Nixon Legacy Forum Transcript:

Waging Peace:
Nixon and the Geopolitics of the Middle East

April 23, 2012
National Archives Research Center
Washington D.C.

Panelists:
Richard Murphy, U.S. Ambassador to Syria, 1974-1977
Sam L. Lewis, U.S. Ambassador to Israel, 1977-1985
Dr. Bill Quandt, National Security Council, 1972-1974, and 1977-1979
Harold H. Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, 1975-1978
Dennis Ross (Moderator), Middle East adviser to Presidents George H.W. Bush, Clinton, and Obama

Geoff Shepard: Good afternoon. I'm Geoff Shepard and I'm here to welcome you on behalf of the Richard Nixon Foundation. The foundation co-sponsors these Nixon legacy forms with the National Archives. In essence, the Archives has the documents and we tend to produce the people who produce the documents, so they have the what and the when, we try to, we try to produce the how, and the why and the perfect partner to do this with us is the head of the National Archives. I introduce at this time David Ferriero, the 10th archivist of the United States, David.

David Ferriero: Thank you, Geoff. It's a pleasure to welcome all of you here for another Nixon Legacy Forum here at the National Archives. Today's forum will be the 20th and an ongoing series that began at the Nixon library in Yorba Linda back in January 2010. Richard Nixon's 97th Birthday January 9, with a forum on the creation of the domestic Council and the Office of Management and Budget, early in the President's first term. The Nixon Legacy Forums assemble Nixon administration officials, the men and women who helped to formulate and carry out the President's policies to remember and discuss and analyze the work they did during those important years between 1969 and 1974. When these recollections and reminiscences and analyses of the people who created the papers are combined with the relevant documents and tapes, they provide a rich and unique resource for scholars and citizens in all the years ahead. The Forums so far have dealt with such varied topics as the peaceful desegregate segregation of southern schools in 1970, the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, the appointment of four justices to the United States Supreme Court, and the way the Nixon White House was organized in order to maximize use of the President's time. Last month, here in the McGowan Theater, we hosted a forum discussing the international aspects of Pat Nixon's long career in public service and particularly during her years as First Lady. That forum was part of the events surrounding the special exhibit ‘People Were Her Project’ that opened at

the Nixon library last month on March 16, which would have been Mrs. Nixon's 100th birthday. Many of the legacy forums have been carried on C-Span and are available online on demand at the C-Span archive. All the forums are recorded on video and are available on demand at the Nixon Foundation's website and the videos and transcripts, of course, will always be available to scholars at the Nixon library. Next month on May 23, the Nixon Legacy forum will convene at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa. Two panels will consider the Nixon administration's pivotal and groundbreaking approach to Native Americans as set out in President Nixon's landmark special message to Congress on Indian Affairs in July 1970. This afternoon's legacy forum will consider one of the most important but perhaps one of the least known of the Nixon administration's accomplishments in the area of foreign policy, the remarkable alignment of ideas and personalities and events that led to a major shift in American policy toward the Middle East during 1973 and 1974. President Nixon, along with President Sadat of Egypt, forged the first peace between Israel and an Arab neighbor and the Nixon policy implemented by Henry Kissinger's remarkable exercise of shuttle diplomacy laid the foundation for the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt in 1978. The forum will be introduced by Robert C. McFarlane, who played his own part in the foreign policy of the Nixon years, but McFarlane is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and for nineteen years was an officer in the United States Marine Corps. His service included two combat tours in Vietnam, for which he received the bronze star and the Navy Commendation Medal, both for combat. In 1971, he was selected as a White House fellow, and then stayed on at the White House as military assistant to Henry Kissinger at the National Security Council. President Ford named Lieutenant Colonel McFarlane his special assistant for national security affairs. In 1979, he worked for the Senate Armed Services Committee and in 1981 was appointed Counselor of the Department of State. In 1984, President Reagan named him National Security Adviser. More recently about his work on international energy issues and last year he co founded United States Energy Security Council. It's my privilege to welcome Bud McFarland to the stage.

Robert C. McFarlane: Thanks very much, both for hosting this at the National Archives, for giving a focus to a period of time in our history, which is perhaps unprecedented and the number of issues globally notable for the profound changes that occurred and the power balance between the United States and the Soviet Union, the conclusion of war in Vietnam, the establishment of an opening to China, and perhaps most importantly, a period of intense engagement in the Middle East, in the interest of establishing both a process and a framework for advancing toward peace that has been underscored and agreements that followed the Nixon administration. This afternoon, we have a panel of distinguished diplomats, who were truly present at that creation period of intense diplomacy in the Middle East. They will frame for you the formation of policy that is the President's concept from coming into office, concerning the opportunities in the Middle East, for advancing toward greater stability, and then carried out at a very difficult time, difficult between United States and the Soviet Union, just the beginning of our relationships with China, and trying to wind up a war in Vietnam, to deal with war in the Middle East. That ended ultimately, with our being faced with an oil embargo from the OPEC countries but with a profound change in the relationship between the United States and Egypt, which foreshadowed an ability to engage with a new leader, and Israel, excuse me and Egypt, that enable the peace accord that ultimately was consummated at Camp David, in the following

administration. The diplomats before you today were party to that intense diplomacy of the period. You introduce them from your left, Ambassador Richard Murphy, distinguished diplomat and serving as ambassador from Mauritania to Syria, to Saudi Arabia, and ultimately heading the Middle East Bureau at the Department of State. Ambassador Sam Lewis, similarly, career Foreign Service officer who served with great distinction. During his period of time in the Carter administrations as well as the Reagan years and beyond, as our distinguished ambassador to Israel, later as head of the policy and planning staff at the Department of State. Dr. Bill Quandt, perhaps the key staffer at the National Security Council in the White House and the period of the October War and the diplomacy which followed, truly at the right hand of Dr. Kissinger and a noted scholar chronicling that period, and the definitive book on that war, and the ensuing shuttle diplomacy that followed it. Next to him, Harold Saunders, the lead staffer, not just in the Nixon years, but going back to the Kennedy and Johnson years and truly the man with a solid foundation that was responsible for advising Dr. Kissinger as for the first time he engaged in the Middle East in a sustained way, later heading the Middle East Bureau at the Department of State, Undersecretary Henry Kissinger. Then finally the moderator of our panel today, Ambassador Dennis Ross, well known, established as perhaps the most learned and wise counsel to four presidents over the past twenty-five years on Middle East matters. Dennis, panelists, let's talk about the Middle East.

Dennis Ross: Well thank you, as you heard, Bud say, the panelists who are all sitting to my right, embody not only a wealth of insights, experience, and an awful lot of practical know-how, but they've thought a lot about this subject. They range in terms of their experience with regard to these. The period of time, we're going to talk about basically ‘69 to ‘74, from those who actually were hands on, in terms of developing the policy and implementing it during part of this period, to those who were in governmental post this time and were not necessarily part of that process, in an intimate way but nonetheless, were observing it from where they were. They're a unique blend of insight and experience and we're going to talk about a lot of the issues in this period and let me sort of summarize some of the issues and then frame maybe the context in which a lot of this takes place, before posing a series of questions to all of them. The first thing to keep in mind when we talk about ‘69 and ‘74 is this is a tumultuous period, internationally, but obviously in the Middle East as well, in the end of ‘69 and we see that the United States puts forward something called the Rogers Plan. The Rogers Plan is actually a proposal designed to try to end the conflict or at least change fundamentally the dynamic of conflict resolution in the Middle East and between Arabs and Israelis. That's at the end of December, that's at the end of 1969. It takes place in the context of something that was called the War of Attrition that had already been ongoing between Egypt and Israel and that escalates dramatically during the course of 1970, to a point where, in fact, you have Israeli and Soviet pilots engaging in dogfights above the canal, tremendous potential for escalation. There's a ceasefire that is achieved in August of 1970 and it's succeeded a month later by something that's known as Black September, which leads to another crisis, which eventually gets resolved, and we'll talk a little bit about, about it as well. So, that comes onto the scene in the aftermath of that because Nasser dies, he has a year of decision and then he expels the Soviets in 1972 and then in 1973, there's a war. There's a war that surprises us, surprises the Israelis, the war itself, is marked by different phases. It's also marked by a significant potential for escalation and confrontation

between the United States and the Soviet Union and yet what emerges from that war is the launching of a significant diplomacy and it's and that diplomacy that is launched, sets in process and in motion, a lot of what follows over the succeeding years in terms of peacemaking. Now, it's also occasion that we're by an Arab oil boycott and shortly before the end of the Nixon tenure, there is also a trip to the Middle East. I want to, I want to get into some questions to the panelists, I also want you to be aware of in the audience that we'll probably as we get to the near the end of the discussion on '74, at least, we'll show a clip on the President Nixon's trip to Egypt but before we get into the questions of the panel, let me just offer a couple of observations and then we'll turn to the questions. One, when President Nixon comes into power, his initial preoccupation, not surprisingly, is Vietnam. He has campaigned and declared that he's going to end the war and so, not surprisingly, given the character of what the war has been in the impact it's had domestically in this country, that's a preoccupation. But he views the world through a certain lens. He and Henry Kissinger together are realists in a very traditional, dare I say it, political science sense of the word. They believe that power is an organizing principle around which international relations takes place and if you're talking about power as an organizing principle, then the guiding relationship is actually the U.S. - Soviet relationship because these are the two superpowers on the world stage and his view of the Soviet Union is an interesting and complex one. He comes in with what I would describe as both a competitive and a cooperative approach. He is very heavily determined to try to change the character of the relationship, he is mindful of the profound risk of nuclear war. He wants to remove that as the kind of Damocles sword that hangs over our heads, he wants to see if there is some way to to create a different basis for the relationship, not in any way informed by a kind of naivete, that we in the Soviets are going to come in and have a common set of bonds but rather, he believes you can build a certain kind of relationship that is respectful, that is rooted in predictability, rooted in stability, but in many ways is also shaped by his competitive impulses, and his awareness that to produce this kind of relationship that he wants, there is a need for us to build leverage, there is a need for us to be able to exercise influence, there is a need for us to think in terms of trade offs and I want to read you a quote from his memoirs that reflects how he thinks about the Soviet Union and it is a kind of interesting point of departure for us and I'm quoting, "since U.S. Soviet interests as the world's two competing superpowers were so widespread and overlapping, it was unrealistic to separate or compartmentalize areas of concern. Therefore, we decided to link progress in such areas of Soviet concern as strategic arms limitation and increased trade with progress in areas important to the United States, Vietnam, the Middle East, and Berlin," and again, you listen to that quote, and what it reflects is someone who believes that you can do business with them, but there's trade offs here, he's not going to give things away to the Soviet Union, he's going to engage on things that shouldn't be a mutual interest but if they really want progress in particular areas, you know, they're going to have to pay for that progress by being responsive to us and things and areas that matter, particularly to us. Vietnam, as I said, was the first item he listed, but the Middle East was the second one that he listed and it is interesting that I made a reference to the Rogers Plan earlier and he wrote about it again in his memoirs, when he writes about the Rogers plan, which is an initiative on our part to affect the diplomacy and try to see if we can produce some kind of dramatic change with regard to conflict in the Middle East. When he writes about it, he basically says I knew the Rogers plan couldn't be implemented and yet, he said, I wanted us to pursue it, because I wanted us to

demonstrate to the Arabs that we didn't dismiss the case that they had to make, and I wanted to use it as a vehicle for them to be able to restore their diplomatic relations with us. So he was thinking about the Middle East, he clearly saw that as having tremendous explosive potential, again, relating to the issue of potential confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union and I wanted to ask Bill, who would wasn't in the White House at this point, but he is a chronicler of this period, and he is studying the period, what was the essence of the Rogers plan? What kind of lies behind promoting it and why if it was designed to sort of reach out to the Arabs, why does Nasser reject it?

Dr. Bill Quandt: As far as I can reconstruct what was going on in the President's mind, he did look at the Middle East is very explosive area of the world, he sometimes made the analogy that the Middle East in the 1960s was like the Balkans before World War One, a small clash could begin in a region and could all of a sudden draw in the major powers and lead to global war. So he wanted to do something to defuse the danger of an explosion in the Middle East. He had Kissinger fully occupied with the opening to China, with Vietnam, and he says in one of his early comments about why he isn't using, Nixon, isn't using Kissinger on the Middle East. He says Henry has a problem dealing with the Israelis. In other words, he's not going to be as fair minded and so he asked his Secretary of State to take on this one area of the Middle East as his main project. He doesn't include him much on Vietnam, as far as I can tell, or on U.S.-Soviet issues, or on China, but the Middle East is given to the State Department and you just saw a clip of Joe Sisco. He was Assistant Secretary of State and State Department put together a project that was meant to be a U.S.-Soviet joint proposal and the idea was that there would be a proposal on how Egypt and Israel should negotiate a peace. That is the basic terms of reference and similarly, Jordan and Israel. We would take primary responsibility for shaping principles for that as well and had this all worked the way it was designed to work, in October, we and the Russians would have jointly announced these proposals as something we agreed on and we would then go respectively, to our friends and clients, they to the Egyptians, we to the Israelis, to try to persuade, ‘69 we're talking about. The Soviets, they say, we're not going to present something unless we know that Egypt will accept it. Nasser won't accept it. So the Soviets stepped back, at that point in December of ‘69 we go forward with these as our own proposals. The reason Nasser objects to it is not so much the substance on just the Egyptian-Israeli part, but it is designed to be a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace and at this point, Nasser still thinks of himself as the leader of the Arab world, and the Syrians, the Palestinians, and the Jordanians should all be in this with Egypt and he's not going to go separately. So he turns it down, the Israelis turn it down and Jordanians subsequently also, don't accept it. So this, this is the first initiative and it's still boring, nobody accepts it. Nobody does and so it's a, it's a failure but it's, if you go back and actually read the text of the Egyptian Israeli proposal, it's very close to what came into focus a decade later, with the Egyptian Israeli peace, the principles are almost identical.

Dennis Ross: So, Harold, you were there. Let me ask you a question. Kissinger is clearly dubious about the essence of the Rogers Plan. Does he simply acquiescent? Number one, because he thinks the president wants it and number two, is he that keen himself to be involved in the Middle East at this point? And if not, why not?

Harold Saunders: I think he was very uncertain about the foundations for involving himself. This, as you said earlier, was not his area and I remember one of my first contacts with him, I was on the NSC staff during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, as you said, and he kept me on, because he felt continuity on the Middle East was important. One of my first discussions with him was very personal and said, asked me whether his being Jewish would be a major factor in the Middle East and I said, I really didn't think so. I thought some of our intelligence reports had suggested from conversations among Arabs, that they thought that that might be an advantage, maybe he would have a way of dealing with the Israelis, it would be more persuasive. Anyway, we had that conversation, but I think he was still uncertain about his base. As Bill said, he was much more preoccupied with Soviets and Vietnam and I think there was a difference. Since we need to get into Nixon here, I've reflected on what President Nixon brought to the presidency in the way of exposure to this area. You have to remember he was Vice President during the Aswan Dam crisis with Egypt in the 1950's, when he was Vice President. Bill quotes a wonderful letter from Nixon to the Secretary of State when the 1967 War broke out, advising him to think about the Soviet role in the war and so on. So, Nixon came to this with some sensitivity to the dynamics of regional conflicts, local conflicts. At the same time, we all know he had a preoccupation with wanting to change the interactions among the major powers to change the way that the great power role in the world was played. Henry didn't, Henry had the second, but not the first. I think the second reason for his not wanting to punch in here was he really didn't have personal experience with the Middle East conflict. So, I think standing back was his way of doing that. I don't think he was ready to assert himself.

Dennis Ross: So It's interesting so the Rogers Plan fails. The War of Attrition heats up during the course of 1970. Then, the Israelis began after heavier bombardments, they build the bar lev line heavy bombardment. Israelis decide to react to heavy bombardments, which Egyptians are doing primarily to raise the cost of them of being there by not only bombing the cities along the Suez Canal, but then doing deep penetration rates in Egypt and basically bombing the outskirts of Cairo. Nasser begins to panic over this and he invites thousands of Soviets into Egypt, large numbers of SAM sites large numbers of Soviet personnel and increasingly Soviet pilots as well. Eventually, you end up with dogfights between the Israeli and Soviet pilots. Tremendous potential for escalation at this point, in June of 1970, again, Rogers in the lead, Rogers launches an initiative to try to bring this escalation to try to control it. Eventually, it leads on August 7, 1970, to a ceasefire, Nixon writes about that and he says this was a great accomplishment for Rogers, a great accomplishment for Joe Sisco but he also says, even though the Egyptians and Soviets violate, before the ink, he says, before the ink is dry, on the agreement, the Egyptians have violated this. The fact is the Israelis are persuaded not to do anything. I want to turn to you, Sam, even though you weren't again involved at this period, you know, the Israelis in your succeeding incarnations. When they look back on the Nixon period, how much are they influenced by simply the behavior of what goes on in '73 and afterwards, which we will get to? How much is there a kind of totality of the Nixon administration and its approaches, including the earlier periods, Nixon in March of 1970 actually postpones a sale of phantom jets. He persuades them not to overreact to the violations of the ceasefire. Is there a residue of that in

the succeeding years when you talk to Israelis? Or do they focus on a different part of the Nixon years?

Sam Lewis: Well, I think they all recall very, admiringly Nixon's style in dealing with them and with the region. They saw him as a pretty smart guy and handling the Russians and the Russian relationship with them is also very crucial. You didn't hear much about it in later years, I think they're more influenced by Henry's shuttles and the impression that those made only which we'll talk about further, but up to the point of 1977 and when Menachem Begin took office in his total turnover and political leadership and Israel, up to that point, the political leaders had all known Nixon, Ford, and Henry Kissinger to be strong and effective when they chose to intercede either to stop something or to start something and I think that did play a role in the thinking of the Labour Party leaders. Unfortunately, left power at the time. Begin took power
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Dennis Ross: Shortly after the ceasefire holes, as I said earlier, we have something called Black September, where radical Palestinian groups hijack airplanes into Jordan. This kind of pushes who decide that enough of a state within a state and he cracks down and basically devastates the, the PLO and forces them to leave. In the midst of this, you have the Syrians threatening to intervene and actually end up sending tanks across the border. I want to talk to Dick Murphy in a second about the Syrian perspective on this. But I want to ask you how this is a crisis, a real crisis at the time, and how does the President look at it?

Harold Saunders: But one sentence, I can remember standing in a group somewhere in the White House, where he or he was the senator and his saying in effect, that this was the most dangerous situation that he had faced and he was even reflecting on the key decision that he had to make during the crisis, and saying he still not was not sure exactly why he made the decision that he made. In other words, it was a traumatic moment for him and the situation was this, following the outbreak of the crisis, King Hussein, excuse me, King Hussein of Jordan, was in touch with the White House asking for military support to blunt these Syrian tank columns that had moved into northern Jordan and the question came up well, the United States really not have the massive military presence in the eastern Mediterranean, that would have been required, certainly for intervention of ground troops but even we're limited in the number of air sorties it could be run from the carriers that were moved to the eastern Mediterranean. So the question came up, should we ask the Israelis for air attacks or maybe even ground troops, which would have been obviously a very, very sensitive thing for Israelis to move in and supportive of an Arab leader against another Arab leader. Anyway, we were back and forth on that was, should we, should Nixon authorize the Israelis to air attacks? The Jordanian said, well, please don't send ground troops into Jordan, but maybe you should move them into Syria. Anyways, a very, very complex period of about forty-eight hours and ultimately, the administration was saved from making any of those decisions because King Hussein ordered his Air Force to attack Syrian tanks, which they did quite successfully and for reasons of domestic politics in Syria, the Syrians did not send their air force in the back of the tanks and so the tanks withdrew, and it was all over and none of the difficult decisions actually had to be made, but in a way they were the decisions made along the way that that could have launched

an Israeli attack. So that was, I think Nixon was much relieved, but also, I think, rather pleased at the way his own personal thought processes and decision making process is.

Sam Lewis: I think also, certainly, the Israelis have always believed that certain moves that they made to threaten, moving their air force against the Syrian tanks played a significant role as well. I think that they did that, knowing that Nixon wouldn't necessarily be unhappy.

Dr. Bill Quandt: He wanted them to.

Sam Lewis: Yeah, yeah.

Harold Saunders: I think the bottom line is when the Bill describes in his book, and that is, the decisions that were made, the moves that were made, and so on, a, gave King Hussein enough confidence that he could send his air force against, and if he got into trouble, to use Bill's words, there would be somebody would come out here and help and help be bailed out.

Dennis Ross: But now the interesting thing here, you said, due to domestic Syrian politics, the Air Force isn't committed. Dick, what's what's going on in Syria at this time? And why does Asaad make the decision? He does and and does the decisions he makes this time he obviously comes to power. He's the head of the air force of time he comes to power later. But is there some impact in his later decisions from this set of decisions that he makes at this juncture?

Richard Murphy: Well, I'd like to suggest that this shows the basic caution that dominated us out and his foreign policy, his military decisions. It didn't hurt in terms of domestic politics that he saved the airforce from getting shut down over Jordan. And it showed up perhaps the recklessness of some Syrian military figures who were sending tanks in. I don't know that firsthand, but I think caution was the watchword for Bashar al-Assad. He showed that five years later, when the question came up of how and should he enter Lebanon, should he send forces to help the Lebanese army and he was very careful to watch the limits that we had laid down relayed from the Israelis at that point in time. So, I think it was, it was typical of Assad. There's great disdain for King Hussein and Jordan, the puppet of England, the creation of England, the puppet of America and Western Imperialism and that, that goes back, I saw that in the early 60's in Syria, and it continued but then when King Hussein showed he could do something militarily, effectively, himself, plus the threats from Israel, from the United States possibly getting involved. It was quite an easy decision to get back out.

Dennis Ross: So I want to this is a, this has been an important preamble, I think, I mean, the the period that is most well known, and the impact that it has on on future peacemaking clearly comes after the war, I want us to get into the '73 War, and it'd be able to discuss it, and all the various elements that have at some length. Bill, I'm going to turn to you, it's clear that when '73 comes, it comes as a great surprise to us, as a great surprise to the Israelis. I wonder if you might get into why it is such a surprise to both of us and spend some time also getting in and describing the kind of what evolves during the course of the war, we clearly have a set of

expectations, if you would describe the President's calculus at the beginning of the war and the expectations. We know during the course of the first week of the war, as an example that the Israelis lose something like five hundred tanks, they lose forty-nine aircraft, they are desperate for resupply, we hold on the resupply, if you'd go through this whole dynamic, the calculus and what unfolds and then the turning points, the various turning points of the war. We want to get into as well, how close we were to a real confrontation with the Soviets but that's enough to sort of launch the discussion on more than enough.

Dr. Bill Quandt: Yeah. In the early part of 1973, a number of interesting things happen and how it was involved in some of them, we actually did begin a political dialogue with the Egyptians and Kissinger in that dialogue said, we'll get to the Middle East issue, but toward the end of the year. Now, the Israelis have elections coming up and you know, we're not ready when since we were still wrapping up odds and ends from Vietnam. So, there was a kind of a commitment that we'll get to your issues, but not right away and I think as time went on, the Egyptians got more and more frustrated that they couldn't somehow get our attention. So, two things happen in the spring of '73, not October. There is a very real looking crisis that starts mobilization on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts, and the Israelis take it seriously and mobilize and the whole thing goes away but at the time, it looked like it was moving toward war. So, when the same things start happening again, in late September, early October, we look at them, and we say, well, they're going through exercises and the Israeli said no, we're not particularly nervous. We've seen this before. What we now know I can't give you much detail on it is, the Israelis had a very high level penetration in the Egyptian government. He happened, interestingly, to be the son-in-law of former President Nasser and they were expecting that if this was real, they would hear from him, which they did on October 5, and he tells them, it's going to be tomorrow, at the end of the day. Based on that, they do their own assessment of what's going on and they conclude that's right, it's going to be the next day. So October 5 is a day when they become aware that war is about to happen. We're watching all the technical things happening and it's looking very serious. Actually, Kissinger is up in New York, talking to the Egyptians. Nixon is in Florida, listening to his tapes to see how bad it's really going to be if they all come out and all of a sudden, I, for tragic reasons involving my good friend and colleague here. He is not able to take charge of the office that day. So, I all of a sudden take charge of the office and say as I leave, if anything happens overnight, call me because it will mean a war is going to start in the Middle East and the next morning at six in the morning, my phone rings and I remember awakening and saying, oh my god, it's for real and it's going to be on my watch. So, I went into the office at about eight o'clock in the morning and shortly thereafter, the war in the Middle East began so we weren't caught by surprise. Not that we didn't see all the signs that it could happen, but we didn't know that it would and the prevailing view, I think, from the President on down was, the Arabs don't have the military clout or potential to attack Israel without getting totally clobbered in return. We had a very, very high regard for Israeli military power. They stopped for good reasons on their performance in the 1967 war and I still remember that when Kissinger came down from New York on that first day, October 6, he was furious. He said, Why didn't the Egyptians Listen to me? I said, I was gonna get to this. They're crazy. The Israelis will be in Cairo tomorrow and they will, I can't understand why this madman Sadat did this. Well, he thought the world would be over in forty-eight hours with a glamorous Israeli victory, but it wasn't

supposed to happen this way.The other thing that's important, from that very first few hours, I have the transcript of a phone conversation, the first one between Kissinger and Nixon, these are all published in something called the foreign relations of the United States, the 1973 War volume has just come out. It's probably the best documented Foreign Affairs crisis that we have now, other than the Cuban Missile Crisis. So on that first day, Kissinger and the President are talking, and they're speculating about why did the war happen? Who started we didn't even know who actually fired the first shots and the President weighs in, he's remember, he's down in Florida and he says, he says to Kissinger, “don't take sides”. His first advice was don't take sides. Otherwise, we're gonna sort of not immediately prejudge who even started the war and so the early moment is, Kissinger being sort of angry that this has happened with an expectation that the Israelis will win very, very quickly, without any need for us to intervene. Now, the next day, very important development takes place that begins to change Kissinger's view of Sadat. He had never met Sadat, Egyptian president, he gets a back channel message, that is a message that doesn't go to the State Department just goes straight to the White House, from Sadat through his National Security Adviser and he basically says, I want you to know why I did this, why we started the war, it's not to defeat Israel. It's because the status quo was intolerable, and we could not get you to do anything through gentle persuasion. We needed to do something dramatic but I want you to know that as much as we will be on opposite sides during the war, when the war is over, we want to work with the United States to solve this once and for all and I am convinced from seeing Henry Kissinger day one and Henry Kissinger day three, that from that moment on he started thinking about the end game. How do we want this to end given that maybe there's a chance that Sadat is somebody we can do diplomacy with. Now he'd done diplomacy with the Russians, with the Chinese, with the Vietnamese, he wasn't looking for an angel, he was looking for somebody who was pragmatic, hard headed, rational and could deliver and so very early on, Kissinger, expresses a judgment and this is like, the third day before the Soviets have started airlifting arms to Israel but at a time when Israel's, to Egypt, sorry, but the Israelis are getting very nervous at this time, because they've taken the heavy losses that Dennis mentions, but we're not yet at the point of immediately responding on a large scale, and Kissinger expresses the view of how this should end. He says the best scenario would be for Israel to push the Egyptians back across the canal but that would entail severe losses. It'd be a big battle, so they probably won't do it. So in the end, we don't want an Arab debacle. That's the second sense. We don't want the Israelis to lose, but we also don't want an Arab debacle and then he goes on and in one sentence, he capsulizes his then state of mind says my assessment is a costly victory for Israel without a disaster is the best that is no disaster on the Arab side, Israelis should win but it should cost them something. It shouldn't be easy and I don't want to see a debacle, a total defeat on the other side. So from that point on, there is an attempt to ensure that this will end in a way that the diplomacy can take off fairly quickly thereafter. I don't want to go on too much longer but the Israeli request for arms becomes a very big and a very controversial part of what happens. Kissinger's view in his memoirs is that once the Soviets started putting arms into Egypt in Syria, which they did on October 10, it was a short delay before we started, the delay, he claims was largely caused by bureaucratic incompetence at the Pentagon. This is not true. Although there, of course, in any big operation, there's some bureaucratic incompetence. What is true is that there was a very concerted effort on October 11 and 12, to get a ceasefire in place, at which point, Kissinger's view was, if the war is about to

end anyway, it's better for us not to launch a big airlift into Israel, with all the implications that would have how we would be perceived on the Arab side, that the war is gonna be over in a day or two and that was based on conversations with the Soviets about a ceasefire, they said they would support it, we would support it but, it didn't work. The initiative failed, and it failed on the 13th of October. On the 13th, Kissinger goes to Nixon and he says to him that the Russians are not showing no restraint, the ceasefire that we thought we could get, is not going to go into effect. So he says to Nixon, we've got to now respond, to Nixon, interestingly, he doesn't have much to say between the beginning of the war and this moment, but on the airlift, he says, as I say, it's got to be the works. That is we've got to send them a lot. What I mean is we're going to get blamed just as much for sending them three planes as for 300. So this is the deadly course I know, that is the airlift to Israel but what I mean Henry is I have no patience with the view that we send in a couple of planes, even though they carry so many tons and so what. So Nixon says, let's do the airlift and let's do it big and that's the beginning of about a 10 day period, where every day the American planes are flying, carrying ammunition, spare parts, in a few cases, tanks, some planes are being flown in. In fact, it doesn't turn the tide of the battle that's already been turned but it changes the psychology for the Israelis. It also probably triggers the Arab oil embargo that may well have happened. Anyway, but it's a very sensitive moment, the relationship between the diplomacy and the arms resupply is quite crucial. And at that point, Kissinger's view is the Israelis can now mount a major offensive that is going to force Sadat to recalculate and they do, they crossed the canal, they start approaching Cairo, they don't get within more than 60 miles of it but then at which point, they basically stop and it's the Russians who finally convinced the Egyptians that it's time to stop the war, otherwise it's going to be it is going to be the debacle and at that point, they invite Kissinger to come to Moscow to negotiate the terms of a ceasefire, which he does partly as delaying tactic. He could have easily talked to Dobrynin in Washington, but he chooses to go to Moscow, he tells the Israelis he's going and he basically says this is coming to an end soon. He negotiates for about 24-36 hours in Moscow. I didn't go on that trip, Hal didn’t go on it but it was dealt with in the U.S.- Soviet context, they reached an agreement called UN resolution 338 and on the way back to Washington, Kissinger stops in Israel, to see Golda Meir, who is not very happy about the UN resolution 338, because Israel's on the verge of encircling the third Egyptian army and capturing or starving them out. So, he arrives with considerable animosity being expressed toward the policy that he's just announced to them, that it's time to stop the ceasefire in place, which is supposed to go into effect almost immediately. So, the Israelis complain, you know, standstill ceasefires don't work and they refer back to August 1970. So, we're not so sure what it even means to have a standstill, ceasefire. So Kissinger says to them, well, she actually I'll quote from Golda Meir, this is on when she's talking to Kissinger in Tel Aviv, “we would have been in a much better position if we'd had a few more days but we can't do that now. We've had a trauma about standstill ceasefires from our August 1970 experience” and then Kissinger tries to explain that he had tried to send a message from Moscow to the Israelis saying that you don't actually have to stop immediately, we'll give you a little bit more time and they say, well, the message never got through. So Kissinger then says, and this is something I don't think he later on would necessarily want revealed, but it's in the transcripts. He says you won't get violent protests. Mind you, the ceasefire was supposed to have gone into effect at this point, Kissinger says you won't get violent protests from Washington. If something happens during the night while I'm flying. In

other words, I've got about a seven hour flight to get home. If you guys use that time to improve your position on the ground, you won't get a big complaint from me. Nothing can happen in Washington until noon tomorrow. In other words, when I get back, the President's not doing anything at this point, but when I get back, then you've got to stop by then and the Prime Minister says, but if they don't stop, we won't and Kissinger says, even if they do, you won't. So this is called the little wink to the Israelis, that go ahead and violate the ceasefire, but not too much. By the time he gets back, they have violated it, they're on the verge of finishing off the Third Army. Sadat is in full panic mode, because his grand strategy is about to collapse and he appeals to the United States and to the Soviet Union, to intervene to enforce UN resolution 338 and the ceasefire and the Soviets come to us and say, That's a good idea. Let's do it and Kissinger says no deal, you don't intervene and we don't intervene. This moment, this becomes a U.S.-Soviet competitive intervention, it changes everything. So, don't even think about it. We'll talk to the Israelis and he gets actually quite annoyed at the Israelis and said, now you've got to stop and you have to allow water and food through to the Egyptian army and if you don't, we'll force you to, he actually gets quite angry at the Israelis. Twenty-four hours earlier, he was urging them to do all this. It's crazy but this is the real world. At that point, Brezhnev sends a message said if you're not prepared to do anything, we will consider taking all measures, including military and that message comes in the evening of October 24, I think it is and in the absence of the President, the National Security Council meets and calls for a stage three nuclear alert, the assumption that the Soviets will notice that we're concerned about their threat and most Americans had no idea when they went to bed that night, what this meant, but a stage three nuclear alert means that everybody in the military is told to go basically to battle stations get ready. If you're a pilot, you get in your B-52 and get ready to either take off and the nuclear weapons are on board. This is like getting ready for nuclear war. It's not imminent, but it's serious. So by the next morning, Americans all over the country were aware that something huge was underway. We hadn't made any public announcement of it and very quickly, the crisis winds down but not without the next morning, the 25th, my last memory and then I promise I'll stop. We did receive a small fragment of intelligence from a communication from Moscow to their embassy in Cairo and it said, troops arrive this afternoon and Kissinger is told this, and he says, Oh my gosh, they're going in and he turns to me and Roy Atherton who happened to be there, he says, you guys figure out where we send our troops in the Middle East if they send theirs, because if they are going in, we also have to go in, but not to Israel, find someplace other than Israel, where we will send our troops and then we'll have some bargaining leverage. They take theirs out, we take ours out. It was a hair raising moment because we could not figure out where those troops might go and very quickly, we discovered, as sometimes you do with intelligence, that it was a fragment of a larger message that said thirty-two uniformed military observers will be arriving in Cairo to observe the ceasefire, which we had agreed to, and we were supposed to send them as well and that's all it was and then the crisis ended and Kissinger's last words on the crisis and this was a pretty nerve wracking few days was we are now, we Americans are now in the catbird seat. I didn't even know what that meant at the time but it's a good place to be, it means you dominate the scene, and he was ready at that point to move from crisis management to diplomacy.

Dennis Ross: Thank you. That sets the stage for us to discuss the diplomacy and how you were on these trips. You were with him helping to shape what would be done. Can you give us a sense of the first meeting that he has with Sadat, I mean, Bill has described how his view of Sadat has basically changed. We'd like to hear about, A, the impact of that meeting, but then get more into the beginnings of diplomacy, the kind of logic that he had in mind, what he was trying to do with it, and what the direction was going to be.

Harold Saunders: I think it's worth just injecting one word of background here among the things that were done around the time after the War of Attrition ended, and so on, there was a brief period in there when the State Department was authorized to pursue with Sadat and with the Israelis, the idea of what we called an interim settlement around the Suez Canal. In other words, there was a move from the idea of the Rogers Plan, which is a package deal, dealing with all issues at once. Most of the day on, the defense minister of Israel had suggested the possibility of a deal to open the canal…

Dennis Ross: Right.

Harold Saunders: Troops, pullback from both sides and so on. That didn't materialize at the time, but there was picked up now and this was in the back of Kissinger's mind moving from the big package deal to interim steps. So, when Kissinger met for the first time with Sadat on the trip, that bill was mentioned, but that took place in early in August, or excuse me, October 1973. At that time, Israeli troops had gone beyond the ceasefire lines. That should have followed from the Resolution 338 and Sadat, in this meeting, where he and Kissinger were alone, according to Kissinger afterward, asked Kissinger to press the Israelis to go back to the, what were called the lines of October 22. That is the formal cease fire lines. They well exceeded that in Egyptian territory and Kissinger, according to his report, after the meeting, says he told Sadat that for me, or us, the United States, to get the Israelis to move back to this East firing lines would cost us as much political capital. I mean, we would be seen to be pressing the Israelis, being seen by the American political community, but to be pressing the Israelis unduly and he said for me to do that would cost as much political capital, as it would, if you would give me two months to arrange the political scene in Washington or an agreement that would get the Israelis back across the canal, and have a much bigger withdrawal, which we could then portray, as the first step toward an overall settlement but that was his formulation, as I remember his reporting. I need time to get the Congress behind us to get the various parts of the administration behind this and, and so on and so that was the, there was a holding pattern.

Dr. Bill Quandt: And Sadat accepts that, yes. Which impresses Kissinger.

Harold Saunders: That's right.

Dr. Bill Quandt: He'd expected haggling. And all of a sudden, Sadat says, Fine, I'll do it.

Harold Saunders: I'll do it now. And then the next thing that happened was, again, back to the Soviet side of all this. It was an agreement to try to arrange a conference on the Middle East in

Geneva, which was to take place in December and so the second chapter in this saga once is private agreement to do an interim deal. Two months, three months hence, then, the Soviets had to be placated by holding this conference in Geneva. The conference was sponsored by the United Nations, and indeed, chaired by the United Nations, and the Soviets and the Americans were sort of the co-chairs or something, some sort of symbolic thing like that. Well, that, that required a couple of more Kissinger trips to the Middle East between October and December, to arrange this and to get all of the Middle Eastern parties lined up and they all came including Palestinian representatives and that was another problem. How do you arrange them who sit who? Who will sit? Have their pictures taken? Sitting next to the Palestinians? Israelis won't? We're not supposed to. And so how do you work that out? That was a minor detail. But the little piece of drama and amusement in the, in the middle, we went to see President Assad in Damascus, and Kissinger presented him with the invitation to this conference in Geneva because everybody, of course, had to agree to the terms of reference for the conference before it happened and Assad, it was read to him, translated from English into Arabic, it was read to him and I saw it listened very, very carefully, very thoughtfully and then he said, to Kissinger, Mr. Secretary, is a very good letter. I agree to everything except the last sentence, the last sentence was acceptance to come. So, I won't be there. So, we have the conference without Syria. That was the formal step. Then in January, having in mind the proposal Kissinger had made to Sadat and his acceptance of it. We floated Cairo with a draft of an agreement in our briefcases that would have, with the proposed Israeli pullback across the canal, Egyptian forces moving forward to a certain point and then there were lines drawn that would create a buffer around the canal, and so on. Sadat looked at this and said to Kissinger, this is perfect, Henry, I want you to stay in the Middle East, until the Israelis will sign it. The shuttles, shuttle diplomacy of the next two years wasn't something that was formally designed as such but it came out of that moment and we did stay for ten days more and lo and behold, we actually got the Israelis to agree to this and that was the first we call, the disengagement agreement. That was really the ostensible purpose of it to pull, pull the troops apart, so that some patrol in the middle of the night wouldn't bump into another one in the desert, and reignite the whole conflict. So that was the first agreement, interim agreement, Sadat preferred another term for it but that was the beginning of shuttle diplomacy and it was accomplished by, the reason for the word shuttle was it, we based ourselves in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. We went from Sadat to Jerusalem, talk to the Israelis about this and they accepted the idea anyway of trying this. It was really not much more than the interim agreement around the canal to open the canal that the State Department had tried before that. So, we went back to Israel and then got their suggestions and so on and flew back to Aswan, in Egypt where Sadat had his winter residence and we'd fly back to Israel and back and forth and we had a dozen journalists on the back of our airplane and they started calling this the shuttle since after the New York to Washington shuttle here, and I forgotten how many round trips there were about fourteen days, so probably at least ten or twelve round trips, and then came down to the point where we had everything agreed, except for I think it was a number of artillery pieces that could be in a certain, certain place and Kissinger got Sadat's tentative agreement, but he had to go back to Israel to get agreement there. He left me behind in Aswan with our ambassador to Egypt, so that we could get word that the Israelis had agreed to the final number then we would take it to Sadat, and that would, be that would be it. While we were sitting in our hotel room and Aswan waiting for this response and from Israel from Tel Aviv.

It didn't come, it didn't come, it didn't come and the only way we could talk to them, we didn't didn't have embassy communications facilities in Aswan. So, we have to do this by telephone but there was no telephone link between Egypt and Israel at the time. So, we had to be on the phone with the operation center in the State Department in Washington and they with the Secretary's party and Israel, the ambassador, and I sat there waiting for this telephone call and finally, we got a message and you know, this is an act of God and all the things that can happen in this complicated situation. It has snowed in Jerusalem, and the Cabinet has not been not been able to gather. So, that finally was overcome and we got the final numbers and the next day, the legal advisor of the State Department had flown over with the signing copies and he and I went to a tent in the desert, kilometer 101, between a Cairo and Suez, which was a UN tent, and that agreement was signed and that was the first disengagement agreement…

Dr Bill Quandt: Signed by the generals, not by the political leaders.

Harold Saunders: That's right. Yeah. Yeah. Agreed by the, by the political authorities, signed by the generals.

Dennis Ross: Yeah, I want to, there's a, there's a disengagement between that, there's a shuttle of thirty-two days, I think, was to produce a disengagement.

Harold Saunders: Thirty-six actually.

Dennis Ross: Sorry, you were saying who's counting but..

Harold Saunders: I was counting the only time in my life I've ever asked whether I could stay on my feet. Twenty-six round trips between Tel-Aviv and…

Dennis Ross: So you actually were counting.

Harold Saunders: You're darn right.

Dennis Ross: But I want to, I want to discuss that shuttle as well and get to talk to Dick as well about the impact of that on Assad. I know it had a big impact on Rubin because I saw it years later, when I was dealing with were being when we were trying to deal with a commitment, that a pocket commitment he gave to us on readiness to was during the Clinton administration to withdraw from the Golan Heights and that shuttle heavily affected his view of Assad and his pragmatism. I want to get to that in a second, though, because I want to, one thing that was raised, and I'd like to get both you and Bill to comment on it, the role of the Soviets. Here, the Soviets have been cut out. If you go back to at least the concept of the Rogers Plan, the Soviets were basically being cut in. In the end, they don't go for it because they can't get Nasser to agree to it but the concept was a kind of almost condominium approach and it sounds as if the Kissinger approach is to keep the Soviets out, but that Nixon, in his mind, given larger, his concept of how it might work, he might have been more open to that. Now, is this one potential

area where there was actually a kind of dissonance in terms of the Nixon view, and the Kissinger review? Or am I reading too much into this?

Harold Saunders: I can only say I never sensed it and we spent a lot of time, as you just said, and I think I would think I would have gotten some sort of snide remarks or something or other from, from Kissinger, if there had been a disagreement. You have to remember at that point, President Nixon was very much preoccupied with domestic problems around Watergate but I think the, the Soviet part of the, of that shuttle is kind of interesting because it revealed to us how Assad, who was getting his arms and everything from the Soviet supposedly serious supporters, and one day Gromyko, Soviet Foreign Minister, had arrived in Damascus while we were meeting with Assad as part of this negotiation and Assad said, Well, you're going to stop by the guesthouse and say, hello to Gromyko, and Kissinger said no, I'm just going to drive by and Asaad was gleeful. He just thought it was the greatest thing that Kissinger was going to snub Gromyko. The relationship there was not all that close at that, at that point.

Dennis Ross: I don't really want to ask what if questions, but I, as long as we have this forum, I'm going to do it anyway. Bill, if there hadn't been the Nixon preoccupation with Watergate, do you think that his view on Middle East diplomacy might have been different in terms of the Soviet role or not?

Dr. Bill Quandt: I think it is true that during October and through the disengagement negotiations, Kissinger was fundamentally in charge, he would get broad lines of guidance from the President and I do think that Nixon's view was a little bit different from his including on, on the Soviet Union on and on the U.S.- Israeli relationship. If you'll indulge me, I read one more excerpt. This is Nixon on October 12. This is just before the decision on the airlift and he's reflecting on a very important event that had happened the previous summer, he had met with Brezhnev at a summit meeting in San Clemente and Brezhnev had said he'd asked for a special meeting late at night, he said, We need to ward off a war that's about as that's coming in the Middle East and he basically tells the Americans that unless something is done, there is going to be an Arab Israeli war, which was true but he didn't, of course, and it's gonna be on October 6, and it's going to happen exactly this way but we kind of brush it off. We don't take it all that seriously. Nixon in the midst of the war, says this to Kissinger, in a phone conversation, he says, “I think we've got to get some way. Look, we've got to face this as far as the Russians are concerned, They have a pretty good beef and so far as everything we've offered on the Mideast, you know what I mean, that meeting in San Clemente, we were stringing them along and they know it. We've got to come off with something on the diplomatic front because if we go for a ceasefire, they'll figure that we will get the ceasefire, then the Israelis will dig in, and we'll back them, as we always have. That's putting it quite bluntly. But you know, it's true, Henry?” And he says, Well, there's a lot to that. Nixon says “they can't be in that position so we've got to be in a position to offer something.” That is we can't expect the Soviets to support a ceasefire, if it means the Israelis are just going to dig in, nothing follows. So we've got to make sure that something will follow on the ceasefire, because there's just says, Well, Nixon says, because we've got to squeeze the Israelis when this is over and the Russians have got to know it. We've got to squeeze them god damn hard and that's the way it's going to be done. But I don't know

how we can get across now in the midst of the war. We told them before we'd squeezed them and we didn't. Kissinger says, Well, we were going to squeeze them. We were going to start diplomacy in November, right after the Israeli elections. It's an interesting little vignette of Nixon wanting to lean forward and being a little sensitive to, the Soviets have a grievance that we've strung them along. Now, whether it would have played out very differently. I don't know but my sense is that detente, meant more to Nixon than it did to Kissinger.

Dennis Ross: Interesting. Let's talk about this, the disengagement with Syria. Why don't you give us again, some of the, your observations on that. And then Dick, I would like to hear from you on the impact of that on Assad, his perception of us, maybe his perception of Rubin, because as I, I will tell you that, the what I said before about that disengagement process had a big impact on Rubin's perception of Assad but I can also tell you, based on a lot of time I spent with Assad, in the first with Baker, and then in the, and then indirect negotiations with him in the 90's. It also had a perception on him of Rubin. Indeed, I was, I was with Assad ten days after the Rubin assassination and he said to me explicitly, that you may think people were rejoicing, were rejoicing here when that happened, we were not and he said, I had a lot of respect for him. So, you know, that respect came from perhaps different periods but I have a suspicion that the, this disengagement process, as difficult as it was, obviously, thirty-six days. Nonetheless, it had, it was a formative experience on both leaders and I'd like to hear from you but then also from you, Dick.

Harold Saunders: Let me begin by saying a word about how Henry conducted these meetings, whether it was between Israel and Egypt or Israel and Syria, he would sit down with, whether it was Sadat or Assad, in this case, Assad and the first half hour of the of the meeting and meetings with Assad were usually about six hours or more. Anyway the first half-hour, Henry would talk about the Israeli negotiating team, individual by individual, if there was some proposal that was then being negotiated, Henry would say, well, so and so took this position, and so and so asked about this, and so on. In an interesting way, today, we might use the word virtual negotiation, but he was really introducing the people on each side to the people on the other side, to the point where it would come down, in fact, well, I suppose Diane won't like this, but, you know, it was an interesting experience in, in mediation and therefore I think Assad, to come back to your point, got, would have gotten a very good feel of people on the other side and of course, the negotiation was tough. As I say, thirty to thirty-six days back and forth. Assad was a very tough negotiator and yet you had this sense that there were serious people having a debate about how to resolve serious issues and I mean, just one little humorous vignette, the final day when Assad said, Well, okay, we, we agree. Kissinger and Assad were walking out of Assad's huge conference room, side by side and Kissinger said, through an interpreter, you know, I've negotiated with a lot of people in my life. Some people walk up to the brink, and look over and step back. You're the only one I've ever met that walks up to the brink, goes over, and hopes he'll catch him on the way down.

Dennis Ross: Dick you spent a lot of time with, with Assad.

Richard Murphy: Many, many hours. First of all, I don't think Kissinger was ever able to go back to the Israelis and say I, I sense this difference within Damascus between General Shahabi and the Foreign Minister and the President, there was one view and it was the President's, how to do it. What he was negotiating all that time, was to get the Israelis back to where they had been before the war. No, not further, not moving deeper into the Golan Heights and yes, Assad was hard as nails and his Kissinger himself said, I got to know every damn rock and bush on the Golan Heights by the time we were finished. That left Assad, certainly with respect for the American effort, and a hope that this was just the first bite and I have never been able to discover when we decided we weren't going again for a further disengagement talk with, with Syria. I thought it was an ongoing, like, it was a likely process it would continue and I think Assad felt that for at least two or three years after he had the first engagement but American attention was focused on Sadat, he was eager. Assad was far from eager, he was very careful, very slow and the Israelis presented their position that they couldn't be expected to negotiate on more than one front at a time and I guess we, those of you back home, accepted that. His view, rather the local comment, I picked up when I called on the Soviet ambassador, I got there in August of '74, paid my first courtesy call on him, he was the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, rather tired having been several years in Damascus and he said, welcome, I'm glad that your relations have been resumed with Syria. Let me just share with you one fact. You have come here thinking this is a Soviet client state. Well, it's true. It's true that Syria accepts everything from Moscow, except advice and that was to me a lesson I've carried over the years and I still think of it today as we continue the fight with the Soviets descendants over Syria.

Sam Lewis: Can I ask you, I want to ask him a question.

Dennis Ross: Please.

Sam Lewis: I'm curious about what you said Dick, about Assad's purpose was always to get the Israelis just back to where they had been before the war. That was his, where it came out…

Richard Murphy: In the first.

Sam Lewis: In the first, first disengagement. That implies the argument that he had lost that territory after having invaded, never made any impact on him. He didn't feel any sense of defeat out of the war. If you don't want to go right back to where you were before, regardless of the fact that you've invaded a country and then lost some territory in the process. Was that his psyche? That didn't count?

Richard Murphy: Well, I think he and Sadat, at one point, certainly before the war, shared the view, this was going to be a political war and we were going to get the attention of the world and particularly of Washington, and get back all of the land back to where it had been before the Six Day War, for all of us.

Sam Lewis: Yeah.

Richard Murphy: And Sadat committed treason. Sadat betrayed us, he betrayed the Arabs, because the only way we would have gotten to that point was to have Arab unity maintained throughout in its talks with Israel.

Sam Lewis: Okay.

Dr. Bill Quandt: Just technically, he did make a slight gain, he got Quneitra, one major Arab city, on the Golan Heights had been on, under Israeli control from 1967 on, and he got Quneitra back and that a lot of the negotiating precisely about Quneitra, and that would be inside the demilitarized zone, and so forth. So, symbolically got that much.

Harold Saunders: And it was symbolic, if you had, we flew up a helicopter to Golan Heights to see where the lines might be drawn during the negotiation and Quneitra was a, I don't want to say anything disparaging about anything, but it wasn't very much of a town and there wasn't very much of it left. It was a symbolic bit of territory.

Richard Murphy: The signs were posted all over the Quneitra for years to come about how civilization had triumphed and evil had been pushed back and here are the open tombs that the Israelis desecrated, looking for weapons in the tombs and all of that was part of the…

Harold Saunders: Just one little vignette of the kind of thing that can go on in the shuttle like this. Because the Israelis were trying not to move that line through Quneitra, 300 yards of it or whatever it was. In the Israeli end of these negotiations, Kissinger would say, well, give me a map and show me where you want the line so, we can talk about it. Well, we don't have a map and for several days, they didn't have a map. Well, one of the things you learn as a mediator is that you're, you're peculiarly naked. We never controlled that territory, we never set foot on it before but we did have satellite photography and so finally, at the fourth day, when Israelis refused to give Henry a map, he turned to me and put his hand out. So, I pulled out the aerial photograph from my briefcase. He said, okay, we have a map. So, it's just an example of how knowledge is power and if you can generate that kind of knowledge, as a mediator, you've got a lot going for you and that's what the United States of America has the capacity to do and I don't think many other governments in the world can do that.

Dennis Ross: Absolutely. Nixon does go to the Middle East. He stops in Egypt. We, I know there's a clip, they started to run a little bit before. Do you want to run that clip now of Walter Cronkite?

Walter Cronkite: Evening, President Nixon came to Egypt today to a very warm welcome from President Anwar Sadat, back there on the balcony of the official Guest House Kuba Palace but perhaps, the more important reception for the President was in the streets of Cairo. Egyptian security authorities estimated there were two million people along the southern mile route of the motorcade that brought the presidents of the United States and Egypt in from the airport. Buses and trucks have brought many of them from their factory jobs but whether they were recruited or not, there seemed to be no mistaking the genuineness of their welcome. They said it was the

greatest crowd here since the funeral of Gamal Nasser. That sad occasion marked the end of one era. This one seemed to be a celebration of the beginning of a new Egyptian era, as much as a welcome for the man they clearly credit with making it possible, one of the many signs that the Egyptians of October ‘73 hail Nixon. That's the significance of this trip for the Arab world, a cache from the President of the United States. Here they consider themselves victor in that October war. They see this presidential visit as the seal on that victory. From some of us older correspondents who once were cheered down the avenues of Europe as American liberators, this was a refreshment of a memory, of strange and wonderful feeling to once again hear cheers for America as the peacemaker. This trip was contrived as some have suggested primarily for domestic political purposes. It still must have been heavy stuff for a president on receives at home and it may redouble his determination to stick a temporary peace as Secretary of State has forged. A man of honor, a man of peace, the sign said, you have our confidence in American understanding, American friendship. The two Presidents of Egypt and the United States meeting together, we cement the foundations of a new relationship, a new relationship between two great peoples, two great peoples who will dedicate themselves in the future, to working together for great causes.

Dennis Ross: Sam, I want to turn to you, because I want to sort of use that as a point of departure. Whatever the purposes of the trip, it's interesting that the, as Walter Cronkite says, you know, here's an image that the U.S. has in there now as a peacemaker. Our discussion so far, I think, has focused a lot about the launching of a process. This was a, a process that Kissinger became uniquely identified with, how you laid out sort of the genesis of it. Historically, it's been looked back on and described as a kind of incremental approach to peacemaking, not a kind of comprehensive approach to peacemaking step-by-step approach to peacemaking there are, there can be alternative models in terms of approaches to peace, step-by-step versus peacemaking, versus the more comprehensive. When you take a look at this now, I mean, what do you, what do you make of it? How do you think of these respective models? Do you think the models are pretty much dependent upon the circumstances? Or do you think there's one that's superior to the other?

Sam Lewis: Well, I think they're both quite valid models, depending on the circumstances, I think it's probably, as was demonstrated by the failure of the Rogers Plan, you had to start and first to get some degree of trust in the mediator as well as some degree of confidence with the adversary and that had to be done, I think, incrementally the way it started, the way it evolved and Henry was uniquely accepted as a mediator because of the style he had achieved with both parties and even with those who didn't play the Jordanians as it turned out. By the time the Nixon-Ford era ended, even Henry Kissinger was pretty well convinced, as the experts all were, it's hard to know how to go further on this road. We've got two agreements with Egypt, have one with Syria, the one with Jordan didn't work for perhaps mistaken reasons but it's hard to see what another slice would achieve and had the Nixon administration or the Ford administration continued, I suspect that they would have moved to try a comprehensive approach but also, Jimmy Carter took office in ‘77, having been steeped in a concept that the Brookings administration report had produced and also his own instincts, that what was needed now certainly was a more comprehensive peacemakers approach toward the region, no longer

looking at little pieces of it and, and concentrating on the big power relationships to help you achieve them but to go at all the parties with a package that had been pre-cooked in advance, more or less and then endorsed by the international community and also, Carter had a preoccupation with the problem making peace in the Middle East per se. It wasn't just about U.S. interests, although certainly he had that concept but peace was a real value, real peace for everybody and his whole instinct was to try for a much bigger comprehensive solution and he launched it immediately on taking office. There were some things said about the previous administrations which weren't very complimentary, and certainly probably unfair. But I don't think that there's any much argument that more incrementalism would probably not have gotten you very far at that moment.

Harold Saunders: Could I offer, I agree one hundred percent, and what Sam says, but I'd like to add a nuanced, sometime around the time of the first shuttle that is the January 1974 agreement between you, Egypt and Israel. We on Kissinger's airplane, were using the phrase negotiating process to describe what we were doing. The idea was that one mediated or negotiated agreement would be placed on top of another on top of another. That's why the journalists on the plane called it, step-by-step diplomacy and it was an incremental approach at that earlier stage that Sam is talking about but we we did realize, after that first agreement, that something happened across the Middle East, especially in Egypt, in Israel, but more broadly, and it certainly was added to by the Syrian disengagement and what happened was, people more broadly began to ask is something changing? Is peace possible? And I remember arriving in Tel Aviv, when President Nixon when I went there, in June of ‘74 and as our motorcade was pulling out of Ben Gurion Airport, there was an array of newspaper stands along the side of the road. I remember looking out of the window, at an English language newspaper, on the side of the road and the headline in big letters was, ‘is peace possible’. Now, you put your mind back into that period of time. The fact that anybody would ask the question was interesting, but there it was and we just started, it started the call and what we are doing, not the negotiating process, but the peace process, and that's where that phrase was born and it gave, I think, but I bring I come back to Sam's point, because even at the beginning of the Carter administration, there was a sense that you had to proceed very carefully, incrementally and so on, the objective could be, as you said, but the the idea of building trust, and building on it, and so on, I think, became very important. It's almost a theology.

Sam Lewis: Let me, let me touch on another point, Dennis, that I think is crucial, because the choice of vote also has to do with what leadership's you deal with. I think historic perspective would say that the great upheaval in Israeli political life, it took place in 1977. The Labour Party which had been in power since the beginning of the State of Israel, was thrown out. Menachem Begin and the Likud party took power. This coincided with Carter's launching of this new comprehensive approach, which would involve serious negotiation with all the key parties before you get them together in a conference and Carter, I think initially did not understand what that upheaval in Israel meant. If you still had had Robin, and Perez, and Alone, and Diane, etc. in the government, when the Carter administration took office, it seems to me there was a much better chance that the Israelis could have been brought to a comprehensive peace settlement ultimately, would have been very tough but they were that party and its leadership was in

business to make peace for territory. Menachem Begin came in with an entirely different view, avoiding war, because people thought he was going to be a warmonger. He wanted very much to demonstrate he wasn't for war and he saw Egypt as the key to avoiding war that was where the real threat was in his mind. He would never in a million years have agreed to give up territory in the West Bank, ideologically for him, it was part of Israel and his entire career and those of his successors in the Likud, have demonstrated, no matter how good our formulas have been, no matter how many times you've met with him, and I've met with him and others have met with the instinct to hang on to at least large chunks of Judea and Samaria, ancient Israel, and the security high spots overwhelm any feeling of insecurity about making peace and I must say that, Begin was a different kind of leader for Israel. It took us a while to figure that out but he did want to make, make peace with Egypt and Sadat was ready to make peace with Israel. So, that concept what's right, can determine whether you go comprehensive, or incrementally. Carter started out thinking it was all right and he tried for several months and ran aground over the, partly over the fact that Syria wasn't going to allow anything to happen unless they were part of it because they didn't trust the Egyptians either not to make a, make a separate deal and by the time he got it ran aground, Sadat was worried he was going to lose his chance, secret diplomacy, bilateral diplomacy without us, told both begun and Sadat, there is a deal here that we might be able to make and they were going to pursue that and Carter came to realize it, much to the dismay, I might say if Hal and others in Washington who didn't want to give up the concept, Carter had started with and tried always to keep inserting it back into the equation and therefore the Camp David agreement is ambiguous about a lot of things in order to remain alive with that option of some peace over the West Bank. Gaza was never the central issue. So, I think it's all about what leaders you have at the moment, what they're prepared to deal with and whether it is conceivable to make a comprehensive approach, real in light of those leadership, attitudes, and the skills of the mediators or whether you settle for what you can and Camp David was we settled for what we could at Camp David one, and got a good promissory note on the West Bank, which we tried to cash, but in retrospect, was never going to be cacheable not with the Begin administration, or its successors.

Dennis Ross: Because we're really not here to talk about the Carter or subsequent administrations but I think we have had a pretty good discussion on the kind of scope and logic of, of the Nixon years as it relates to this issue. Maybe we can wrap up by getting from each of you your own kind of concluding thoughts about the implications of those years for, for peace more generally, in the region and just your own sense of what the character that diplomacy reveals about diplomacy in general.

Harold Saunders: I would start by saying I think the, the shuttles go back to the Nixon period, Representative unique form of diplomacy in the modern world. That kind of active mediation made possible by modern technology, at that time, modern technology meant you had an airplane that you could fly back and forth, from Xerox machine on the plane, which parenthetically, when the plane was in a long approach, going into the Egypt, for instance, and was tilted like this, the Xerox machine only printed on one side of the paper, because the toner ran to one side, so, so much, so much for technology, but of the day. My first point, though, is I think that I went said to a secretary on the plane who, after a particularly vigorous flight of

retyping, texts and stuff, she was about ready to collapse. I said, Chris, the only consolation you have is that this thing, no other government in the world could do this and it was true. Tell from my body language and tone of voice that we felt we were involved in something powerful, and I think it was at the time and it was a new form of diplomacy and I'll voice one more thought which gets outside the Nixon period, but begins there, and that is that one looks at the missed opportunities since Camp David and the Egyptian Israeli peace treaty. I think they were that the peace process was not picked up in the Reagan administration. That's one of the great tragedies of the last 30 years in this particular subject to my mind. So I think a powerful base was made in the Nixon administration and one of the marvels to me was that when Carter came in, with Secretary Vance, we didn't skip a step. We were on a plane to the Middle East, three weeks after Carter's inauguration. We never wrote a briefing paper for Cyrus Vance. To bring him up to date he was up to date and the only papers we wrote were, what can we do next? So that was a marvelous, another marvelous example of how change of administrations even across party lines for something as serious as this, had nothing to do with, with that. We picked up the Nixon, Kissinger put forward policy and went right on with it and that's I mean, we ended up at Camp David, because we ended up not being able to do something else.

Dennis Ross: Bill.

Dr. Bill Quandt: I think what, what impressed me watching this policymaking in the Nixon Kissinger period up close, is that the policies of the first several years of the Nixon administration toward the Middle East, struck me at the time and strike me now as having missed opportunities. They could have done more with Sadat, once he had come to power and the interim canal issue was on offer, back channel diplomacy, expulsion. So looking back on that period, we made a lot of mistakes, by misunderstanding the regional context, we didn't know what Sadat was up to. Kissinger's genius and I think Nixon's in the midst of this crisis, which is a very serious crisis, October '73 War was to correctly read the tea leaves helped along by Sadat's is communicating to us but it would have been very easy to say, this guy has deceived us, he's launched a war against the Israelis, why should we believe anything he's saying to us now, but they actually made a very quick and probably rather instinctive judgment, that Sadat is somebody we may be able to work with and therefore, every step over the next twenty, some odd days, was geared toward reaching an outcome, that would be a basis from which you could launch diplomacy. So, crises are going to happen in the world. The question is whether you can have an American foreign policy team that is well equipped to see, as Nixon used to say, the opportunity that lies within every crisis is not an unquestioning fan of Richard Nixon but on that point, he was quite right that things get shaken up in the midst of crises and if you can exercise real leadership, you can then shape what comes next and I think that Kissinger backed by Nixon did that very well in October. The other lesson I would draw from this whole period, is that America can do peacemaking in a place like the Middle East well, when at the very, very highest level, which means the President and Secretary of State, they genuinely believe that there are American national interests at stake. This is not just doing it because, you know, it's a nice thing to help people make peace, there was a real sense of why we're doing this, we had an oil embargo, we'd practically been on a nuclear alert. This was a war that was not supposed to have happened and it didn't turn out the way we had expected. So, there was a very strong

sense, we don't want this to happen again and that carried over certainly into the Carter administration. When I was, again, back in government, we knew why Middle East peace mattered and it wasn't missionary work. It wasn't because we were, you know, just going to help the locals solve this little quarrel they had, we had a real sense that this mattered to us. So, I would say that if you want to succeed in this business, make sure you've got a president with a Kissinger like figure ready to work his team to the bones, and then make sure that the American public understands we're doing this because it matters to the United States.

Dennis Ross: Sam?

Sam Lewis: Well, I think everything Bill has said I would endorse, I do think that we've spoiled both Israelis, the Palestinians, and maybe the rest of the Arabs. To think that diplomacy is only effective when the President or the Secretary of State are doing it, we've had a lot of special emissaries, including you, Dennis and unfortunately, both the Israelis in particular and I think the Arabs don't take special emissaries very seriously anymore, because they've had the experience of seeing what happens when there is that sort of high level team commitment and engagement and commitment of time and energy, even maybe to the exclusion of other crises. That has been productive at moments in the past. Now, we, the formula no longer works. You can use special emissaries quite well to negotiate and support and help work out logistics and all the rest but that doesn't ever get the job all the way done and won't and I think in a way it's too bad because our presidents and our Secretaries of State have an entire world to worry about and it's a tough world, it's getting tougher, not easier. So, the how much the Middle East can claim legitimately, of the daily and commitment to thirty-two day shuttles of secretaries of state is problematic. Right now, for example, we have an Iran crisis and that is the crisis as far as the Israelis are concerned, it's not the Palestinians and it may be the crisis also more for some of the Arabs as well. We also have the residue of a war in Iraq, and then Syria that we don't know where in the world it's going, how you launch a new administration, or a second term administration into this, in a way that will give you the sense of focus, to produce another major step forward in peacemaking between the Palestinians and the Israelis, when the local leaders have problematic domestic fronts, can't guarantee the support of their own people for a deal if they make one and don't have the leadership skills necessary or the commitment may be to seek it. I think this is the real dilemma for the next administration, whether it's Republican or Democratic, because I think at this moment, the problem is not in Washington. The problem is in those leadership groups, and the time is not ripe. So that I think our presidents will have plenty of time to work on other issues, and Iran may be the first one.

Richard Murphy: Well, pick up on the very last point about the crisis that is Iran. I asked would it be that size crisis today, if we had not gone along with the so, heavily with the Egyptian Israeli piece and put the other pieces aside? President Nixon reopened doors all over the Arab world and he left office with respect in the Arab world as Eisenhower had done from the time of Suez but we were in a sense, seduced by the attractions of an Egyptian-Israeli agreement. Assad goes off and establishes himself as the leader of the steadfastness and Resistance Front. The Palestinians fight among each other, and the whole situation becomes more, more complex, more difficult to work with, and willing players like Iran step in. So I ended up wondering what

would have happened if he, if President Nixon had not left office the day after he signed my letters of credence to go to Damascus.

Dennis Ross: Well, it clearly has a correlation between that signature deck and what's happened afterwards but I'll wrap it up, I guess a few obstacles at first, I, I think that the this is an extraordinary collection of people, which we knew at the outset, given the combination of experiences and, and the insights that you collectively have drawn from those experiences. I think what does stand out for me as someone who also took part in in shuttle diplomacy is that there was a diplomatic art form that was created by Henry Kissinger, but because you also had a president, who very much invested in this and so that creates a kind of a frame for action to begin with. I do also think that the notion that out of crises come opportunities, it's almost by definition, that that's the case, because the crises, shake up the landscape. I come from California, so the earthquake metaphor is one that's often in my mind. The one thing you know about earthquakes is that the land is going to resettle and you also have to act before it has resettled and so here again, you had the sense of a recognition that there was a moment I mean, if there is something in diplomacy that I've often myself have written about. I've often said that, you know, just as in in real estate, its location, location, location, in diplomacy, its timing, because timing creates particular moments and if you don't act on those moments, and you lose them, one of the things you find is that you may be worse off than if you hadn't had the moment at all, if you fail to take advantage of it. I think there's no doubt that in the history of Middle East diplomacy, there are certainly missed opportunities and there's a lot of different reasons for why you miss the opportunities. I do think that when you look at where we are today context matters enormously. The, many of the Arab leaders are either preoccupied with their own internal situations, which I think is going to continue to be a hallmark of the region for some time to come. Those who are not completely riveted on their internal situations are few and far between and even those there are some who are focused on Iran at the same time. So getting attention on, on the, on the peace issue is not going to be such a simple proposition, either in the region, or here and one of the things that you need is not only the ability to see the stakes from here and apply the leadership from here, but you also need leaders out there who are prepared to take steps and that also shapes the context that one can say, to some extent, sometimes we have the ability to influence that but I think we also have to have a certain degree of humility, about what we can do and when we can do it and if there was ever a time for humility as it relates to the Middle East as a whole, now is it. Since nobody predicted the upheaval that we've seen, now to, to, to hear from those who would claim that they know exactly what's going to happen, I think invites some degree of skepticism but I do think that if, in a, in an era of upheaval, and uncertainty, and crisis, one thing that's needed is leader Is who have the ability to look at the situation and understand it and usually what's required for that is to have people like yourselves who are there to help them to understand it. So, I want to thank you for helping all of us understand what was done during this period and for, I think, giving some insight into these five years of Middle East diplomacy. Thank you.

Robert C. McFarlane: Ladies and gentlemen, I think you've been treated to a visit, looking back to one of the most important moments in our history in the Middle East. I think each of the panelists have made points that are unique, authoritative, based upon their own standing as

advisors at the hand of the President, Secretary of State. I think as I look back on that period, having been in the White House at the time, what stands out for me is that the President came to office with a foundation knowledge of the stakes involved in the Middle East, that is, for all of humankind. Yes, United States had important interests and they weren't simply the flow of oil, we hadn't even become truly aware of our own vulnerability in that domain at that point. President Nixon came to office with an understanding that to be able to contribute usefully to forging greater stability, you had to be credible on both sides of the equation and indeed, in his campaign he saw a very unpolitical standard for how he would approach the Middle East by saying that we must engage and understand Arab interest in the interest of Israel, and to be able to maintain credibility with both parties. If ever were to contribute usefully toward if not reconciliation, at least a modus vivendi peacefully would be hard to imagine today, a presidential candidate with the courage to say we will not take sides as Bill Quant underscored and finally, I would say that when you look back on those years of tumult period of less than six years time in which with the Soviet Union, the first important nuclear arms control agreement was reached. With China, that historic reopening that has prospered enormously in the years since. With Vietnam forging a negotiation that brought an end to the war and ultimately a better future and finally, in the Middle East, establishment of a process that has been carried forward to historic milestones of peace there that offer hope for continuity in the years ahead, that a president truly under great duress could have the presence of mind, the vision, the leadership skills to manage this process, while concurrently achieving some of the most important experiences or results in the last half of the 20th century and U.S. Soviet relations in an opening to China and ending the Vietnam War and the Capstone discussed here today is a measure of the skills vision leadership, former President Nixon. Thank you all for being here.