You can't trust State. They leak everything. Blah, blah, blah." My sense is that there were better relations among the pros, as discussed here, than there were higher up the line. And yet, it's clear that relations – between Oksenberg and Holbrooke – deteriorated very significantly.

Just to put one little anecdote in on that. In the summer of 1978, David Aaron⁴⁵ called

⁴² Cyrus Vance, secretary of state during the Carter administration.

⁴³ Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics On The Limitation Of Strategic Offensive Arms (SALT II), signed in June 1979 but never ratified.

⁴⁴ Deng Xiaoping, paramount Chinese leader from 1978 until his death in 1997.

⁴⁵ David Aaron, deputy national security adviser under Carter.

me – I was at RAND⁴⁶ then – and asked me to do a “Team B” assessment of “should we normalize,” strictly off the record. I wasn’t to tell State or anybody else. I did a memo and basically ended up not giving David what he wanted to be the Team B voice. So in the end, the memo was dropped, but later I said something to Holbrooke about this, and he commented, “Oh, you’ve been cruelly pulled into this little personality game here.”

ARMACOST: That started well before then. My first instruction was to go with Holbrooke to Paris to pick up Vice President Mondale and take him out to meet Prime Minister Fukuda⁴⁷ in Japan to inform him of our instructions with regard to Korean troop withdrawals, among other things. I had never met Holbrooke before. This was in February 1977.

Aaron, who was Zbig’s deputy, told me, “Your job is to keep Holbrooke out of the meeting with Fukuda.” I thought this was a rather strange way to start a new job focused on coordinating relations with State. How could I succeed at that if I was on Dick’s blacklist from day one? Needless to say, I didn’t do it.

LILLEY: The importance of the professional and personal relationship among the key staff, the assistant secretary of state, the senior NSC person, the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, is that although the relationship between George Shultz⁴⁸ and Weinberger⁴⁹ was not a tranquil one, the fact that Rich Armitage talked the same language as Paul Wolfowitz, who talked the same language as Gaston Sigur, made it work very smoothly. I think that’s key to remember. No matter how serious the Brzezinski-Vance fighting was, this process where these people knew each other, worked together, and studied together made it work.

KELLY: There was a premium on getting issues to the two secretaries simultaneously. If Weinberger and Shultz both would get an issue, and if they knew the other one had formed a position on it, they were very likely to form the opposite position. But if the other one had not taken a position, their instincts were quite similar and they would end up in the same place. So that put a big premium on bureaucratic timing and coordination. It was a real contribution to a uniquely blessed time in which we went to elaborate lengths to make sure that there was one foreign policy for the administration, and not different Asia policies at State or Defense.

LILLEY: I think as a facilitator in the field to this team back home, when I was in Korea, you really had a sense that you had support and that they spoke with one voice. There were variations on this. This was 1987-88. There was a single voice that came out. Yes, there were discordant notes, largely based on personality and emotion, but there was a consistency to it, I think, that really paid off very well in foreign policy success. I think that’s very key.

ROY: When I took over the job from Jim, we had a regular weekly lunch involving the [Defense Department] international security affairs deputy, myself as the State deputy for East Asian and

⁴⁶ The RAND Corporation, a think tank based in Santa Monica, California.

⁴⁷ Takeo Fukuda, Japanese prime minister, 1976-1978.

⁴⁸ Secretary of state during the Reagan administration, 1982-89.

⁴⁹ Caspar Weinberger, secretary of defense during the Reagan administration, 1981-87.

Pacific affairs, and the Asia person working for you at the NSC. Every policy issue during the two and a half years that we worked together was coordinated in advance before the papers went up in the various bureaus and we essentially had no policy disputes during that period.

LILLEY: I wish I could claim credit, but I think it was Paul Wolfowitz and Bill Brown⁵⁰ who started it.

KELLY: But also it was the bosses. For the national security adviser: Poindexter⁵¹ was distracted and not really involved in it, but Frank Carlucci⁵² and Colin Powell⁵³ are the essence of team players and organizers and they were certainly not giving any commands to their staff to act on their own and cut out George Shultz.

ARMACOST: Well, actually, it's well to remember that coordination doesn't only take place at the staff level. In those days George and Cap and the NSC adviser had breakfast every other Wednesday morning – with one or two other people on each side. There was also a continuing conversation among those principals during the Carter administration. You remember those Brzezinski lunches – the BVB luncheons.⁵⁴

SOLOMON: A comment about the intelligence side of it, to finish the other point I was trying to make. Neuhauser⁵⁵ and I had a covert relationship. I mean, Henry did not want any of the stuff coming out of the most intimate talks outside of the building, and yet there was really interesting stuff that was worthy of interpretation. The clearest example was when Mao, in 1973, made disparaging comments about women. And you know, of course, my antenna immediately went up. Was he disparaging Jiang Qing,⁵⁶ or what was he doing? Charlie and I had an ongoing dialogue trying to figure out a lot of this stuff and Henry never knew about it. One of the interesting and sad things is that bundled off in warehouses out in Warrenton or whatever was a whole documentary record of our dealings with the same cast of characters during the 1940s – Zhou En-lai,⁵⁷ Ye Jianying,⁵⁸ and others – that was never drawn upon. Now maybe Art, you and some others were able to put some of that in, but the intelligence community ironically was cut off from much of that. My dealings with Neuhauser were in my point of view very productive. Lin Biao's⁵⁹ name disappeared, for example, in September of 1977. It was important to find out what was going on.

⁵⁰ Foreign Service officer active in East Asia.

⁵¹ John Poindexter, fourth national security adviser under President Reagan, 1985-86.

⁵² Fifth national security adviser under President Reagan, 1986-87, and secretary of defense, 1987-89.

⁵³ Sixth national security adviser under President Reagan, 1987-89.

⁵⁴ Brzezinski-Vance-Brown (BVB) luncheons: meetings between the national security adviser, secretary of state, and secretary of defense during the Carter administration.

⁵⁵ Charles Neuhauser, senior CIA analyst of Chinese political affairs.

⁵⁶ Madame Mao.

⁵⁷ Premier of China.

⁵⁸ Ranking Marshall of the People's Liberation Army and key subordinate to Zhou En-lai.

⁵⁹ Longtime Chinese minister of defense and Mao's designated successor from 1969 to 1971.

The other point I wanted to make – and it’s not China-related, specifically. When I ran the “EA informal,” we were almost totally cut out of China stuff after Tiananmen. It was either run out of the White House or by Eagleburger.⁶⁰ But with Cambodia, we had a hell of a time because there was a specific individual in INR who showed up at the EA informal meetings who we knew very well was hostile to policy, and together with some of the CIA types, was leaking stuff up on the Hill about the policy direction, and was really making it very difficult for us to operate.

We ended up doing the sort of thing you’re talking about. The directorate of operations people at CIA just sat there sucking their thumbs – and whatever they could get. They were absolutely no help at all. You ended up not finding it a very useful forum for those kinds of issues; you just worked around them.

GLEYSTEN: Before we leave this matter, could I just reiterate that the issue of Nixon and Kissinger and China was very special. Everything else we have been talking about has been quite different, more classical problems between the various organizations. And to use a specific example of the Carter period, there was, as I said, no great need for secrecy on China. Obviously there were still things that were very restricted; there were important policy arguments over timing; and there were attitudinal differences between Brzezinski and Vance, although they were not really as great as they were played up to be. However, the collegial bureaucracy in a small group worked extremely well, even with Oksenberg. I was on the front line with Oksenberg a great deal, and we managed to work pretty successfully. Unfortunately, there were three problems we could not manage: the president himself, a very peculiar man; the development of the Vance-Brzezinski strain; and the short circuit caused by the rivalry of Brzezinski and Holbrooke.

If you go backwards and forwards in history, you’re going to find this sort of struggle is very common, whereas Nixon and Kissinger on China was a rather unique situation. Interestingly, the same people who gave us so much trouble while I was working on China in Washington in 1978 cooperated with me during the tough times in Korea after Park was assassinated.⁶¹ There was excellent coordination, and even the White House was running so scared that Brzezinski was not being difficult. Korea in 1979-80 was a very, very sensitive issue – a war and peace issue – that was managed with easy coordination. So, while the normal American process can be worrisome and contentious, I suspect we will not often come across big new changes that have to be handled with the great secrecy of 1971.

SMYSER: Although I worked twice for Henry on Asia, I also worked on Europe on other occasions. You posed an important question: Was the bureaucratic pattern on U.S. policy toward China repeated elsewhere? In fact, it was. For this is something that may be endemic and that might be worth addressing in your study, particularly as the process has evolved over the years.

⁶⁰ Lawrence Eagleburger, deputy secretary of state and secretary of state, 1992-93, under President George H. W. Bush.

⁶¹ Pak (or Park) Chung Hee, South Korean military ruler from 1961 until his death by assassination in October 1979.

Henry was running back channels on everything involving the Soviet Union, including Germany. The Germans and Russians were running back channels. Yuri Andropov⁶² had his own back channel to Germany. So it may be amusing to wonder whether Kissinger was the only one dealing behind the back of others, but he was not. I experienced this also when I was in Bonn some years later. Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski were definitely playing separate games and even pursuing separate policies and channels. It destroyed the German chancellor and almost destroyed Central European relationships. On this point, China is far from unique although I agree with Bill Gleysteen's point that Nixon's opening to China was a very specific and different situation from most. But the fact is that just about everybody plays games when they get a chance and they have a lot of fun doing it. And sometimes it contributes to the national interest. But, as has been discussed here, sometimes it does not.

SOLOMON: Dick's point touches on a fundamental issue that any secretary of state or national security adviser or any official running one of these bureaucracies is going to face and that is how does he or she prevent being controlled and isolated by that bureaucracy. The back channeling is one approach. Issues of security are part of it. But you know, you see very different patterns. I mean, in retrospect, Jim Baker⁶³ probably used his bureaucracy the least. He surrounded himself with five or six people, and virtually every other assistant-secretary level operation was cut out, except where he wasn't interested. Shultz really used the bureaucracy. He was probably the most open. Henry, in retrospect, when he went over to State, really used the bureaucracy. And so there's tremendous variation, but the structural problem remains: no cabinet-level secretary wants to be captive of the bureaucracy.

SUETTINGER: If you start looking at achievements and initiatives you have to take into account what happened in China, and oftentimes this becomes an irrelevant factor in U.S. policymaking. But in point of fact, the period that we're talking about here, from 1969 until the late 1970s and early 1980s, is one of the most chaotic periods in post-World War II Chinese history. The Cultural Revolution, followed by the Lin Biao purges and so forth, left the Chinese leadership in an extraordinarily perilous state. And Mao and Zhou had, I think, identical interests to Nixon and Kissinger in terms of keeping the issue of developing a relationship out of their own political milieu. So they worked this thing until they could understand that it was a success.

I think one of the reasons why the Ford people were not able to accomplish much was that this was the period in which Deng Xiaoping was purged. It is not an accident that the normalization of relations between China and the United States took place *after* Deng had succeeded in moving out Hua Guofeng⁶⁴ and in taking over the leadership of the Communist party. I think it's important to kind of match your timelines of how things took place in the United States with the political developments in China, where this policy is just as important in domestic politics as it is here.

⁶² Soviet leader and former head of the KGB until 1982 when he resigned.

⁶³ James K. Baker III, secretary of state during the Bush administration.

⁶⁴ Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party under Mao.

DAALDER: I think that this certainly is a policy that has at least two players. And they're not all in Washington.

SMYSER: It has many more players than two, and I think the Russian issue is a constant throughout all of this. I literally cannot think of a single occasion that I was involved in this policy when we and the Chinese were not both thinking about Moscow.

ROY: Well, you mentioned the important role that Vietnam played in affecting our thinking. The clash at Damansky Island on the Sino-Soviet border⁶⁵ was a major factor in the Chinese decision.

LILLEY: And in Vietnam certainly, according to Pat Tyler's book,⁶⁶ it was a driving factor when Henry went to China to try to line them up and put an end to the Vietnam War. He would do something about Taiwan as a trade-off.

You might want to focus on some of the negative periods a little more, in the sense that there were times when the staffing, the senior staffing apparatus, was in considerable disarray. I do think that the policy results at that period are rather poor, and an event usually shakes it all up. And yet, you have people experimenting with the Chinese-American relationship beginning to try to push the envelope and change it. You get the staffers fighting very hard, resulting in a neutralization of the process. We're spending more time fighting each other than dealing with the problem. This has happened a couple of times, and I think it's had quite deleterious effects.

An example would be when Reagan came in and announced the intent for restoration of official relations with China, Haig comes in and has differences with Dick Allen; and the NSC is cut off from all correspondence. There was a lot of anger and frustration, backstabbing, and I'm sure Art felt the results of this out in Beijing. It was awful. And I think after Tiananmen, there was some bloodletting between the embassy and Dick. There was a lot of nasty feeling about who screwed up and what went wrong and who didn't do what. And then you got into a sort of policy stasis, and you had to improvise in the field, really without consulting people back home.

ROY: In 1994, at the end of the MFN issue⁶⁷ where State finally got shoved out of the issue and the decisions were made elsewhere.

LILLEY: I think this is very important. There are periods of time that Stape faced, that I faced, that Art faced, that you had this disarray back home that affected how you did your job.

DAALDER: Let's now spend time on that first period in the Reagan administration, and then move onto the Tiananmen and the post-Tiananmen period. In an aside, Dick, you said, "Of course, I didn't deal with China after Tiananmen." Even though you were assistant secretary it was an interesting comment, which I think we need to know a little bit more about. And then we

⁶⁵ March 1969, China-Soviet Union border clashes.

⁶⁶ Tyler, *A Great Wall*.

⁶⁷ The annual Congressional debate concerning the extension of Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status for China, now known as Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR).

should move on to Clinton. But we went from Carter into the late Reagan period and skipped the earlier Reagan period. And as Jim Lilley is saying, this may not have been the happiest of times at the beginning.

HOLDRIDGE: When things began to fall apart after Tiananmen, I thought that we did something really quite stupid, and that was to send Eagleburger and Scowcroft⁶⁸ far too soon to Beijing to try to carry out some kind of a reconciliation of our respective policies. The Chinese themselves didn't know what the dickens they were going to be able to do to put things back on the track. And to get these two people out there, quite conspicuously, in fact, I thought was a gross mistake. We should have kept our mouths shut and our presence somewhat in the background until the Chinese themselves had been able to figure out what they wanted to do about the Tiananmen situation.

And then, of course, three months later, we repeated it. I'm not sure whether it was Eagleburger or Scowcroft, which carried on some kind of a statement about the relationship, which we weren't able to back up. And I think that this was a very uncoordinated and not well-planned situation that developed at that time.

ROY: John, without disagreeing with your point, just a slight corrective. The first Eagleburger-Scowcroft trip in July 1989 was secret and was never known by anybody. There was only the second one.⁶⁹ No, it did not leak. It was only the second one that leaked.

SUETTINGER: The Scowcroft-Bush book⁷⁰ has got a very interesting coverage of this whole period. It's very clear from the book that the guy driving the policy during that period was George Bush. I mean, he was known as the China desk officer, but I don't think any period proves more readily than that one in that this is what he wanted to do. Bush was committed to this relationship in a way that went beyond the strategic.

LILLEY: With due respect to Larry Eagleburger, he never thought it was a good idea, right from the beginning. He said, "This is going to have a huge domestic fallout." And he agreed with Bush's position. Bush was very strong on this: "I am going to preserve the strategic relationship. I'm going to explain to the Chinese I have to give you hell, but I'm going to preserve the relationship." And all I can say in a positive side on that, the Chinese remembered the terrible savaging Bush took for them. And when it came time to collect the fee for that, he could do it.

In my view, that was not a big policy mistake, but all I'm saying is that we preserved the strategic relationship with China. Bush took a savage beating. He probably lost the election because of this in a way.

HUMMEL: Well, I agree with everything, but I don't think the PRC paid back. They very

⁶⁸ Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser under President Bush, 1989-93.

⁶⁹ The second trip took place in December 1989.

⁷⁰ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998).

seldom paid back. The reason that they were relatively quiet about the F-16 decision⁷¹ was that the election was coming up, and they hoped that George Bush would be re-elected.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, Haig has told me that the message carried to the Chinese was that if Bush won, he would do something to rectify the sale of the F-16s. But he didn't win.

SOLOMON: I'll just give another interpretation or some impressions that will reinforce what they said. Let me begin by commenting on Jim's description of what you might call the iron triangle [with one extra side] – the Sigur-Wolfowitz-Rich Armitage-Carl Ford relationship. I spoke with Paul in the spring of 1986 and he made it very clear that he didn't want me injecting the policy planning staff into that relationship, and I frankly spent most of my time during those three years focused on the Soviet Union. Shultz had great confidence in Gaston Sigur and Paul. So there was no issue for me to be a more active player. I had plenty else to do. I had more of a watching brief on China. And as earlier said, there were very effective working relations on the senior-staff level.

Then just to describe a little bit what was going on at the next layer down, I was nominated after Rich Armitage withdrew in April of 1989. [When the People's Liberation Army moved in on the students in Tiananmen Square in June,] I remember vividly watching all the shooting on CNN in the office. And a call came from Baker: "Hey, what do we say?" And I suggested a few things. And at that point I was not supposed to be an operator. Baker got together with Bob Kimmitt,⁷² and the question was, in the discussions at the White House, what do we do, particularly in terms of public reaction. And Baker and Kimmitt came up with this list of sanctions, which included "no official exchanges."

What they had in mind was that [Robert] Mosbacher, who was then secretary of commerce, was getting ready to go over there a month later and they wanted to cut that off. But the phrasing implied a blanket cutoff of all cabinet-level contacts, which was what led to the secret trip [by Brent Scowcroft] in July. Now, why did the trip occur? I'm quite confident that some of this is now out in the various publications. Both Kissinger and Nixon called Bush and said, "You can't let the bleeding-heart liberals destroy this relationship because of Tiananmen." And it was in that context that the first secret trip was managed. It was all, as has been said, very tightly controlled, effectively out of the White House, the NSC and State. The only people who knew about it were Baker and Eagleburger.

ROY: And me.

SOLOMON: Then it came out in the open. But certainly, State at that point played almost no role. Baker didn't want to get sullied by this nasty issue. He picked up on it, and he coined the phrase that "the desk officer for China is in the White House." He was delighted not to be involved. He let Eagleburger be the link to Scowcroft and the president. And as Jim [Lilley] has correctly said, Larry had his own serious second thoughts about it. But the only role we played

⁷¹ President Bush's decision, announced in September 1992, to sell F-16s to Taiwan despite a U.S.-Chinese communiqué on August 17, 1982, concerning arms sales.

⁷² Under secretary of state for political affairs from 1989 to 1991.

until Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait was basically supporting Larry [Eagleburger] in his testimony on the Hill.

LILLEY: Let me just add one thing to what Dick said. At that time, when the Chinese get into a rough situation, they go back in their cave and we lose access at a critical level. Bush wanted to hit them at the top. He said the only way is to go straight to Deng. And there was another very strong message he wanted to deliver, which is that you have got to stop the public executions or I cannot hold the relationship together, because it was all over U.S. TV, with the shaven-headed kids and arms like this [*puts arms behind back*] being hauled in. It was having a very bad effect. And I was asked one question in that whole time: “Will the Chinese stop shooting them if we make a *démarche*?” And I said, “No, they’ll shoot them in private. But if you can make that change, you might be able to preserve the relationship, but don’t think for a minute you’re going to alter human rights behavior in China by a *démarche* at the top.”

You can argue endlessly about the tactics of this. I think John has made the point that it was not well done. It certainly caused us, and them, a lot of damage. But there was a positive aspect to it. The Chinese did stop shooting people in public. They toned it down. They knew what they had to do. And then, of course, in that fall, Nixon and Kissinger were both coming to China and laying the message very heavily on the Chinese, informally. And Nixon worked very closely with us, and was quite effective. Kissinger kept us out of most of his talks.

But Nixon really was helping, and he approached the Chinese, I thought, quite effectively. He made a point to them that I am the oldest friend you have in the United States, I’ve stood by you, but you have done something that has caused a great deal of difficulty in the relationship and you must change. The Chinese were very defensive, but you could see it had an impact.

HUMMEL: When Henry visited Beijing when I was ambassador there, he always made a point of going with me out on the tarmac at departure time and giving me a pretty good readout of what he had said and what his impressions were from the Chinese.

ROY: And me [as executive secretary of the department].

LILLEY: He walked me around Diaoyutai,⁷³ but he told me what he wanted me to know. I wasn’t in the meetings. That’s the problem.

HUMMEL: By the way, it was the same with Nixon.

ROY: We skipped over the middle Reagan years, and that was the period when we had the August 17th communiqué,⁷⁴ two exchanges of summit visits,⁷⁵ etc. I wonder if some of the

⁷³ The state guest house in Beijing.

⁷⁴ A 1982 U.S.-Chinese agreement, championed by Secretary of State Alexander Haig, in which the United States agreed not to increase arms sales to Taiwan above their present quantitative and qualitative levels, and eventually to eliminate them.

⁷⁵ President Reagan’s visit to China in 1984 was followed by Chinese State President Li Xiannian’s 1985 trip to the United States.

people here who were directly involved in that want to just briefly comment on how the process worked in terms of that period.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I can take you back to the whole genesis of trying to work something out. It was quite clear by the fall of 1981, that we weren't going to go much further in our improvement of relations with China unless we could somehow tackle this arms-sales issue, which has been one of the things that had been bothering us from the very beginning of our relationship with Beijing. So we had to do something, and the question was what. What would we do? And we tried to figure out a number of different ways that we might be able to address this thing.

Among other things, we were going to sell arms to China. I sat in on a number of meetings over in Commerce. Our thought was to address China as a friendly, non-allied country with which we could carry out a certain amount of arms sales of weaponry, which was not considered detrimental to the interests of the United States. And we worked that out very carefully. Then Al Haig blew it when he went to Beijing in July 1981. He wasn't supposed to say that we were going to change our policy, that we would sell non-lethal – or whatever the heck it was we were going to sell to the Chinese. He wasn't supposed to say anything about that until the vice chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army, Liu Huaqing, got to the United States that coming fall, bringing with him a little list of items.

HOLDRIDGE: This is what the whole scenario was supposed to be, but Al Haig got carried away for some odd reason. We were up there on the top floor of the Nationalities Hotel having a press conference. Haig got up and dropped this clangor: "We're going to sell weapons to the Chinese." Blam! And of course, that was the only thing that anybody for the rest of that whole trip wanted to talk about.

SOLOMON: But there's an important prior issue, which is important to picking up on this point. You've got to see the China element in this, as well as the American bureaucratic aspect. The reason that the arms sales issue was white-hot was because of normalization. It was the one issue not brought to closure. Then Congress picked it up and passed the Taiwan Relations Act.⁷⁶ Deng Xiaoping was determined to reverse our position or to close it off and that led to all the display.

HOLDRIDGE: Actually, what had happened was that he summoned Len Woodcock,⁷⁷ the hero of that particular episode.

LILLEY: You're forgetting one little thing that happened there that I think is instructive and which influenced our thinking on this. No matter how offensive the TRA was to the Chinese you have to remember that in the fall of 1979, Ye Jianying came out with nine points emphasizing

⁷⁶ Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) in 1979 in response to the normalization of ties with China and the U.S. withdrawal from a defense pact with Taiwan. It specifies that the United States shall supply "such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability" and shall consider Chinese military action against Taiwan "a threat to the peace of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States."

⁷⁷ Leonard Woodcock, U.S. ambassador to China, 1979-1981.

peaceful reunification with Taiwan. A series of things happened in the mid-1980s that solidified the relationship. First Li Xiannian's⁷⁸ visit in 1985, and the key to that was Three Gorges.⁷⁹ Nothing ever happened, but the symbolism was very important and Li Peng⁸⁰ was with him, but they were hostile to Vietnam. It was for American-Chinese cooperation on major construction projects.

The second thing was in 1984 when Shultz went to China. They did a very clever thing, because they realized that if you manage your Taiwan policy right, your China policy can benefit from it. The third thing is that if China policy is right, Taiwan is not so difficult. In this sense, I remember specifically, as a symbolic move, they brought me back. And they let it be known I was there. They had a big meeting in the White House and everybody was there, and pictures were taken. Everybody in Taiwan knew that the big men were there with me and Reagan then was off to China. That kind of symbolism helped.

When Cap Weinberger went to China in 1986, he went with two things. One, Vietnam, goes down to Kunming; second, U.S. naval ship visits to China. And Cap was just like a little boy in a bathtub with rubber boats. He loved it. He was afraid that somebody would leak it and he wanted to announce it and say "in your face" to the Russians. And it went off well and then Baker went to China. Bush later, when he went to China in the 1985 period, opened up Chengdu circulate and you had expansion of American interests. Bush personally went out and cut the ribbon and made a major occasion of it. And then Baker went out in the same mid-1980s time frame and got the dual taxation treaty.

LILLEY: There was a lot of movement; all four U.S. leaders were in China working hand-in-glove.

HOLDRIDGE: What you had to have though, was some kind of a statement, which we could present to the American people that would set forth premises under which we'd be operating.

SUETTINGER: I have a specific question in terms of the August 17, 1982 communiqué, in regards to the process that went into signing that communiqué. Was that a NSC- or a State Department-driven process?

HOLDRIDGE: The State Department had the operational control, held the pencil, but by that time the NSC head was Judge Clark⁸¹ and he was not the same kind of a personality as Brzezinski or Kissinger or anybody else. He wanted to keep things smooth and even and not let things get out of hand, because there was an election coming up. He was really quite helpful in that thing.

HUMMEL: This is one case where I was on the Beijing end and actually signed the communiqué, but the negotiations lasted roughly ten months. This is one case where the State

⁷⁸ Vice premier and subsequently state president of China.

⁷⁹ The Three Gorges Dam, a massive Chinese energy project spanning decades.

⁸⁰ Vice premier of the State Council of China.

⁸¹ William P. Clark, second national security adviser under President Reagan, 1982-83.

Department really managed the course of the negotiations, and I think in a very professional way.

Judge Clark was very passive and the action was taken in the State Department. The scope of the deal was understood at a very early stage in the White House – both in the NSC and at State. The Chinese demanded that we should set a date for terminating and, of course, we wouldn't do that. What we did do was to link a peaceful situation in the Taiwan Strait with our commitment to diminish in quantity and quality of the arms sales.

The point is that NSC had to go to the president. I was told that Reagan, when he finally understood it, signed off on a memo that approved the general policy and then approved the final agreement.

KELLY: There was also a side letter and six assurances.⁸² Gaston Sigur, under directions from Judge Clark, was under a hell of a lot of difficulty to get Reagan to approve.

HOLDRIDGE: It was like a ping-pong game. Art's cable would come in as a reporting cable of what he had seen or said to Zhang Wenjin⁸³ or whoever. We would look it over, work on it for the rest of the evening, possibly well into the night, send the draft over to the White House, whereupon nothing ever got changed. Off it went.

KELLY: True, but then we had all your testimony in which you repeatedly testified that there was no conflict, and could be no conflict between the August 17th communiqué and the Taiwan Relations Act.

HOLDRIDGE: I had to go up and say that to Congress.

LILLEY: But the interagency process worked in two ways. First of all, you had in a period from roughly 1983 to 1986, a series of assurances [of weapons sales] for Taiwan and all of it was through the interagency process: Indigenous Defense Fighter, S-70 choppers, frigates. You put muscle into your protestations of friendship. They got enough confidence and then did what they should have done anyway – open up to China in 1987. Larry Eagleburger was in a key position there, and he was the man that wrote the cables to me and I was writing to him. That's when I would get answers like this [*snaps fingers*]. The same thing occurred in China in 1989, when we dealt with the suspension of our Chinese military relationship and the F-8 avionics.

LEVIN: When this process that we're talking about began, people working on the NSC staff felt personally protected from a professional standpoint. This is because Kissinger was knowledgeable of what had happened to the old China hands. In recent years, I've fallen asleep watching Suettinger testifying on C-SPAN late at night. I do not consider that this is an improvement in the way the NSC staff is handled in terms of policy formulation, although I know he wasn't testifying about policy.

⁸² Private assurances to Taiwan concerning U.S.-China relations.

⁸³ Chinese ambassador to the United States.

Now we have a situation where every weenie Defense Intelligence Agency or National Security Agency intelligence analyst who doesn't get his views accepted goes and gives it to the *Washington Times* or to his friendly staffer on the Hill. These views are dealt with in the press as "suppressed analysis" from "whistle-blowers," and as far as I know there is no discipline of leakers. The press, the public, and honest Congressional staffers are left totally confused as to what the serious considered appraisal is. We are in a deteriorated institutional situation in regards to helping the American people reach their judgments.

SOLOMON: In terms of understanding the dynamic of our own bureaucracy, again I want to inject the China element. This is something that I documented in my Chinese negotiating behavior book, and I think both Mann and Tyler have added to it a bit. The Chinese got hooked on dealing with the president. For the most part, they tried maneuvers so that the China policy was always managed out of the White House. They wanted the president personally involved, hands-on. There's an exception. The one administration that the Chinese could not get a hold on was the Reagan administration. It started out with Haig, of course, as secretary of state. He was their old friend. Dick Allen, they recognized, was not particularly friendly. So at that point they were glad to deal with State.

When Shultz came on, there was a very conscious decision to downplay the rhetoric of our dealings with the Chinese. The Chinese were described as a regional power, and a lot of the hype of the Kissinger-Brzezinski period, regarding China as a cardinal element in our foreign policy, washed away. Suddenly they didn't have an "old friend." They didn't have an intercessor. And that's a period when State played the role that I think you've accurately described. This is similar to the role played in part during the Clinton period. In the Clinton period, their old friend turned out to be Bill Perry.⁸⁴ And every time they lose their old friend, they panic because they don't know how to plug into the system. They personalize it so much. Their preference is to have China policy run out of the White House, but at base, they're looking for a sympathetic official who will carry their brief for them. They consciously played up to Schlesinger⁸⁵ against Kissinger. They constantly played up Brzezinski against Vance. They consciously tried to maneuver in support of Al Haig, because they didn't trust Dick Allen. And so that has some effect on how our own bureaucracy works.

HOLDRIDGE: But they were very fortunate in having two people in Washington who were not deeply involved in this. One was Walt Stoessel, who was the acting secretary and a European type. What we said, he didn't ever challenge. On the other hand, they had over there in the NSC Judge Clark, who was looking to try to get this whole issue moving along in such a way that it did not reflect adversely on the prospects of the Republican Party. So it sort of went smoothly along, and we finally got the wording we were looking for; and it's not what I would call 100-percent assurance that the Chinese would never use force. It said it was their formal policy to seek reunification of Taiwan with the mainland by non-violent means, without the use of force.

HUMMEL: Back to the process. What Dick said about China's predilection to try and deal with the White House is not a singular China phenomenon. I'm not too familiar with other countries,

⁸⁴ William Perry, secretary of defense during the first Clinton administration.

⁸⁵ James Schlesinger, secretary of defense under Presidents Nixon and Ford.

but the Russians, the Germans, a whole lot of other people, always want to deal with the source of power if they can, unless the power shifted, as it sometimes did with Kissinger.

ROY: Well, that was the problem in the Bush-Clinton transition because they lost the old friend as the president, and as Jim says, there were some chips there that were exchangeable, and they ended up with a president that they were terrified of because of the way the campaign statements had been.

HUMMEL: And they ended up with an assistant secretary for the region at the State Department whom they badly distrusted.

ROY: That was Win Lord.

LORD: I believe the Chinese had ambivalent attitudes toward me. They were displeased about my critical stance on the Tiananmen massacre and afterward during the Bush administration. Throughout, while tough on human rights, I maintained support for engagement, for geopolitical cooperation, and for a one-China policy.⁸⁶

KRISTOFF: I think that's exactly right. By the time the Chinese got Clinton, it's post-Tiananmen. He's had a campaign where he painted very clearly his view of China. Sandy Berger⁸⁷ at one point said, "This is going to be an arm's-length relationship at best between Washington and Beijing." The Chinese, I think, were in fact quite worried.

To pick up on a couple of the process points that were made. By the time Clinton comes in information is very public, moves very quickly. There's not much chance for secrecy on anything in this administration, which reacts primarily to headlines. There's great jockeying between the agencies for supremacy, and it is driven partially by personality, but more by issue. Issues with lots of technicality, like nonproliferation. The State Department runs that issue, until the point of sanctions. But if you want to push China policy forward, then it's the White House that wants to grab it back. The whole first two years of the Clinton administration, there was no single voice on China policy. The USTR speaks; the Defense Department speaks; the *New York Times* speaks; everybody speaks.

ROY: That was an effort to try to find a voice.

KRISTOFF: Exactly. There's no single voice, and as there is no single voice in the administration, the players that are influencing China policy change. And it goes back to the point that Mr. Levin made. It's no longer the diplomats or even the intelligence people or the military. By then, it's the whole economic issue in the business community and the U.S. Congress and the NGOs and human rights, soon to mutate into labor and environment, that unholy alliance, if you will. Those become voices that the administration then begins to respond to in terms of trying to set China policy.

⁸⁶ As noted earlier, Lord was not present at the discussion but was invited to comment.

⁸⁷ Samuel "Sandy" R. Berger, deputy national security adviser during the first Clinton administration and national security adviser during the second.

HUMMEL: I was not directly involved at this time, but after talking to a lot of people who were it seemed pretty obvious that the MFN-human rights linkage collapsed, because Clinton had linked it firmly and the following year he had to de-link it. Win Lord got blamed for this – Winston Lord was the assistant secretary for the region – and he was pretty much out of it after that. The China policy moved very conspicuously to the NSC.

KRISTOFF: Right. Between Lake and Christopher on China policy, there wasn't a lot of love lost.⁸⁸ Tony made the decision that the White House would run the China policy. And he commissioned the paper in 1994, and by then Winston was peripheral to the process. And it becomes Lake and Berger.

LORD: In every administration since Nixon, the White House has controlled China policy. In 1994 the NSC, led mostly by Berger, gave more systematic attention to China, including convening of meetings, etc., that I supported.

To state that I then became "out of it" or "peripheral" is absurd. Throughout the first Clinton term, I was in every important government meeting at all levels and every meeting with the Chinese in Washington and around the world, from the president on down. I joined Tony Lake in his discreet strategic discussions with the Chinese in 1996. I was the adviser on trips to China by the secretary of defense, director of CIA, and Mrs. Clinton, among others.

Moreover, Secretary Christopher continued to play a key role, along with Lake and Berger, right to the end, especially in a dozen meetings with his Chinese counterpart. In 1996 especially, there was excellent coordination of China policy among all agencies. We went from a spring crisis to a very successful conclusion of the Clinton first term with key – and closely coordinated – roles by both Christopher and Lake.

ROY: The only gloss I would add on this, though, is the thing that plagued those first two years and then carried on was that there was a split within the administration between those who wanted to use a human rights lever and attach it to everything we did with China, and those who wanted to push trade, strategic, or other objectives without being totally saddled by the human rights thing. The administration wouldn't address that issue. And so, they drifted along with two totally conflicting viewpoints, and even when the policy went to the NSC, the human-rights people in the State Department were able to stymie implementation of the policy through the human-rights angle.

HUMMEL: And the State Department, as far as Win Lord was concerned, was not able to play a peaceful function of jabbing when the inattention dragged our relationship down to a very low point. In this case the State Department was unable to perform its function. And the NSC screwed it up.

SUETTINGER: Let me visit that issue for a minute. First of all, a couple of process points. I think there's no precedent for what happened at the beginning of the Clinton administration,

⁸⁸ Anthony Lake, national security adviser during the first Clinton administration. Warren Christopher, secretary of state during the Clinton administration from 1993-1997.

when Winston Lord was given responsibility for choosing a senior director for Asia, and he chose Kent Wiedemann,⁸⁹ who had been his economic minister counselor in Beijing.

There were supposedly going to be unanimity of view between the NSC and the State Department. Both Christopher and Lake were very concerned that they were not going to have a repeat of what had happened before – that the State Department and the NSC would be at odds with each other on policy in general, but Asia in particular. So there was a real effort to coordinate the policy at that point.

There was also on the president's part, and on the national security adviser's part, a very deep desire to end the bickering with Congress, particularly over MFN. So the executive order of May 28, 1993,⁹⁰ was the end result of Winston's effort to reach out to the human-rights community and to Congress, particularly the Democratic leadership, and to put together a policy that would satisfy the domestic audiences who were still continuing to scream at very high decibel levels about the nature of the China policy.

So the policy was never really looked at in the context of whether it would work. And some of the China experts that were called upon, including relatively well-known China scholars, said, "Well, this is easy for the Chinese. These conditions are a piece of cake. They can meet these without any problems at all."

LILLEY: Can I put a self-serving comment in here? One of the things that we left as a legacy to Clinton's administration was a good Taiwan-Chinese relationship. You had an unprecedented meeting in Singapore in 1993 between Wang Daohan⁹¹ and Koo Chen-fu,⁹² and they were going like gangbusters. In 1996, three years later, we almost went to war with China over Taiwan. What the hell happened?

HOLDRIDGE: Lee Teng-hui happened.⁹³

SUETTINGER: I think one of the most important aspects was the atomization of the State Department. The State Department, under Secretary Christopher, reflected a greater emphasis on functional expertise across the board. So the State Department was sort of divided against itself – the human-rights bureau and "T" (or PM) and Asia – with the result that there was not one China policy. There were several. And so you had the nonproliferation people running that part

⁸⁹ U.S. ambassador to Cambodia and former deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the Department of State.

⁹⁰ President Clinton's executive order linking China's Most Favored Nation trading status to improvements on human rights helped to avert more restrictive legislation.

⁹¹ Senior Chinese statesman, close adviser to President Jiang Zemin, and head of the semi-official Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS); China's chief interlocutor with the Taiwanese.

⁹² Senior Taiwanese statesman and head of the semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF); Taiwan's chief interlocutor with the Chinese.

⁹³ A reference to the "private" visit of Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui to the United States in 1995.

of the relationship. You had the *Yinhe* incident⁹⁴ and the sanctions against Pakistan in 1993.⁹⁵ You had the human-rights people, who were running most of the rest of the relationship and you had USTR running the relationship with Japan through Congress.

You also had a situation in which State Department was not speaking with one voice. But neither was anybody else. There was nobody at a senior level on the National Security Council who had the gravitas or the experience to deal with Asia in a sort of comprehensive and strategic way. We paid a huge price for that. It was also true at State. There wasn't anybody at the very topmost levels of the State Department who was able to deal with this issue at the same level of expertise that had been done in previous administrations.

So what you had was a train wreck in 1993. The executive order was a catastrophe. It was followed up by the process that took the relationship further and further down, virtually every aspect of it culminating in Christopher's disastrous trip to China in 1994. At that point, the White House said, "We've got to do this here."

The NSC and NEC developed a small group that met about two or three times a week, usually at 6 o'clock in the evening, and would work for several hours on trying to make the policy as it had been defined work as well as possible; to give ourselves at least a maximum amount of cover for retreat from the policy. And the process was not only determined to try to put together a new policy, but to avoid spilling a lot of blood on the floor. I mean, there were people who would have loved to have eviscerated Win Lord, but that was not what the effort was all about.

LORD: There is a blatant amnesia and revisionism at work here again. Reasonable people can argue against any linkage of MFN to human rights in principle, but one has to recall the context in the spring of 1993. Clinton came into office having attacked "the butchers of Beijing" and unconditional trade privileges. There was a substantial number of members of Congress who wanted to cut off MFN immediately and many more, especially in the president's own party, who wanted heavy conditions.

Against this backdrop, I was asked by the White House to negotiate a deal essentially with Senator George Mitchell⁹⁶ and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi.⁹⁷ The NSC was by my side. The deal we worked out was hailed at the time (except by economic and business constituencies who opposed any linkage in principle) as a remarkably moderate outcome considering the above context. The conditions were modest indeed compared to what many in Congress wished. They were doable by the Chinese – most of them under the rubric of "overall satisfactory progress" which was loose on progress needed and the numbers of conditions to be met. The White House,

⁹⁴ A diplomatic incident in the summer of 1993. The *Yinhe*, a Chinese ship headed for Iran, was stopped to be searched in Saudi Arabia in response to American claims that it was carrying chemical-weapons precursors. No such items were found.

⁹⁵ In August 1993, during the unfolding of the *Yinhe* incident, the U.S. imposed sanctions against Chinese and Pakistani entities believed to have engaged in the transfer of missiles or missile parts from China to Pakistan.

⁹⁶ Sen. George Mitchell (D-Maine), Senate majority leader until 1995.

⁹⁷ Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-California).

the Congress, and most media were all laudatory of the deal for preserving MFN for the next year and providing reasonable leverage, while fending off more drastic pressures.

ROY: Let me add on this because I was sitting in the field on it. And what Bob has described, I think, is quite accurate in general. But here was the problem as I saw it in the field. The executive order as defined – and I shared the view – was a doable set of conditions under normal circumstances. You could make enough progress. The problem was, it was put in terms of fundamental improvements in seven areas, and you don't get fundamental improvements in any country in any area in one year.

But the real underlying issue was this. The only foreign policy issue on which George Bush had been vulnerable was China, because of Tiananmen. A Democratic Congress had voted against the president for four years on political grounds, not because of genuine policy differences. Suddenly, you had a Democratic president with a Democratic Congress still in control, but Congress had a four-year voting record. Even though Congress under the Democrats did not want to use China against Clinton the way they had before, they couldn't switch their position. What you needed from the executive order was enough progress on human rights to justify a change in the voting pattern in Congress. And they got it. When George Mitchell and Nancy Pelosi introduced bills opposing the president's decision to de-link,⁹⁸ they were roundly defeated by Congress. The trouble was, State never understood what was going on.

LORD: The dirty little secret was that for the first six months after the spring 1993 MFN modest conditions deal, we made more progress on human rights than at any time during the Clinton administration. But during this period we had formal human rights dialogues; the releasing of a few prisoners; movement toward a prison labor agreement; and movement on Red Cross inspection of prisons.

At the same time the business community and our economic agencies were undercutting the president's policy. They were lobbying the White House against raising human rights instead of pressing the Chinese to move on this issue. By early 1994 the Chinese could easily see the disarray on our side and in any event began tightening up on dissidents before Christopher's March 1994 trip. After that frosty trip, the president and the White House gave absolutely no support to Christopher in the face of Chinese brutality. The president failed to exert discipline over his own economic agencies that were blatantly sabotaging his own policy. The Chinese knew they were off the hook.

ROY: They thought the issue was fundamental improvements in human rights, where we should have been declaring victory and used the next year to get the human rights improvements that the Chinese were willing to give us. That would have justified breaking the linkage, but State insisted on failure as the outcome of the policy. The result was we had to keep the sanctions in place; we had to denounce the Chinese; and we had to go after them in Geneva on the human-rights issue. So the next year produced zero progress on human rights in China and made the president look foolish, because he had broken the linkage and had nothing to show for it. The problem was because of a total breakdown in terms of understanding what we were doing with

⁹⁸ In May 1994, President Clinton reversed his executive order of May 1993 linking China's Most Favored Nation trading status to improvements on human rights.

China.

LORD: In the wake of Christopher's trip and White House/economic agency sandbagging no further progress was made on human rights leading up to the spring MFN renewal deadline. We thus faced three unpalatable choices: First, cut off MFN because the Chinese did not meet the conditions. Thus no one, except the human rights bureau in State, wanted to do this because of the impact on bilateral relations, U.S. economic interests, the reformers in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, etc.

Second, declare victory, i.e. that China had met the conditions and so we would renew MFN. This would not only have been intellectually dishonest, it would have destroyed our credibility with the Chinese, the Congress, and the media.

Third, we chose the third option: Acknowledge there had been some progress, but not enough. State that we had run out the string with the MFN approach, renew MFN and sever linkage, but stress continued attention to improving human rights through other means.

To be sure, this was an awkward reversal, but in my mind clearly preferable to the other two options. I don't recall anyone in the government, except the human rights bureau in State, pushing either of the other two options.

DAALDER: Now, let's take up this discussion about Taiwan, because perhaps we solved the MFN issue but we certainly didn't solve the Taiwan issue, and it gets worse and worse over time. Secondly, I would like to come back to Art Hummel's original question of where the initiative lies in many of these areas.

DESTLER: We would also like to discuss the following: Was there something about the process of the Clinton administration that explains why he represented a change from a good situation on Taiwan-Chinese relations in 1993 to a situation where missiles were being shot into the water three or four years later? Is it really true that the NSC produces new ideas, and the State Department people are all sort of stodgy stick-in-the-muds who just try to implement and stick to the old policy? Another argument would be that partisan politics have become much fiercer, and, in the quest for political gain, demonizing China and demonizing the opposition have become stronger. Now, is policy manageable in the same sorts of ways people were talking about it being nicely and cooperatively managed in the 1980s, or are we just going to be stuck with a much more fractious political process in China?

But to start, Jim, may I ask you to briefly restate your question and make it a process question.

LILLEY: As I said, it's a very self-serving question. First, we gave our Clinton friends a legacy of good Chinese-Taiwan relations that we worked very hard to achieve for a number of years. And I went through Tiananmen in China and I saw that Taiwan weighed in during China's hour of need. They did not get involved in the criticism. They kept investments flowing. And all of a sudden there was the Lee Teng-hui trip and various other things that happened. Something went drastically wrong in those three years that turned this into a major issue in Chinese-American

relations. I think it's very important to examine that in managing your China policy. How do you get the Taiwan relationship right? What do you have to do? How far do you go, etc.?

My ideas on this are fairly simplistic. I just go back chronologically. I say that when you take a consistent position that gives Taiwan confidence, you deal with China simultaneously in a positive way. This sounds rather clichéd, but that formula seems to work. You have to give Taiwan confidence to deal with China and then give China the clear sense that you can manage your relationship with Taiwan. This is the balance you have to achieve.

HUMMEL: Why do we have to give Taiwan any more confidence than they've already got?

LILLEY: Because when you don't give them confidence, when you have the three no's,⁹⁹ and when Qian Qichen¹⁰⁰ drops the bomb on Lee Teng-hui's head, he's going to come back to you and he's going to hit back. I grant you, it's part of Lee Teng-hui's makeup, but two things were done: America was restricting its international flexibility; and Qian Qichen had given a very harsh formula for continuing cross-Strait relations.

Qian Qichen¹⁰¹ had said to Koo Chen-fu very clearly in October 1998, "There are three ways we can resume the talks with you next year with Wang Daohan. Number one, there's only one China. Number two, we are that one China. And number three, you belong to us."

It was inevitable you were going to get some sort of reaction because Lee Teng-hui was riding a wave of public opinion approval that had never been higher. He took the advantage of the thing. He saw an American government vacillating on this issue, going to China, pulling back, sending carriers, and sending presidents. He said, "This is a situation where you weigh in with pressure."

SUETTINGER: Let me try to take it back to a time when you were actually in Taipei and you were part of the equation. This is 1994. When Lee Teng-hui wanted to go to Nicaragua and South Africa. He wanted to travel. This was not Lee's first trip, but one of his principal efforts at that particular brand of diplomacy that he liked and the Chinese didn't like. Vacation diplomacy and expanding Taiwan's horizons.

This comes down to a process issue. When this issue was first bruited about, I had been in the White House for approximately a week, and Tony Lake sort of knew who I was but not really. And Stanley [Roth] hadn't shown up yet. So it was a kind of an odd sort of situation. A cable came over for crosshatching, which was then approved by the national security adviser, on heading off Lee Teng-hui's effort to go to Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

The proposal was done by the State Department. It was drafted by the deputy assistant

⁹⁹ In August 1995, Secretary of State Warren Christopher delivered a letter from President Clinton to President Jiang assuring him that the United States would resist any Taiwanese attempt to declare independence, would not support the creation of "two Chinas," and would not support Taiwanese membership in the United Nations.

¹⁰⁰ Long-time Chinese foreign minister.

¹⁰¹ Vice premier of the State Council of the PRC.

secretary, and by the time it reached us it had gone through Christopher and had been chopped off by him. It came over to me and I read it, and said, “Jesus, this is really going to go over like the proverbial lead balloon.” It was rude. It basically said, “Don’t ask to come to the United States.” Their intent was to ask to go from Taipei to Los Angeles to Nicaragua or wherever, and they wanted to do a stopover in Los Angeles. And, of course, this violated all the previous agreements and precedents and so forth. The State Department concluded that this was simply not something that they could agree to. So in order to head it off, even before the formal request was made for a transit, they wanted to send in Lynn Pascoe,¹⁰² who was the AIT director at that time, to say, “Not just no, hell no.” Their proposal was that Taipei should consider landing in Tijuana instead of Los Angeles.

And so the cable came over, and I was very uncomfortable with it. I sent an e-mail to Tony, and I said I think this plays badly. I think that it’s insufficiently respectful to the president of Taiwan and I think they’ll react to it in a very visceral and negative way. Tony’s response was, “I can’t go on your feelings. Christopher has already signed off on this, and I’m not going to cross him.” So the cable went out and you were there with Fred Chien the day after it hit.¹⁰³ And the Taiwanese had reacted as I predicted that they would react – with fury. And that was the start of the process that took us further down the hill to 1996. And there’s a lot of other water that flows under the bridge.

LILLEY: There’s one thing that you’ve got to look back on in this situation. I’ve said this before so it’s probably no surprise, but here was Lee Teng-hui going to Costa Rica, the only real, permanent democratic state in Central America. He’s going to Nicaragua, where Chamorro¹⁰⁴ has been put in by democratic forces and we got rid of the Sandinistas. He’s going to South Africa for the event of the 20th century, the inauguration of Nelson Mandela. He’s going to Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. He’s going to see the chiefs of state in each one of those countries, all of which recognized China. And the United States, the greatest power on earth, screws around about this transit thing. It looked perfectly terrible. And the Congressmen were enraged by our two-bit action.

LORD: The facts are that there had never been a stop or visit, transit or otherwise, in the United States by the president of Taiwan. Taiwan was pushing the envelope. Our challenge was to accommodate various pressures. We worked out a policy that became standard, i.e. permit transit visits by the highest Taiwan officials for reasons of convenience, safety, and comfort while keeping them low key and unofficial. President Lee’s stop in Hawaii was the first ever of its kind and in that sense a step forward. We were prepared to take heat from Beijing, and we did. Taiwan -- and the revisionists -- now try to portray it as an insult.

LILLEY: There is haggling over this sort of thing when this man is making an epic trip. This may sound sentimental and perhaps weak on my part, but this is powerful stuff you’re dealing

¹⁰² B. Lynn Pascoe, Foreign Service officer and senior adviser in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs; then U.S. ambassador to Malaysia. The American Institute on Taiwan, functions as an “unofficial” embassy. Its director is the functional equivalent of an ambassador.

¹⁰³ Frederick Chien, Taiwanese foreign minister.

¹⁰⁴ Violeta Chamorro, president of Nicaragua.

with. And it was miscalculated in a way that really did harm because it led to the Chinese miscalculation. Taiwan was pushing the envelope as far as they could. This inevitably led to the visit here the next year.

KRISTOFF: Right, and the problem is exactly what Bob just said. Nobody was at the helm because there was no centrality in the Washington policymaking on China. The White House was not exercising any discipline.

DAALDER: Can I just ask a process question? It ought to be highly unusual for a cable in the State Department to be written and sent up to the secretary without anybody in the NSC knowing that it's coming.

SMYSER: Absolutely.

HUMMEL: At least on an issue of this importance.

DAALDER: On an issue of this importance, if it can go to the secretary of state for approval, it certainly can go to the NSC for information as a draft. So you already have, it seems to me, a breakdown in the nature of the relationship at that time, because one would hope that the assistant secretary, or at the very least the office director, would pass it along.

KRISTOFF: You have to remember what Bob had said, though. This was 1994, after you had all of 1993 tussling between the East Asian bureau and the West Wing.

DAALDER: What happens to the East Asia informal group, which we heard about earlier? It's not an issue that gets discussed there.

KRISTOFF: It wouldn't be discussed in the East Asia informal group because by then it is chaired by Lynn at two levels. On Wednesday or Thursday, one East Asia informal is on political issues and has everybody and his brother attending it, not only the key players from Defense and intelligence, but most of the office directors in East Asia. Then he has a second East Asia informal, as I recollect, an economic one, which includes USTR, Commerce, etc.

SMYSER: Which means they're both useless.

KRISTOFF: Right. And they're both very large. And they become sort of interagency staff meetings, but they don't grapple with any of the issues.

LORD: In the first Clinton term, we continued the EAP practice of weekly informals on Asia, featuring State, Defense, NSC, and CIA, and focusing on political-military issues. These were very productive, though they would not treat a few issues of the utmost sensitivity. We also tried regular economic informals, but frankly these were never as successful. As for EAP and the NSC, relations between me and my deputies and Wiedemann/Roth were the best State-NSC ties I've ever seen in government. I thought they were also good when Kristoff took over at the NSC, but she has apparently changed her mind, or was dissembling at the time.

ROY: Let me weigh in on this. What was missing was a sense of what we wanted to do with China. Let me walk you back and show how we could have gotten somewhere else if we had been prepared to see it. Jim had the bad period in China. He got there right before Tiananmen, and he had the post-Tiananmen standoff in the Chinese leadership, in which the hard-liners were more dominant than the others. At the 14th Party Congress in the fall of 1992, the hard-liners were routed in the wake of Deng Xiaoping's tour to the southern provinces. The Tiananmen crowd was thrown out, and China went back on to the path of reform and openness.

In 1993, we had a new administration come in that set goals that would have permitted the Congress to turn around on human rights, if we had created enough basis for that. In 1994, the administration was positioned to move ahead on China policy, and it didn't see it. It was still ripping itself apart between the human-rights group and the trade group. Picture what we should have done. In 1996, we were going into an election year. Jiang Zemin¹⁰⁵ wanted to come to the United States so badly he could taste it, in connection with the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in 1995. We should have set up a plan to have an exchange of visits. If we had had a Jiang visit out of the way, it could have permitted us to have a Lee Teng-hui visit in the wake of it.

LORD: Relations with China will always be complex and go up and down. There's a masochistic impulse among many so-called China experts to blame Washington and not Beijing when there's trouble. The fact is that some tactical mistakes were made by the American side but we – and all administrations – are dealing with a very tough partner. Sometimes China is at fault.

As for specifics, a Lee trip at any time (including after a Jiang trip) would have set off a furor in Beijing. President Clinton did meet with Jiang in the United States and Asia on several occasions, including during the UN anniversary. And he invited Jiang to a working visit to Washington (as we have done with Europe, Israel, and many others), but Jiang held out for a full-blown state visit.

LILLEY: Stape, one question. How about the Perry trip to China in September 1994, which I'm told was a great success? It was a high point, wasn't it?

ROY: That's right. In the wake of the MFN decision, the administration took this contradictory position. On the one hand, it broke the linkage, and, on the other hand, it said it was going to keep sanctioning the Chinese, it was going to go after them in Geneva, etc. All summer the Chinese were saying that if you want to cooperate on human rights, we're ready to cooperate. Then we have two cabinet visits, which were the first since the Baker visit in November of 1991.¹⁰⁶ We had the secretary of commerce come in, and that got the human rights dialogue re-established. And then we had Perry come in. It was a very successful visit. Both of those were helping to prepare the way.

But we had two things going on. We had the Chinese trying to get into the WTO. The

¹⁰⁵ President of the People's Republic of China and General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party.

¹⁰⁶ Secretary of Commerce Barbara Franklin visited China at the end of 1992.

administration at the beginning of the process had said, “We don’t want China in the WTO.” So we were heading for a crunch where China was not going to get into the WTO at the end of this 1994 period. We had the momentum produced by these cabinet visits with nothing to follow on. We had a textiles agreement coming up that was going to create a real problem in the spring of 1995. We let the positive momentum generated by the two cabinet visits dissipate and then ended up fighting over the WTO and the trade issues.

LORD: After severing the MFN link we had to pursue human rights in other ways, not just drop it. It’s naïve to state the Chinese were ready to “cooperate” on human rights in any meaningful way. They have never really done so, except for a few prisoner releases. The United States never opposed China’s entry into the WTO – that’s just wrong. We did negotiate for a good deal, as we should have.

ROY: The slip in relations occurred when we had the deal made. We made two decisions that I think played a factor. We made a decision to permit cabinet secretaries to go to Taiwan; and we made a decision to hold the line on Lee Teng-hui. My position was the opposite. I wanted to hold the line on cabinet visits because it was quite logical. In addition, I didn’t think we could block a Lee Teng-hui visit. I thought it was foolish for us to put ourselves in a position of trying to hold the line on a visit by Lee Teng-hui to his old alma matter. I saw that as a loser.

In connection with the stopover that Bob is talking about, I did something I’ve never done before. I weighed in from Beijing and said, “I thought we could be more permissive in the handling of the Lee Teng-hui stopover.” And normally when you’re sitting in Beijing you keep your fingers out of the Taiwan issue. But I was so upset by the domestic consequences of the way it was being handled that I actually sent in a cable and said, “Hey, I think you guys can relax a bit on this.” In other words, we drifted into the Lee Teng-hui visit under the worst circumstances, which stiffed Jiang Zemin in terms of his desire to come on an official visit. We convinced the Chinese that we were going to hold the line on a Lee Teng-hui visit, and instead we let ourselves get rolled at the last minute. And we permitted cabinet secretaries to go to Taiwan.

LORD: I could be wrong, but I don’t recall our ambassador in China encouraging us to allow a Lee visit. I don’t understand the logic of criticizing the administration on mistreating Taiwan and at the same time opposing cabinet visits to Taiwan. These began under the Bush administration. In our Taiwan policy review we made several friendly gestures toward Taiwan, including more frequent cabinet visits, but confined to economic agencies, and for concrete goals.

As for the Lee visit to Cornell in 1995, I agree it was mishandled – but by all three parties: Washington, Taipei, and Beijing. In retrospect we should have agreed to the visit from the beginning rather than misleading Beijing and getting rolled by Congress. We managed to keep the visit strictly unofficial and received assurances that Lee’s speech would be about Taiwan’s economic miracle. But Taiwan double-crossed us by lacing the speech with very provocative statements and formulations.

I believe that Beijing’s response to the trip would have been much less strident if Lee’s

speech had been what Taipei promised. In any event, Beijing grossly overreacted to the trip, which after all, was strictly private, unofficial, and much less provocative than his visits to many other countries.

KRISTOFF: And if you were in Beijing, what signal could you possibly read out of this?

ROY: They saw our China policy going totally off the track, with no one able to enforce any parameters.

DESTLER: Did the China specialists that stayed in the NSC see this pattern at that time as opposed to seeing it now? And if so, what did they try to do about it and why didn't it work?

KELLY: Peter Tomsen was leading this parade.¹⁰⁷ When Lee went to Honolulu, Peter made numerous calls to block the governor of Hawaii, of all people, from even being seen to greet Lee Teng-hui. They got into this business that Lee had to come in the dark of night. He had to go to the military terminal. He could not be greeted by anybody. They would block the military terminal so that no local Chinese-Americans would be allowed to go in there. And as I say, they made call after call to make sure that our obscure governor didn't go out there to shake his hand. And of course, all of this was transmitted instantly back to Washington where it was totally counterproductive.

LORD: This is a hyperbolic account of what, after all, was the first visit in the United States ever by a Taiwan president. Tomsen carried out Washington's instructions to keep the lid on official aspects of the stop. He surely didn't make "over 25 calls." By the way, Tomsen was committed to friendly ties with Taiwan. He helped steer our Taiwan review, which resulted in several, albeit modest, positive gestures. He supported reasonable arms sales. He personally negotiated Taiwan's attendance at the first APEC summit meeting in Seattle.

As for the Lee stop in Hawaii, Lee decided to play up alleged mistreatment to stir up Congress. I sent our AIT Director, Nat Bellocchi, to Hawaii especially to extend courtesies. We invited Lee into the VIP lounge, but he stayed on the plane and then put out word that he was forced to do so.

SUETTINGER: It was a situation, and it led to the desire within the NSC to take China policy out of the hands of the State Department.

DAALDER: Just to get the record straight, when you informed the national security adviser about this, he said, "I don't want to cross swords with State."

ROY: The NSC was not strong enough to be able to push a positive China policy, and the State Department's focus on the human-rights issue meant that we were basically dead in the water with a strategy. So we ended up tactically dealing with a trade issue when it came up, or dealing with a cabinet visit when it took place, and it wasn't leading anywhere.

¹⁰⁷ Deputy assistant secretary of state of East Asian and Pacific affairs with responsibility for China.

KRISTOFF: Bear in mind, there are shifting personalities at that point in time. That whole first year was Winston and Wiedemann. And then we go through that terrible de-linkage thing, and Winston then gets pushed out. And I'm not speaking personalities. I'm speaking of what happened institutionally. Wiedemann goes off; Stan hasn't come on; Bob hasn't come on; and I've gone down to the NSC. There's nothing going on at State except human rights. And you know there's no focus by the president on China. There's no focus by Lake on China at that point. Lake doesn't turn around on China until late 1995-early 1996.

LORD: I've already addressed the absurd allegation that I got "pushed out." The first year was not all Lord and Wiedemann. China policy was fully coordinated with the NSC. And, as mentioned, the White House was among those who applauded the spring 1993 MFN deal. But much of the policy was sabotaged by the economic agencies with White House acquiescence.

As for lack of a strategy and just focusing on human rights, amnesia has set in again. Under my direction, State in the summer of 1993 drafted a strategy paper on China in the wake of the MFN deal. It called for broad engagement with China across a spectrum of issues and exchanges. It looked very much like the constructive engagement policy that finally began to pay off in 1996. We sent it to the White House in July 1993 and it was approved on an interagency basis in September.

I agree with the point that there was not high-level attention to China in the White House the first couple of years. The president and Lake did not give this issue sustained attention until 1996. We tried to get the president to give major speeches on China for four years, and he never did. His – and the NSC's – most egregious contribution was to let the economic agencies sabotage the president's own MFN policy and leave Christopher swinging in the wind.

DESTLER: Does it get better after Lake and the president focus in 1996?

KRISTOFF: I think so.

ROY: Once we went into the Lee Teng-hui crisis, the administration handled it brilliantly, but it was an avoidable crisis.

LORD: To be sure, involvement by the NSC adviser and the president was crucial, and once we obtained it, all went much better. This underlines the key point that China policy, under any administration, requires White House leadership.

I agree that China policy was handled brilliantly from March 1996 through January 1997 – but this was a team effort. Lake's talks with the Chinese, in which I was the second in command, were very important. So were Christopher's continued dealings with the Chinese foreign ministry in many cities, and his November trip to China. Throughout there were continued interagency strategy sessions, chaired either by Christopher or Lake/Berger. It was a model we should have used earlier.

DAALDER: This is a good transition to the third question. Can we still conduct ourselves in a process manner on China policy as we did in the 1970s and even in parts of the 1980s, given the

fact that China policy is no longer about whether or not we should “deal with these people,” but how? The interests that are involved are so diverse, so politicized, so much part of our everyday parlance that the notion of “doing a Kissinger” today, quite frankly, just doesn’t work – although Scowcroft did go to China without any anybody knowing about it.

LEVIN: You can achieve this with the following: The president and a sufficient number of those who get appointed to high positions have agreement on a coherent set of goals, so that you have the entire executive branch pulling together, and they have a decent working relationship with their party members in the Congress, plus a few of the other party. The Kissinger-Nixon successes – ABM,¹⁰⁸ China, etc. – were not because of the secret visits and that sort of thing, but because they had the government united in supporting them with clear direction. The administration also knew where their Congressional allies were and how to neutralize those who might be opposed. The first thing is always coherence in the executive branch.

ROY: Let me pick up on that because it’s directly related to process. When the administration shifted its policy on Lee Teng-hui, it was a major issue. In the past, you didn’t make major shifts in policy without sending somebody of importance to explain why you’re doing it. I weighed in, but ran into the problem. There was no one in the State Department that could be sent. And process meant that State would block anybody else at a suitable level from going. For example, Tony Lake had never been to China at that point. He would have been the perfect envoy to have gone to explain the president’s decision to permit Lee Teng-hui to come. But State would have died before they would have permitted Tony Lake to do that.

SUETTINGER: Let me weigh in on this, because again it’s part of the process. Stanley Roth and I had fought against Lee Teng-hui’s visit, basically from the word “go,” when we had tried to find alternatives that would be satisfactory to both Taiwan and the State Department as to where else he might stop off that would obviate the need to go to Cornell.

We lost. Stanley was out of the country and I was the last dog to be hung on this one. I sat in the office with Sandy Berger and with Tony Lake and I made my best shot. And Tony said, “The president has decided.” So at that point the game is basically over. I said, “Please do one thing for me,” and that was to add to the president’s decision file on this a memo that I had written on what the consequences would be. And I had the consequences right, as it turned out, including the missile tests. I basically said this is going to do enormous damage, not only to the U.S.-China relationship, but also to the Taiwan-PRC relationship. It is going to increase military tensions in the Gulf. We’ll have exercises. We’ll probably have missile tests because we had intelligence at that point that was saying that was going to happen. And I laid out about a seven- or eight-point memorandum about how China will react. I said, “Just make sure that the president sees this.”

And Tony was as good as his word, and he did. So the decision was not made in ignorance. When Tony said, “Go back and rewrite your memorandum.” I basically said, “There are two options here.” One is to continue fighting until Congress forces our hand on this issue, which they will. The other is to grant the visa and then try to manage the process. And I put

¹⁰⁸ Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty), 1972.

them in that order of preference. Tony said, “Go back and reverse the order,” which I did. I told him I would need at least a week to handle this process, to get the message delivered to the Chinese in the appropriate fashion, so that they will understand why this decision was made. And I said, “I think it’s extremely important that we sit on this one for at least a week while we try to work this issue through State and through others, then try to explain what the situation is.”

It leaked the evening the memo was written because the president told Chuck Robb¹⁰⁹ in a private session that he had made this decision and Robb talked to the Taiwan press on that same evening.¹¹⁰ So that’s how we ended up with the disaster and we had to cobble together some sort of an effort to try and explain the policy both to Taiwan and to Beijing so that Taiwan wouldn’t misunderstand what the visit was all about and that Beijing wouldn’t misunderstand what the motivations were.

So it was a cock-up of a major fashion that involved the way the policy gets made at the very top levels of any administration. And we talked about this before, when the president decides something, whether the bureaucracy agrees with him or not, he’s going to do it. And he did.

DESTLER: It was the James Reston maxim that government is the only vessel that leaks from the top. I mean that’s *de facto* a presidential leak. Formally, it may be a senatorial leak, but if Clinton had told Robb, “Don’t tell the press,” Robb probably would not have talked.

LILLEY: I heard that Lieberman¹¹¹ and Rockefeller¹¹² were in the meeting – all good men.

DESTLER: Back to the larger question that Herb and I were raising – can you still do it? China has become, to a degree, a partisan political plaything. It’s a subject for partisan political gain.

LILLEY: I think the recent things on the WTO and the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act¹¹³ indicate a certain degree of maturity and adult supervision of the process. You’re getting to your priorities right – WTO comes first. Get China in and handle this thing with a timing that will get you a balanced policy. I see a little light at the end of the tunnel.

DESTLER: With the increase in the persistence of activists’ groups and lobbies, particularly on the human-rights dimension, there is built-in conflict with the economics dimension. On the conservative side, there is increasing noise about China being our future military enemy. All this enhances the potential of China being an issue for partisan political gains for Democrats on human-rights grounds and for Republicans on security-threat grounds. Once policy is fractured this way, can Humpty Dumpty be put back together again?

¹⁰⁹ Sen. Charles Robb (D-Virginia), who had visited Taiwan with Bill Clinton in October 1985, when Clinton was governor of Arkansas and Robb was governor of Virginia.

¹¹⁰ May 18, 1995.

¹¹¹ Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Connecticut).

¹¹² Sen. Jay Rockefeller IV (D-West Virginia).

¹¹³ A bill introduced in March 2000, mandating the sale of several types of sophisticated armaments to Taiwan.

LILLEY: You left out the big middle ground, the commercial relationship, which is probably driving the relationship more than anything else at this point.

GLEYSTEEEN: Well, it's a very good question. Obviously a very sharp answer is not sensible, but my general reaction is that, for this administration, the answer is clearly no. It's incompetent to do what's required. For a new administration it's going to be difficult for all the reasons you cite, but it will be doable. One key factor is that you must have a president who understands the problem and the nature of the country he's dealing with, who knows what's going on in that country, and what's going on in his own country.

If you can deal with those things, I think you can manage all the little monkeys like us fairly easily, and we will cooperate in the process. But what has really come apart are those basics. All of the glue has come out of the system. Is that destined to be forever? I don't know.

ROY: I agree with Bill. What we have discovered from our experience is that the China relationship involves factors so immense that when the relationship is mishandled, there's a certain self-correcting factor that is caused by the severity of the crisis that results.

The point is, whether we have the ability to understand that and put together a coherent approach that doesn't require self-correcting crises to keep us on the right path. And the answer is "yes." But this administration, I totally agree, does not have the capability to do it, and I'm not sure the next one does either.

ROY: But I think it's doable if you have the vision to see how you do it.

KRISTOFF: Yeah, but why does this administration, and in your statement, the next administration, have the capability to do that? I think you have to look to the different emphasis on issues on the relationship. This is an enormously learned and august group of people who are talking about geostrategic issues of the 1960s and 1970s of engaging with this country called China. The players on China policy now are very much different than the ones of 15 or 20 years ago. And they're not so easy to box in. It's not so easy to carry on secret diplomacy. It's not so easy to gain a Congressional consensus. There is great fragility in any support in the United States on a coherent China policy. So the capability limitations I think somewhat go to the issues, the multiplicity of the players, the vocalness of those players, the fractured political process on the Hill.

ROY: Let's pick up on that, though, and go back to the Kissinger period. The secrecy of the Nixon-Kissinger period not only involved secrecy, but involved developing our steps in the China relationship in such a way that they have a gigantic impact on U.S. domestic opinion about China that ended up supporting the direction in which we were moved. Over the last ten years, since Tiananmen, every administration has talked about China in a way that has undermined our ability to do the things with China that we need to do. And you see this right now. The Falun Dafa or Falun Gong,¹¹⁴ is being turned into a major human-rights issue, which in American

¹¹⁴ A group that the Chinese government, since 1999, has outlawed and labeled a dangerous cult.

public opinion and the view of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* should block our doing many of the things with China that we need to do in order to have a coherent strategy.

We need an administration that understands that if you want to do something with China, you have to talk about the country and you have to pave the way by making things happen that will develop the domestic support for doing what you need to do. That's the skill that I think was lost post-Tiananmen.

SUETTINGER: And I think permanently lost. I don't think that's recoverable.

LILLEY: I just had one personal experience lately where I've seen some light in talking to the Republican policy committee – Chris Cox, Gilman, Bob Barr, Doug Bereuter, etc.¹¹⁵ I saw people that really grasped the need to move ahead on WTO, and at the same time to do something that would offset it for Taiwan, not necessarily a muscular Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, but something that you will do to bring this into balance.

DAALDER: Jim, these are the people who were shocked that China was spying on the United States, and then produced a report that was highly politicized.

LILLEY: Right. But I knew Chris Cox very well. I've dealt with him many times. The espionage business is not unfamiliar to me. It seems to me that Chris Cox made some very balanced statements on WTO, as did John McCain.

DAALDER: And he produced a report that thoroughly politicized China for the rest of this administration, that pointed a finger at the national security adviser in a way that was thoroughly destructive of the way one deals with China.

SUETTINGER: Without getting into that particular issue, I think the point that is important for us to understand is that in order to construct a policy toward China that is balanced and likely to be successful, you now have to draw upon a much larger universe of actors than was necessary during any previous administration. And that is in part the legacy of Tiananmen. It is also a part of the legacy of the atomization, if you will, of American policy that takes place over the last couple of decades.

You can't wish to go back to where we were. It isn't going to happen. The American political system is not ready for it, will not stand for it. There are too many factors now that need to be taken into consideration for us to wish that we could go back to the good old days of the late 1970s or early 1980s.

Is there an approach that can be taken that will get us to that point? I think the answer to

¹¹⁵ Rep. Christopher Cox (R-California), chairman of the House Policy Committee and chairman of the Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China. Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-New York), chairman of the House International Relations Committee and Atlantic Coast representative to the House Policy Committee. Rep. Bob Barr (R-Georgia), Cotton South representative to the House Policy Committee. Rep. Doug Bereuter (R-Nebraska), chairman of the Asian-Pacific Subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee and Small States representative to the House Policy Committee.

that question is “yes.” And I think one of the keys to it is improved communication between the White House and Congress.

We asked for this. We begged to be able to go down to the Congress and tell them what we’re doing. And we were consistently told, “We can’t trust you to do that. You can’t go. It’s a violation of executive privilege.” All the other reasons that basically kept us from going down and talking to the staffers. I’m not talking about going down to brief the Hill. I’m talking about going to talk to the staffers and say, “Here’s what we’re trying to do. And here’s what we’re trying to do to accomplish our goals.” We’ve got to build that coalition much more effectively than we’ve done before.

KRISTOFF: Right. And when you’re not building that coalition, a very political White House like this then swings from one headline to the next. You can take as an example not China, but Hong Kong. You know, nine months before reversion, we started sending in memos saying here’s how we think we ought to posture ourselves on the July reversion.¹¹⁶ None of the memos were read until February, at which point the question comes back to us, “Save Hong Kong!” To which we write back, “Sorry, we didn’t give it away. This is going to happen. There’s not much you can do about it.”

It is a political atmosphere there, and without somebody in the White House who will focus day by day, you do end up swinging in response to news headlines. That’s where we are now. That’s why I am now at 40-60 that anything positive is going to happen in the China relationship for the next 15 months of this administration and probably for the first year of the next administration.

HOLDRIDGE: I much appreciate what Sandy has been saying. My concern is that we’ve been talking a great deal about what the United States should do to try to patch up this relationship, but not all that much on what China might do. What can we ask the Chinese to do? What can we expect that they might be willing to do to move this thing along? Obviously, the relationship is very much in their interest as well – economically, strategically, politically, and so on. So are there things which the Chinese might be doing which we could encourage them to do which might be put before them as of now?

LEVIN: Foreign policy at this point is about as elitist as it’s been since the Second World War. The number of foreign correspondents abroad is down, the amount of foreign news is down, the news magazines are down, the Congressmen don’t travel abroad. Talk to Les Gelb¹¹⁷ about the Council of Foreign Relations. The number of people who are really trying to get involved and actively affect foreign policy are very, very small in number. I think that what we have is popularism, which is shouting slogans about how somebody is good or somebody is bad. That is not foreign policymaking.

The reason we get this fragmentation is a lack of leadership. If you have leadership which points out policies and explains them over a period of time, then you’ll have a public

¹¹⁶ Hong Kong reverted from British to Chinese control on July 1, 1997.

¹¹⁷ Leslie Gelb, president of the Council on Foreign Relations.

which responds when asked in good polls, “What’s bothering you, what do you want your government to do?” The public does not mention foreign policy. We have to have people in the presidency and as national security adviser and secretary of state who are not on-the-job trainees on these issues, who bring with them intellectual capital, which they can draw upon.

SUETTINGER: George Bush did that and he got hammered.

LEVIN: There are certain events that you cannot handle. Tiananmen was not something that was a failure of his policies or vision. When you have on-the-job trainees at the top of our foreign policy mechanism over a period of years, naturally there’s chaos in the views in the country. So I hate to go back to the Great Man and Great Woman Theory, but I really think that’s what we need to avoid it.

DESTLER: So we should appoint a better president and a better secretary of state and a better national security adviser.

KRISTOFF: And yet Christopher was deputy at State. Tony Lake, Sandy Berger served in State policy planning.

LEVIN: Christopher had one visit to Taipei and so he avoided China policy when he was deputy secretary.¹¹⁸ Tony Lake bailed out of the NSC staff over the Cambodia bombing.¹¹⁹ These are very estimable and worthy individuals, but they’re not people who came in with track records of being thoughtful and accomplished in the handling of this sort of issue.

KRISTOFF: Well, to me that suggests there was, in this administration, a disconnect between the political leadership and what I would call the core professional service, between the politicals and what you would call the elites. I think that that was really rampant in 1993, and was evidenced over the linkage of MFN and human rights, and every professional that I know that worked on China at the time opposed the linkage. It was political leadership that forced that linkage.

LILLEY: I don’t think that’s going to happen again. Of course, I think we’ve gone through a crisis in the Taiwan Strait, MFN versus human rights, Lee Teng-hui’s trip to the States. I presume there’s a learning process here, and on the bright side, I see certain trends that are powerful.

Any leader has to come in and figure out how to manage these trends. And the first of them is the Chinese-American business relationship, which is a huge driving force. With all of its warts, with all of its difficulties, this relationship is driving the administration’s policy more than anything else. Second, I think you have a chance to get the military relationship into some perspective, because the debate has gone from the simple caricature of Bob Ross¹²⁰ and Ross

¹¹⁸ Warren Christopher was met with violent protest when he traveled to Taiwan in December 1979 after the normalization of U.S.-China ties and the severance of U.S.-Taiwan ties.

¹¹⁹ Anthony Lake resigned from the NSC staff in 1970 after the decision to invade Cambodia.

¹²⁰ Professor at Boston College and co-author of Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China’s Search for Security* (New York: Norton, 1997).

Munro.¹²¹ We are becoming much more sophisticated. We are looking at this more realistically. General Xiong Guangkai¹²² is often over here. We are going to get the Taiwan relationship on track. If you have trends moving in that direction, a manager can take hold and weave all of this into some sort of a policy.

This is the real challenge, because you have some positive trends in motion that have been built on the mistakes that we've made. We aren't going to make the same mistakes again on Taiwan. We're not going to link trade to human rights. We're not going to get this proliferation thing driving us to the Milky Way [*Yinhe*] fiasco. And I don't see any leadership coming in, whether it's Republican or Democrat, that will make the same mistakes that were made by Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan. I don't see that.

ROY: I see a somewhat different scenario developing. Instead of trying to stabilize the Taiwan, cross-Strait relationship, we're involved in a pattern of doing something for one and then having to compensate with the other, and it's going to get into the arms race business. We are moving on theater missile defense in a way that will make it impossible, politically, for us not to extend to Taiwan, and that's going to drive China ballistic.

We see the problem coming. I see a total lack of what I call foreign policy leadership to deal with the issue, because we're so committed to moving ahead with the technology. People are just hoping that the issue will somehow go away. There are all sorts of studies going on around town about the implications. They all come to the same conclusion and nobody will touch the direction in which we're moving. So I really see a train wreck potentially coming down the road. We need to impose an intelligence onto the process that says, "Here's how you have to manage different pieces, and if you have to compromise in this area in order to do something in this area, that's what we need to do." I don't see that happening.

SUETTINGER: I'm coming to an earlier comment about China. To say that they don't have the first team in would be an understatement. They don't even have the second team in. I wish I had a dollar for every time we've had to rely on China taking us through and doing the right thing in order for the relationship to end up on the right note. Right now, you've got leadership in Beijing that is not very smart.

KELLY: Well, I'm struck with Bob's point of having to articulate the policy. I certainly agree that it has to be articulated better to the Hill. But in all the history of these days, I'm not sure we've ever had fewer than two or more than four people at the NSC. If it's the NSC staff's job to sell the whole policy to everybody on the Hill, you're never going to get it done. The problem is that State and the White House have to be operating from some similar sheet of music, and State has to overcome the obstacle of its own organization. Those 21, 22, or 23 bureaus can never be co-equal. Somebody has to be in charge of them. How can an administration even talk about having a policy if it doesn't have anybody at State who can give meaningful support to the

¹²¹ Journalist and co-author of Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, *The Coming Conflict With China* (New York: Knopf, 1997).

¹²² Former head of Chinese military intelligence, deputy chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army and primary interlocutor with the U.S. military.

White House policy?

A policy is certain to fail if you don't have anyone from State even trying to explain it. The only solution to this is to at least have a few other people at State, and ideally maybe a few individuals even from other departments, so there is at least in consensus on the simplest basis, some sort of a sense within an administration of what its policy is and a willingness to find a few people to go out and sell it.

DAALDER: It is a failure of the departments to deliver on the policy means that the NSC thinks it has to do it all by itself and it can't. And it never can, and never will, and the moment it thinks it can or will, it is in deep trouble, which means that if you want to do good reform, you have got to start it at State.

SOLOMON: From what I have heard, you can not go back to the 1970s, because this is a relationship now that is too ramified. You didn't have Commerce, you didn't have Defense, and you didn't have the human-rights element. The reason you have to run this policy out of the NSC is precisely because you have all these other bureaucratic actors. Now, you can talk about where the talent is going to come from and who will implement the policy, but the two things you can say are that this is a relationship that is so heavy, so complex that it requires what Kissinger called "meticulous management." It's like the Russian relationship. Japan is relatively duck soup once you get your policy right. But management of China policy, it seems to me, can only come out of the White House. It needs the weight of presidential authority to get the special trade representative¹²³ and the secretary of defense and the secretary of state on that same sheet of music.

Once you set the policy, then, of course, you could talk about how you farm out the other elements – including the Congressional element. State's congressional relations people just cannot deal with this problem. So for all those reasons, I just say you have to have this relationship grounded in the White House. Otherwise it will fly apart and you'll have too much turf rivalry and not enough presidential weight behind it.

ROY: But let's take this conceptually. It has to come from the president. He can provide it by saying the NSC should be in charge and go do it – Nixon's style – or he can have a secretary of state in whom he has confidence – Dean Rusk-George Shultz-style – and have the State Department do it in cooperation with the NSC. But if you don't have a president who gives any clear sense of foreign policy direction, the only way you can get it is if you have a John Foster Dulles or somebody who has a very clear sense of what he wants to get done, and this administration doesn't have that type of foreign policy thinker.

LILLEY: Truman-Acheson.¹²⁴ That was the best arrangement you had.

ROY: The NSC cannot do it simply because it is in the White House if the White House is not headed by somebody who gives a sense of direction again.

¹²³ Original title of the United States Trade Representative.

¹²⁴ Dean Acheson, secretary of state under Truman.

KRISTOFF: The president has to give coherence and direction. The NSC has to exercise the discipline. However, it can not operationalize and that has been the problem.

DESTLER: On that note, it is past our promised closing time. Thank you very much.

APPENDIX A: AGENDA

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

I. The NSC-State Relationship

1. How would you describe the relationship between the State Department and NSC in general and the secretary of state and the national security adviser in particular in the making and implementation of U.S. policy toward China during the administrations with which you were associated?
 - Was the relationship one of co-equals, did State tend to lead, or was the NSC out in front?
 - Did the relationship differ at various stages of the decision-making process – including in the policy formulation, promulgation, and implementation stages?
 - Was the pattern that developed for U.S. policy toward China different than or similar to the pattern that developed within that administration with regard to other critical foreign policy issues (*e.g.*, the Soviet Union/Russia and the Middle East)?

2. To what extent was NSC dominance at critical turning points in U.S. policy toward China – including the opening to China in 1971, the normalization of relations in 1978, the aftermath of Tiananmen in 1989, and the start of the strategic dialogue in 1996 – exceptional rather than part of a consistent pattern?

3. What best explains those instances where the NSC supplanted the State Department in direct diplomacy and policy?
 - The exceptional importance of China policy to successive presidents?
 - The personalities of the particular incumbents at State and NSC?
 - Organizational advantages of the NSC over State (small size, proximity to the president, etc.)?
 - The Chinese desire to have it this way?
 - The nature of the China relationship (centered on strategic issues, with the need to deal at the top)?

4. To what extent does congressional involvement in U.S. policy toward China have an impact on the organizational dynamics within the executive branch as to who leads in the formulation, promulgation, and implementation of U.S. policy?

II. Major issue areas

1. What was the role of the NSC in each of the following issue areas – was it to act as an honest broker among different agency perspectives, as an initiator of new policies and ideas, and/or as an implementer of policy?

- Major diplomatic initiatives (e.g., the opening to China, normalization of relations, the negotiation and declaration of joint communiqués, and negotiations over WTO entry);
- Relations with Taiwan and cross-Strait relations, (e.g., critical arms sales, the invitation of Lee Teng-hui to the United States, the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1996, and attempts to play a role in cross-Strait relations before and during the recent war of words)'
- Arms control, (e.g., the imposition of sanctions in response to missile and nuclear transfers, securing Beijing adherence to the NPT and CTBT);
- Human rights and Congressional relations, (e.g., the post-Tiananmen freeze, the MFN debates and Presidential decisions, the identification of China as a human rights offender in international fora, and the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act debate).

III. Lessons

1. On the whole, how would you characterize the contribution of the NSC to the conduct of China policy since 1969? (constructive, essential, contentious, self-aggrandizing, etc.)

2. What lessons can be drawn from the China case for the organization and conduct of the NSC more generally? Are there particular methods, activities, or modes of organization to use or to avoid?

3. How relevant are past experiences to present and future conditions? Are some methods more appropriate to certain circumstances or presidential styles?