

President Nixon's Transformation of the National Security Council

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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David Ferriero: Good morning. Welcome to the National Archives. I'm David Ferriero, the Archivist of the United States and it's a pleasure to have you here with us this morning for another of our Nixon legacy forums, and a special welcome to our C-span viewers. This is the 28th of these Nixon legacy forums in which the Nixon administration alum, sit down and talk about what it was actually like to be there to work on the programs and policies President Nixon proposed. And it's a real gift to have these men and women share their memories to add to the documentation which the National Archives holds. These are the people who worked on and wrote that documentation, and having them relive those days only enhances our understanding and appreciation for those years between 1969 and 1974. So near, and yet so far. These are the kinds of memories that help explain the how, the why, and the way things really happened. These are the kinds of details that amplify and illuminate the millions of documents and thousands of hours of tapes that we have at the Nixon library. The audio and video and transcripts of these Nixon legacy forms play a vital and virtually unique part in the oral history that is available to scholars and citizens who want to learn more about our 37th President and his administration, and they're available online and at the library at Yorba Linda.

Speaking of Yorba Linda, the National Archives and the Nixon Foundation are beginning the long overdue process of moving the library there into the 21st century. Most presidential libraries are renovated at least in part every several years in order to take advantage of the exciting new opportunities available thanks to digital and interactive technologies. With the exception of the Watergate exhibit that opened in 2011, this will be the first renovation of the Nixon library since it opened 23 years ago. As splendid as it is, it's time for an update and we expect it will begin later this year.

Most of the Nixon legacy forums so far have dealt with President Nixon's domestic policies, from the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency and desegregating the southern schools to taking the bite out of organized crime and overturning almost a century of federal policy in order to guarantee the integrity and rights of American Indians. In May 2011, a forum considered Richard Nixon as Cold War strategist. And the year later, the forum looked at Richard Nixon and the geopolitics of the Middle East. But today's forum marks a new direction. Now in addition to his domestic legacy, the forms will also examine President Nixon's foreign policy. Today, we'll begin at the beginning by examining President Nixon's new and unique National Security Council, under its new and very unique director, Dr. Henry Kissinger.

It's my pleasure to introduce Geoff Shepard, who was the founder of the Nixon legacy forums. Geoff is a graduate of President Nixon's alma mater, Whittier College and Harvard Law School, came to

Washington as a White House fellow assigned to Paul Volcker at the Treasury Department, and then moved to the White House to join John Ehrlichman as an Associate Director of the Domestic Council.

Geoff Shepard: Thank you very much, David. It's a pleasure to be here this morning and welcome you also, on behalf of the Richard Nixon Foundation, as David said, We co-sponsor these Nixon legacy forums, and they, they amount to group oral histories and we make the comparison to the Civil War. We have all our records, David has them of the Civil War. But well, we don't have our taped interviews with the participants and the generals and the soldiers, asking them why and how they did certain things. And we have the opportunity to do that with the Nixon administration, because by and large, the staffs were quite young. So here we are 40 years later, and we're still walking, talking and carrying on. So we're going to, we're going to talk today, and this is our 27th or 28th forum.

We're going to talk today about the structure of the NSC. And this set, this particular forum goes hand in hand with the transformation of the Bureau, the budget and OMB and the creation of the domestic Council. This is the consolidation of policy making power into the White House itself. And we call it the Executive Office of the President because it wasn't the White House staff. These are separately budgeted organizations in the Executive Office of the President. We have with us today and we're very, very fortunate to have KT McFarland, who's going to be our moderator. KT is uniquely qualified to moderate the foreign policy forums. Because she started really early. As a second semester freshman at George Washington University, needing to work her way through school, she joined the night typing pool in the West Wing for the NSC. And recognizing the treasurer they had over time, she increased in importance since and she became a spokesperson and then served on President Ford's and President Nixon's force. And then back again, under President Reagan in between she went to Oxford, got a master's degree, and completed all of her coursework for a PhD at MIT, but was called back to serve under President Reagan. And today she's, of course, Fox's national security analyst. So with that as an introduction, KT, welcome, and the show is yours. Nice to see you.

KT McFarland: It was great starting my life as a career as a clerk typist, and for women of my age. That was how you started things. I wanted to talk, this is as Geoff has said, this is probably going to be the first in a several part series of the innovations and bureaucratic breakthroughs and how they changed the world in the Nixon administration, particularly Henry Kissinger's National Security Council. It was a particularly fruitful time in American foreign policy. There was the Vietnam peace agreement, the rapprochement with China, arms control agreements with Russia, and then finally, the shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East, leading to the first Middle East peace agreements in probably 2000 years. But what gets lost in this amazing and dazzling series of successes is how President Nixon and his very able foreign policy adviser National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, transformed the national security decision making structure on the very first day of the administration. These innovations, then lay the groundwork and the foundation for all the successes they were able to achieve in the Nixon presidency.

Now, at first glance, you know, you would say, Well, what is all that have to do you know, the structure that's more about good housekeeping than it is brilliant foreign policymaking. But both Nixon and Kissinger, because of their previous experiences, they realized that, as Nixon said, a successful foreign policy, the key to it is the decision making process. And so both Nixon and Kissinger devoted considerable time by themselves and together discussing how they wanted to structure the National Security Council staff, Nixon had learned firsthand about the importance of a good org chart when he

was Eisenhower's Vice President. Eisenhower's White House structure was more likely Army General Staff than in previous administrations given Eisenhower had just come off the job as supreme allied commander during World War II. What happened during the Eisenhower administration is that it allowed Eisenhower this structure to deal with the day to day crises as well as to devote more time to strategic planning. Even so, in his memoirs, Richard Nixon, complained that a lot of Eisenhower's time was wasted on long meetings. And Nixon because of his own personal preference, to do things on paper and not in person, and in the interest of efficiency, wanted to get briefings and presentations and the decision making process through memoranda rather than meetings. Also the other shortcoming of the Eisenhower system was because it was the military, a lot of the decisions were made at a much lower level. So by the time the boss got the decision, it was a yes or no as opposed to Option A, B or C. Kissinger arrived from a different set of a different place. He was an outside consultant to the Kennedy and Johnson administration. And he saw firsthand the weakness of their foreign policy decision making processes, he thought that Kennedy had functioned more as his administration and then later Johnson was more of an ad hoc crisis management dealing with the crisis of the day and had less time to devote to, to strategic decision makings. And at the end of the Johnson administration, a lot of their decisions were made by a few people at a regular Tuesday luncheon, because Johnson at that point, during the end of the Vietnam War, was afraid of leaks. So together, Kissinger and Nixon, from the very beginning, reformed the national security structure.

Now, when you talk when people talk about the National Security Council, it's important to make a distinction. The National Security Council is something mandated by law and the National Security Act of 1947. And there are four members to the National Security Council: the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense; they're voting members, it's sort of like a Supra cabinet. But the National Security Council staff, which is what most people refer to when they say National Security Council, is in fact the staffers who prepare the documents for that top level group. In Nixon's book, he said Eisenhower made the selection of John Foster Dulles as his secretary of state because he wanted Dulles to be the chief foreign policy decision maker. But Nixon said from the outset, he, Nixon, wanted to have foreign policy directed from the White House. Now, in his book, *The White House Years*, Kissinger describes that Johnson administration process that I talked about, where it was no central focus, that there was not a lot of preparation of staff work, and often decisions were made more or less on the fly. And as a result, as Kissinger says, that the administration became hostage and prisoners to the events of the day, and were not able to really formulate and see strategically how they might develop things.

Well, Kissinger and Nixon didn't do it all alone, despite what their memoirs might say. The guys who helped them with it and carried it out are in front of you. So joining us today are the men who made it happen. Richard Allen, raise your hand so we know who you are, okay, was a nationally recognized scholar at Stanford University's Hoover Institution when Richard Nixon tapped him to coordinate foreign policy issues for the 1968 Nixon Presidential campaign. And then once Nixon became president, Richard Allen became the deputy director of the National Security Council. John Lehman, sitting next to him, was a brilliant young defense analyst when he joined Dick Allen on Nixon campaign staff in 1968. Once Nixon took office, Lehman became the National Security Council staff head of Legislative Affairs and had to manage the often very testy relationships between the White House and Congress, particularly during the Vietnam War. And if I can put a personal note, John Lehman routinely gave Henry Kissinger headaches for his exploits, notably in the gossip columns of the day as one of the most eligible bachelors in the Nixon administration. A role with Henry Kissinger saw more of himself in that

role. Then returning to Winston Lord; Nixon distrusted most bureaucracies particularly State Department, Foreign Service officers, but Winston Lord was probably one of the few exceptions. He was a State Department Foreign Service officer. He was in the Pentagon analysis for a policy planning shop, and he joined Henry Kissinger's NSC staff at the very beginning, and probably became Henry Kissinger's closest associate throughout the administration. Winston Lord worked on everything from the Vietnam peace negotiations to the other major foreign policy issues. And particularly opening to China was created really in that office when Winston Lord would run into Henry Kissinger's office several times a day, talking about the opening to China. Winston helped plan and was part of the secret trip to, Kissinger secret trip to China in July '71. And he was then central to the implementation of that opening throughout Winston accompanied Nixon and Kissinger on every one of their China trips. He later became the ambassador to China, and was also Kissinger's right hand man, not only in speeches that dealt with everything from the Middle East, to Vietnam, to China, to Asia to Russia, but also as a close personal confidant throughout. And finally Bud MacFarlane. Bud was a Vietnam veteran, a Marine Corps officer. He came to Kissinger staff in 1971, initially as a White House fellow, and then as the military liaison, but like Winston Lord, Bud MacFarlane's brief quickly expanded behind beyond just the military issues of the day, he became instrumental in the arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union, and then the shuttle diplomacy after the October 1973 War, which resulted in the in the peace agreements of the time. So with that, I would like to move chairs to here and talk to these gentlemen about their recollections and remembrances and the good points and the bad points of how they changed the world. I would like to start, Dick, with you, because you were the guy with Nixon from the very beginning. You were his sounding board throughout his campaign, Nixon obviously, given a lot of thought to these issues. What prompted him to want to change the NSC system?

Richard Allen: His experience, as you noted, as Vice President was informed how he would structure things as president. His personality was such that he insisted on planning, spent hours and hours and hours reading, mostly reading, some writing, and lots of travel before he became president. He had the opportunity to see American foreign policy in disarray. And he thought that all of the elements of national power should be brought together under the rubric of national security. It's not just foreign policy or particular policy toward an agglomeration of states, but its military power, its economic power. It's our position in the world it's even down to and including information, how we presented ourselves in the world, we once had a USIA, for example, which did a fairly efficient job, although highly criticized, Nixon was critical of us, he wanted to reform it, put Frank Shakespeare in charge of, a CBS executive. So his idea was a comprehensive national security strategy, harnessing all of the components. And in order to do that, he spent hours and hours and hours of the time that I knew him, there was a long time. And then as president, and in the transition period, charged Kissinger, very specifically, and us with doing just what he wanted to do, organize it, bring decision making back into the White House where it properly belongs.

KT McFarland: So this was between Richard Nixon getting elected in November of 1968. And taking the oath of office in January of 1969. So at that period of time was when you crafted this whole new system?

Richard Allen: Yes. It was very specifically his wishes that were implemented in the structure that followed.

KT McFarland: Alright, well, John, let me ask you, and how was it codified? Now, it's one thing to have the meetings and say, "We're going to do that", "We're going to have everything in the White House." But were there pieces of paper? What was the system that then established this? Because if the White House is going to control foreign policy decision making, what does the State Department, Defense Department, CIA, and everybody else think about it?

John Lehman: Well, I don't think the views of the institutions and the Cabinet agencies were particularly sought after from the beginning. And, and part of it, you know, if you read President Nixon's biographies, he was so battered by the Washington establishment during his years in the Congress and as Senator because he was really viewed as an outsider, and particularly going after Alger Hiss was just thought to be an unforgivable sin. So he was not particularly trusting of the bureaucracy. And so he had a very small group. And Winston was one of the leaders along with Dick during the, during the lead up to it in putting together the framework, and then having more experienced legal counsels, and so forth, put the words together to provide the actual framework, but the agencies weren't asked until it was all baked.

KT McFarland: Okay, now there's something called and we've seen in the archives in the documents, something called an "NSSM's" and "NSDM's" they're national security study memoranda, which are like briefing papers, which would be prepared by the agencies and then sent to the President. And then there were also national security decision memorandums whereby the President was making a decision, this is how we wanted to go forward, that you were you were part of the group that you and Winston, all of you, and chime in, by the way, as your roles are more prominent or less prominent, the national security decision memorandum number two was the one that created this different structure, which in effect, put Henry Kissinger in charge.

Richard Allen: Yes, that was the codification of everything that he wanted. And as a result of discussions during the transition, and his own thinking, that's exactly what we've written down, and that's what he approved. You'll note on the memorandum, it was approved, or you can see it on the memorandum that it was approved without any other commentary on the side, no penciled notes on the outside, no modifications. And it was because he had earlier drafts presented to him before he got the final draft.

KT McFarlane: Clean copy in the final analysis. Okay, Winston, jump in with it, because why and how is this so much different than it had been before?

Winston Lord: First of all, during this period up at the Pierre Hotel in December '68. Kissinger worked with General Goodpaster, who had work for Eisenhower, to get his views on how the system should work because Eisenhower had his own system, as well as my boss at the time in the Pentagon, who was then taken over to the NSC, Mort Halperin, and Dick Allen and others also contributed. The key thing about this new system that we're looking at is who chairs the committees. If you chair a committee, you set the agenda, you run the show, you make sure how it's implemented. And so the big distinction from previous administrations were, in effect, the national security adviser was chairing all the key committees. There were six basic committees, one for general foreign policy problems, one for

crisis that would advise, a defense program committee which related defense to foreign policy issues, a verification panel which looked at arms control, and then to intelligence committees, one for intelligence policy and one for clandestine operations. Everyone of those was chaired by Henry Kissinger.

Now we should add that there were two things they were trying to accomplish, this was Nixon driving this, as you said, one, you wanted some form of structure where every agency had a chance to get their views and even though the White House was dominating, and he wanted real options. The other thing about this system that was different is that Nixon genuinely wanted different policy recommendations in which agencies supported it, the pros, the cons, the expenses, the risks. We used to joke, of course, that what we would do is we'd give three options. The first one would be unconditional surrender, the second would be nuclear war, and the third would be to continue present policy. So that was that seriously, these were serious options. And the other thing that you wanted to make sure was there was strategy and not just reacting to crisis. I make one last point. It isn't just the system that dominated foreign policy in terms of the White House and control, you had several factors. You have the president himself that Dick has outlined his knowledge and instinct. Secondly, his distrust of bureaucracy, not only whether they would be loyal, which was not really fair, but also whether they would be imaginative and innovative. Too often, bureaucracies are slow and they don't take risks. Thirdly, he had the guts to appoint Henry Kissinger, who had worked for his opponent, Nelson Rockefeller, who was a Jewish immigrant from Harvard. Everything which you don't associate with Nixon, so it was to his credit that he reached out, then you had Kissinger himself was grand, a terrific staff, present company excluded, of course. And they all worked harder than the State Department. And then you had issues that we'll get into that lent themselves to close knit operations and secret operations, the three key issues being Vietnam, China and Russia, none of which are exactly democracies, and needed to work with the public and parliament. So, these are some of the factors that led to the domination by the White House.

KT McFarland: Now, I want to focus on this because it was different than what came before, who chaired those? There was obviously interagency conversations and discussions about foreign policy decisions in the Eisenhower, and the Kennedy, and the Johnson administrations. But who chaired those meetings, who was in charge of that interagency?

Winston Lord: Well, then I want to get brought in here, but you had an even under the Nixon era, you had an undersecretary, essentially a group that would look at issues sometimes before they got to the NSC, or you'd have regional ones for particular regions that would make their way up to the NSC. But in previous administrations, the key committees were generally chaired, I think, by the Secretary of State, or his, his deputy, as opposed to the NSC. And as I said earlier, that's what is crucial.

KT McFarland: And then, Bud, you're a military guy, so talk to us from the perspective of the Defense Department in the military.

Bud MacFarlane: Well, this system was very welcome to the military, because the military historically and today, plans all the time, looking over the horizon. What could go wrong? What might happen in the Middle East, Soviet Union or Russia now? And so, the system that President Nixon put in place, which put a premium on planning, how should we approach East, West, or Soviet relations? What are the political, the economic, the military dimensions of how we can bring together all the US resources to

focus on their vulnerabilities? And, by the way, what's the cost of doing option one, option two, and option three? The cost financially, the risks politically, vis-à-vis allies, and so forth. So the military welcomed this system. It's fair to say, however, that because presidents have cabinet officers who are strong willed people, normally, you really had to have a very talented staff and I say that not having been present at the creation as my colleagues were here. But when you brought together the experts from the department or the CIA, so forth, around a table, they had credentials also, and it was only by debt of the excellence of people like Hal Sonnenfeldt, Bill Hyland, Hal Saunders, people who had been practicing diplomats, scholars, for decades already, that were trusted by Dr. Kissinger and President Nixon, when they went to those interdepartmental meetings to forge policy and bring the options back to the President. They spoke with authority. Yes, they were backed by the White House and the President, but they were intellectually up to the job. They weren't there, it was kind of patsies listening to ideas that might have been a little bit fringe-oriented.

So it wasn't only the president, who was keenly well informed, and a scholar himself. And Dr. Kissinger, who of course, had taught this at Harvard for many years. But it was subordinates who really were up to the task of the grit work, the day to day management of these interdepartmental groups that brought to the president options that really made a lot of sense. He had picked one, and then they were the people who cracked the whip. After he made a decision about what ought to be our policy towards the Soviet Union. If any cabinet agency began to go off the reservation and vary a little bit, they'd get a call from Sonnenfeldt, or John Lehman, or someone else. In short, it was a discipline system. It was a system that studied matters exhaustively, came to decisions and published them. It is almost unique in American history that in those years, everybody in the world and every American could go to the bookstore and get a copy of the national security policy of the United States every year, that covered every region, and arms control and trade and so forth. So it was not a kind of a furtive, close hold, secret operation except when needed, but a rather pluralistic, thorough, well thought out, policy throughout the Nixon years. And the successes bear that out.

Winston Lord: I think we'd all agree, however, that it had some flaws, we can get into that, some drawbacks. And no system is perfect. Bad systems can doom your foreign policy. But good systems don't guarantee success, either. Personalities are crucial. And to get back to your earlier point about the contrast. Again, nothing is perfect depends on what the President wants, above all. But Nixon and Kissinger felt that the Eisenhower system was good. In a sense, it was somewhat formal, and you had everybody involved. But usually it was only one recommendation to the President. Like you often get in the military, where the compromises were hashed out before it even got to the President's desk, whereas Nixon, as I said earlier, wanted real options. And also, I think Nixon felt that Ike spent too many times in meetings and so on. Also, the difference was because Eisenhower leaned heavily on Dulles, whereas Nixon leaned on his National Security Adviser. On the other hand, under LBJ, you have what they call "Tuesday Lunches" where the top, you know, secretaries of state, defense, and the President would get together every Tuesday for lunch, because they were worried about leaks, and they wanted fast moving decisions. I'm oversimplifying a little bit. And that had the advantage of flexibility, candor, etc. But the disadvantage is, since it was relatively ad hoc and informal, that you didn't always have carefully prepared agendas for the lunches and principals were not adequately briefed. You had different interpretations of decisions that were made at the launch and uneven implementation. So they wanted Nixon in case you wanted to avoid both these extremes.

Richard Allen: I would make one postscript or add one postscript here. And a second later, I'll come back to. But, President Nixon had the good sense to pick and recognize that there was a legislative arm to all of this and to pick, probably the premier fellow in all of Washington, and that was Bryce Harlow. Bryce Harlow had originally written, among other things, that part of Eisenhower's farewell speech in which he warned to beware of the military industrial complex. Bryce then was a lobbyist, heaven forfend, for Procter and Gamble. Neil McElroy, when Neil McElroy was chairman, of course, McElroy had been Secretary of Defense and was himself a scholar and student of national security matters. Harlow was probably this- we have representative one of his deputies, Tom Korologos, our colleague, beginning in 1969-'68, actually and '69, forward- who handled Congressional Relations, knowing that the required congressional understanding, congressional funding, and, of course, approval of the policies. And I think that the Nixon system actually engendered respect on the part of the legislature. They saw that he had a plan, a program, he had things in hand. And he didn't waste any time in implementing. That kind of respect, actually built support, that is legislative support, for funding for the programs that were necessary. Without any funding, you're not going anywhere.

KT McFarland: You know, I jump in with that. And then I want to go back and say, when the point that Winston made where they were, the staff was really the best. I mean, they may not have been national figures, but they were the best at their fields. I want to ask each of you how you found your way or how they found their way to you. But John, jump in to comment.

John Lehman: Well, I just...while we're talking about history, on this, it's important to understand where the National Security Council came from, it just didn't happen to come full bloom in the 1947 Act. It was one of the most bitter and contentious periods that makes today's partisanship look like kindergarten in the years 1946, '47, and '48. It was a bitter struggle for control of policy. And, to understand that perspective, you have to remember that when Franklin Roosevelt took office, for the first years, his first term, his White House staff was five people. And his was a true cabinet government. He wanted to hear directly from each of the service chiefs, from the secretaries of the military departments, and so forth. So there was no such thing as a "national security staff". And that gradually as the war came on, and the chiefs became more, running back and forth every day during the war, that that increased somewhat, but not really, there would never be a national security council.

KT McFarland: Let me just say, they were not running back to the Pentagon. The Pentagon didn't exist at that point.

John Lehman: Well, no, they were, well, there was the War Department, which by the end of the war was in the five sided building and navy was in the temporary buildings down on the mall, which is another side story about how they got kicked out of there. But the fact is, that the cabinet officers were the President's advisors, and they met virtually daily during the war. Then Truman came in, and Truman really kind of burned about the way Roosevelt with his powerful persona, and having had the tenure of four terms, how he was running policy completely. And, and, and particularly-

Richard Allen: And, also, in part because he wasn't included. Most of the meetings.

John Lehman: He was not included. And he particularly had, as many of you read his memoirs of his great life and the biographies. He really, really disliked the Navy and the Navy Department, because Franklin Roosevelt always referred to when he was talking about the Navy, he always used “we” and “us”. And when he talked about the War Department, the army, he talked about “them” and “those guys”, and it just drove Truman up the wall. Truman called the Navy Department, a bunch of “Fancy Dans”, and he thought they had much more power than they should. And, so, this led to-

Winston Lord: -Well, remember, he’s Secretary of the Navy, so he’s very biased there. We have to be very careful.

Richard Allen: Well, Roosevelt was assistant secretary of the Navy-

John Lehman: -For eight years, under Josephus Daniels, he was very pro-Navy through and through. But the fact is that there was an attempt in the Truman White House to seize back control from both the State Department and especially the two military departments. And so there was a huge battle over the consolidation and the creation of the Department of Defense and to skip over a lot of interesting “Who struck John?”, the fact is that it was the very strong Secretary of the Navy, who really wrote a lot of the 1947 Act as he fought consolidation and part of creating a National Security Council was indeed, his, he wrote it, with his friends on the hill. And it was to get control of the way Truman was running policy trying to consolidate things and particularly Clark Clifford and a few other of Truman aides, the cabinet, particularly the new Defense Department, the service chiefs and the State Department were frozen out of the policy. So the NSC was thought up by Forrest Dulles, who became the first Secretary of Defense and Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State, as a way to ring fence these haphazard people over in the White House and get back in control. And the way it was originally organized, it was staffed entirely by serving military officers and foreign service officers on detail over there, there was no budget for a National Security Council staff. And so, Truman never used it. He resented it. He just was furious about the whole establishment of it. So he never used it. Eisenhower turned it into a military staff. And then after that, it reflected how interested a president was in foreign policy and national security. LBJ was much more interested in civil rights and domestic affairs, although Vietnam became the total obsession of having a concept of vision for how the rest of the world should be dealt with was just not, he wasn't interested.

So the NSC was reverted to a very ad hoc, “Tuesday Lunch”, kind of ad hoc meetings and so sometimes the cabinet officers had to completely weigh on things that he was not interested in. And other times, they never knew what was going on. So it was a major change. And then when President Nixon came in here was a guy who, as critics from Watergate have often contended, did not pay enough attention, and was not that interested in domestic and Social Policy. He was really interested in national security policy and in Kissinger, he found his alter ego. And so their structure of whatever process was used to build it and, and put it in place was designed to bring all that back in, in an orderly structured fashion, but controlled by the President.

Winston Lord: I think it's only fair to point out, there's no question that's all true. And the whole theme of this conversation is how the President and the NSC ran the policy, but none of us, we want to denigrate the other agencies, in fact, very many able people who actually took care of a lot of issues that are not quite the highest level of importance to the president, whether it was Latin America or

Africa or economic issues. And also, they had to implement what was decided by the NSC. So all of us would not deny that the White House dominated and a lot of secrecy we can get into later. But the agencies still continue to play a crucial role, including providing the kind of background information that was needed by the President.

Richard Allen: There's just one little component. The other point I would like to make is that although we find in the memorandum that was submitted to the President, the concept of including what was then the United States Information Agency, in the process. To my utter surprise, I was walking into the very first National Security Council meeting, probably in early February, late January, across the street from the EOB, over to the White House on the way to the meeting, I passed Frank Shakespeare, the newly appointed director, whom I mentioned of USIA. And I said, "Frank, I'll see you..." he'd been in the campaign, "I'll see you at the NSC meeting." He said, "What NSC meeting?" And I then raised the question of why USIA wasn't in the meeting. And it was simply dismissed. Actually, I think probably, Nixon himself didn't mind that the exclusion had occurred. Certainly, Henry wanted USIA out because I think he didn't like or trust USIA.

KT McFarland: Y'know, you guys have talked about, y'know, and certainly others have written about the unique abilities of the people who were on the National Security Council staff. And yet, as somebody has pointed out, I think, Jeff, it was you, everybody was pretty young. I mean, I thought you guys were really old at the time. But in fact, you were quite young compared to other people who have held those jobs. Why don't you just talk through where-how did you find your work? Because let's start with Bud, how did you find your way into the exalted levels of Henry Kissinger's innermost sanctum?

Bud MacFarlane: Well, I was a Marine officer at the time on active duty and I'd spent a year Working in legislative affairs, and coincidentally, my office was next door to Henry Kissinger's and I sought the opportunity to be interviewed for his military advisor, and had the good fortune to join. And then, over time began to focus on working with Wint Lord as handling the intelligence dimension of the relationship with China, and the sharing of sensitive intelligence information that the Chinese would tell you was kind of the American card that they played vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. And then a few years later, at the end of-

Winston Lord: -It would be like Soviet troop deployments and missile capabilities, it was to try to gain Chinese confidence in the new relationship with us.

Bud MacFarlane: Yes, it was immensely valuable to both countries. For China they said, they got periodic briefings on Soviet military deployments, 45 divisions on their border, what was their strength, their readiness? What about naval deployments? What about Soviet aid programs to India? But in short, providing the Chinese intelligence that they could count on was immensely valuable. And of course, just the perception if you were in Moscow at the time that suddenly this was going on. It not only enabled you to, or made you, keep 45 divisions deployed on the Chinese border now that the Americans were at least if not allied, supportive. And those were 45 divisions we Americans and NATO didn't have to worry about in Europe, or at least not as much.

I'd like to add, however, that if copying or replicating is the sincerest form of flattery, the Nixon system, which was virtually adopted part and parcel from 1982 on by President Reagan for decision

making, was applied in a similar fashion. The wrinkle that I won't spend a lot of time on, because we're talking about the Nixon administration, who were very, very strong-willed cabinet officers in the Reagan years who sharply disagreed on just about everything. But President Nixon, excuse me, and Reagan wanted those disagreements to be aired, heard personally in cabinet and NSC meetings, and decisions made the next day or so. But in order to do that, you had to have a strong White House staff that could bring him honest disagreements, analyze the merits of each, get decisions made, published. And the Nixon model with Dr. Kissinger really established that process that would get the best from the bureaucracy, including the disagreements, options, make decisions, and then oversee the implementation of policy that brought such success in the China opening, the Middle East diplomacy, the arms control agreements, and so forth. And similarly, later in the Reagan years, successful policies that accelerated the collapse of Marxism in the world, an end to the Cold War, reduction of nuclear weapons for the first time in history, but all involving a model very, very similar to the Nixon years.

KT McFarland: Go ahead, did you want to jump in? Oh, by the way, everybody feel that you-

Winston Lord: -Just, let me comment on this. We won't get into other presidential systems in any depth. But the basic two patterns, it depends entirely on whether the President wants to run foreign policy or wants to delegate. I'm oversimplifying, because all presidents have to make the ultimate top courageous decisions, and generally sense strategic outlines, but it really doesn't matter whether they were focusing on domestic or foreign policy. So you have, you know, Eisenhower delegating a lot to Dulles, you had Ford delegating a lot to Kissinger. But then you'd have Nixon dominating foreign policy. And then you have periods where there was more even struggle like Vance and Brzezinski, or Scowcroft and Baker. So you've had different and none of these systems are perfect. They all have their advantages and disadvantages.

John Lehman: Yeah, I think there's one dimension where had we all been able to go back to the creation, we might have called on Tom Korologos a little more to help in the drafting because Congress is hardly mentioned in any of these documents. And well, while the NSC meetings were-and the agendas-were options were really the finest put together. Ever up to that point. There was one big lack. There was a 500-pound gorilla in the room that was never considered-

Winston Lord: -That was your job. Right?

John Lehman: That's how I got the job, because nobody was doing it. So in fact, Korologos came, came to one meeting with Kissinger and in his usual diplomatic way said, "God dammit Kissinger, you got to put somebody in charge of Legislative Affairs!" No, you never would have used words like that-

Richard Allen: -And then, Korologos taught you everything that you know.

John Lehman: That's right. Yep. I sat at his feet for the next five years and learned how Congress really ran foreign policy and defense policy which used to drive Henry right up the wall.

Winston Lord: That was another shortcoming. I think Dick Allen pointed this out in somebody else's turn. But the economic dimensions of foreign policy didn't get full attention, at least in the early years. Now, in all fairness, economic power. Today is absolutely crucial. Look at China's got nothing else but that but look at its cloud. But in those days, it was less important, but still is a lot more important than the respect it got I think in the system.

Richard Allen: Well, I would use it with respect to that. The shortcoming became so apparent by 1971 that Nixon created the Council on International Economic Policy with an assistant to the president for international economic affairs. I know because I was shanghaied to come back to help Peter Peterson, actually structure de novo, right from nothing, and build a Council International Economic Policy which gave the opportunity for those secretaries such as Commerce and Labor and agriculture, all of which had international issues that began to burn by a 1971 dumping of Japanese television sets, specialty steels, expropriation of various American properties abroad, such as in Chile with Salvador Allende, and worries there. So that dimension really took off because of Nixon, and we speak of President Nixon as an architectural president, which is the theme of our discussion, the overarching theme of our discussion today, that architecture was put in place. It was also stimulated, one has to admit, particularly by pressure from Congress and pressure from John B. Conley, who had become Secretary of the Treasury, and was a very strong voice and was often thought to be Nixon's prospective successor.

KT McFarland: Can I just say, for the for the record, the person that everybody seems to be referring to, who is not on this stage is Tom Korologos, who's sitting in the front row, and he was the assistant to the president for legislative affairs in the Nixon administration, one of the inner circle in the White House. And so wave your hand, Tom, so the cameras can record you for posterity.

Bud McFarlane: Crisis. We haven't dealt with crisis.

KT McFarland: Okay, that was the next thing I want to go. So Kissinger and Nixon set up this system, where all the agencies had a role. Their role was to contribute to these national security study memoranda called NSSMs. And those then were presented to President Nixon, with a cover letter written by the Assistant to the President for national security affairs, Henry Kissinger. And as Win Lord said, there was always several options, the two unacceptable ones and the one that, no, but the three options and they would reflect a tab A, yeah, but there were but a tab a would be the secretary-

Richard Allen: -Always an odd number, always an odd number.

KT McFarland: So there was always a Tab A as the State Department recommendation. Tab B, is the Defense Department recommendation Tab C maybe as the Secretary of Treasury weighing in, and then Kissinger would also recommend the pros and cons and say, however, I recommend option B, whatever. So the NSC was all of a sudden getting a vote that was really co equal, if not superior, in some ways, to the agency's. Winston, you may have made a point in your writings, that this system not only was unique to Nixon, and Kissinger, but it was the issues of the time that required it by centralizing the study of issues and then the decision of issues. It really suited itself to this concentration of power in the White House. Because of the countries and issues we were dealing with.

Winston Lord: I would separate out two things. One, you just been mentioning about...this really was intellectually stimulating system because the studies by the agencies I might add as well as is put together and I was one of the jobs I had when I was there. These briefing books, these were real options with real implications, but there was a strategy first before you got the specific choices. And so that was true of almost every issue. Now what you're referring to is the three most urgent issues that Nixon faced when he came into office, were trying to open up the China arms control and detente, generally with the Soviet Union and ending the Vietnam War. And as I mentioned briefly earlier, in each case, you are dealing with something that was birthed the economic component I might add, that was urgent, and was you're dealing with a very closed societies of communist dictators and effect, who didn't have to worry about public opinion and Parliament's, and therefore, all three of these issues lent themselves to delicate negotiations out of the public spotlight, because you'd have domestic criticisms, all the sensitivities are these three issues. And therefore it sort of lent itself to the Nixon-Kissinger approach of dealing. I have to say, in many cases, secretly, we want to get into the secrecy issue at some point. But the very nature of the issues at the outset of the administration has lent themselves to White House control, and, and secrecy and that had pluses and minuses. But it was part of the reason that they went about diplomacy this way.

Richard Allen: With respect to the opening to China, it's also important to recognize that Mr. Nixon wrote an article in October, for the October 1967 issue of foreign affairs. It was actually written during the summer of 1967. And he wrote it almost entirely himself with people like Pat Buchanan, Ray Price. Richard Whalen, I participated in this as well, although I was destined to the Hoover Institution at Stanford. But this article really telegraphed the opening to China, nobody paid any attention to it. When the article appeared. It was quite cryptic. And if you go back and read it, it's called "Asia After Vietnam". Go back and read it, you'll see that Nixon calls for a series of summit meetings, makes direct hints about opening to Asia, but nobody picked it up. And he didn't elaborate on it. Some people later thought that he was really referring to the Nixon secret plan for Vietnam, which, of course, was a canard anyway, it did. He never had never said he had a secret plan for Vietnam. But that's what it became in the press literature. And that initiative was in place. Now, in one of the very first meetings as President I participated in I was walking out with Henry and I don't know perhaps you were also walking out of this meeting as well. It was in the first days, the administration. And as we approached the door, RN said to him, "By the way, find a way to get in touch with China." And that was the last remark, out the door from the Oval Office, walking down the hall. And Henry muttered, "Is he crazy?" Well, he himself became the vehicle to get in touch with China.

Winston Lord: Well, it was actually beyond that, on February 1, 1969, one week after essentially after the inauguration, Nixon sent a memo to Kissinger codifying what you just said he didn't realize he had said it verbally, saying in effect, find a way to get in touch with the Chinese. Now, this was clearly a Nixon initiative. I will say Henry agreed with the concept as well. It's not as if...he may have said, "How the hell am I going to do this?" but he certainly agreed that the opening of China would help us with the Russians and would do a lot of other things we saved for another meeting. But there's no question that this is one of Nixon's basic impulses from the very beginning, sending a memo within one week of his inauguration, by the way, he didn't have a secret plan for Vietnam, but his basic approach was to use

the Russians to squeeze Hanoi. So that was what he meant by a secret plan, at least try to construct the best possible version of it.

Richard Allen: Except there was none during 1968.

KT McFarland: You've all talked about sort of how Kissinger Nixon got control of the bureaucracy. But talk to us about how Nixon and Kissinger let the world know that the action was in the West Wing of the White House and not necessarily at the other agencies.

Richard Allen: In that first memorandum. There is a recommendation for an annual statement as Winston Lord pointed out, and the annual statement became very important, as been mentioned to a person could go to any bookstore, actually the government printing office and get a copy of the statement, which was a declaration of American principles and policy that was valid for the year and beyond. It was a statement of strategic goals and objectives. That was really fundamentally important.

Winston Lord: Well, we beat our brains out doing this over Christmas in San Clemente every year. It would be issued in February.

Richard Allen: That's right.

Winston Lord: The trouble is They had a lot of thoughtful stuff, including signals and strategies. But the press was only interested in Vietnam. So all the questions and the attention was on the Vietnam section. But, for example, on China, those reports gave a lot of indications of the direction we were going to take with China. And people sort of overlooked it. But these documents...

Richard Allen: Shows you what drives press coverage of real substantive policy issues.

KT McFarland: I think it's worth talking about this for a little bit longer. This is one of the first times an administration had said publicly, and not just in sort of boilerplate bureaucracies language, but specifically laid out this is how we see our policy here, this is where we want to go there. Kissinger and Nixon would assemble I know, Bud you were part of it. Winston, you were part of it, would assemble the top four or five guys and spend a week in San Clemente and hammer out what was really the whitepaper on Nixon foreign policy. And it was done throughout the Nixon presidency. And I don't think it's really been done since in that kind of strategic, not only here's what's happening today, but here's strategically where we want to go.

Winston Lord: One comment. But one last introduction, and this was it. Although it didn't get the attention of our press and domestic audience, that it should have, foreign governments read it very carefully. And so it was very important for that reason, but it was a real agony. And Kissinger of course he tried drafting a speech or a document for Kissinger, its... you could say agony and ecstasy. I don't know where the ecstasy was. But I used to-since he always rejected first drafts as being inherently worthless. What I did was one of these foreign policy-I was doing a section I think on Indochina, it was about 30 pages, my first draft. So I think he didn't even read the first draft, he's going to reject it because it was a first draft, right? So on page 15, and right in the middle, in the middle of a paragraph I

put in a sentence that was grammatically correct, but consisted of the titles of all of Kissinger's books. And I figure if he's gonna miss that, I got to point out to him that, in fact, he wasn't reading this very carefully. Unfortunately, he caught it. Anyway, but I wanted to chime in here.

Bud McFarlane: You know, thus far, we've talked about the planning, the thoroughness, to put in writing American policy for every part of the world. And that planning was really an important quality of President Nixon and the system. But of course, there are things that happen that you don't anticipate, wars, crises overseas that involve American interest. So what do you do when you have a crisis? And that was equally as impressive as the long-term planning in the way that President Nixon organized his team. Probably the most salient example, during his presidency was the Yom Kippur War in October of 1973. Dr. Kissinger had just been appointed and confirmed as Secretary of State. So the system for decision making was as it had been centered in the White House and remained so. I mentioned this, primarily, however, because it did end well, you can go and read about that. And you can see one of these forums like this one, focused entirely on that Middle East war.

I mentioned it for a different reason. And it was the resilience, strength really, of President Nixon, for remember the circumstances- here was an American ally, Israel, attacked from two sides Syria, and Egypt- and losing. I didn't look for about a week's time as though Israel was going to suffer a pretty serious defeat. President Nixon However, here, saying the importance of avoiding that catastrophe, was himself besieged by the Watergate problem, challenged back, over a year now, into this worsening crisis and attack by members of Congress and others and the press, and an ally was about to go under. So it required a personal composure and vision of where he wanted this to end to be able to continue to manage this NSC system with the aid of Dr. Kissinger and subordinates and State Department as well as defense. Bear in mind that in addition to the pressures of Watergate, his vice president was about to resign. Separately, the Soviet Union who had its own interest in trying to get back into the Middle East, was looking for ways to under by an American policy to the point of even alerting seven airborne divisions, to go back into Egypt, and to tip the balance in favor of Egypt, you had threats by the Arab countries to impose an oil embargo, which would, or could have brought down not only our economy, but the global economy.

And so this is not your average afternoon walk in the park, if you're the president, facing these kinds of stresses, but throughout, and indeed, the Vice President did resign, in that first two week period of October, the President was there to make the decision, and there was never any question about who was in charge. The reallocation of things coming off the Defense Department production line for American units were just sent immediately to Israel. The battlefield was turned around so that Israel could avoid being defeated. But then, the evolution of any crisis, in this case, a tipping of the balance in favor of Israel, which almost brought in the Soviet Union's airborne divisions required the composure, to go to a nuclear alert on the American side, ala 1962, or almost, all of this by a president under siege, with no vice president, the possibility of an Arab oil embargo. But there, like a rock, making decisions, and assuring that this came out, so that in the aftermath, not only was the security of Egypt and the Arab states, restored to a measure of stability. But an opening was created for the first time since Israel became a state for a dialogue with an Arab leader, Anwar Sadat, who had the statesmanship and character, to be willing to engage against the Council of every Arab country to engage with Israel, and lay the foundation for the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state. A president, however, able to do that, notwithstanding all of the pressures he was under. Through this system that he ran, he

managed, regardless of his own personal circumstance, through the excellence of Dr. Kissinger, now, his Secretary of State-

Winston Lord: Also what the other hat is NSC advisor at the same time.

Bud McFarlane: That's right.

Winston Lord: He could write a memo to himself with the secretary of state. But another point there, and we'll get back to these other issues. The President and Kissinger had the guts and the intelligence to realize that just as Israel needed to restore the balance after suffering a defeat for a week or two, they didn't let Israel wipe out the Egyptian army because that would have made psychologically difficult for the Arabs to negotiate. So they struck and had a ceasefire, and I was involved in it, we went to Moscow, at a time where the Arabs for the first time had enough success against Israel, they had some dignity and self respect to negotiate. Israel was sufficiently chastened and losing some of its hubris about overwhelming superiority, because they had trouble. So both sides were ready to negotiate and so that you not only have to manage the crisis, to figure out how you come out of it.

Now, on the crisis issue, we had a specific committee, one of the six that I chaired, called the West Sag, and that was specifically for crises. And that would only work. If you had a couple of things already intellectually in place. One, a strategy for the region, whether a crisis breaks out. So you're not quite sure it's not like it's a recipe that you're going to pull out. So this is going to work. But you do some contingency planning. And you think about a region strategically, early on. So when a crisis breaks out, you at least have some background in which to maneuver and to tailor your tactics to. And so you needed this committee, but you also needed the more formal system in advance.

KT McFarland: Why don't you, for a minute, talk about what that crisis management team was? Who was on it, who called it? And then also, John, if you could weigh in? What role did Congress play in any of this? I mean, because Congress was crucial for as Dick pointed out, if they didn't give the budget, if they didn't have the money, some of these things would never have happened.

Winston Lord: Well, he was chair of course, like everything else, the committee went by Henry, you would have state defense CIA Joint Chiefs present, there was an economic dimension, you'd have them present. So that was the basic and that would meet in the White House Situation, just like all these other committee meetings, but this was specified for crises. Now, the way that this would work. And the way most of these NSC meetings would work, they would start out with a briefing by CIA to give the intelligence background, then Henry would give the overview including the options involved. And then each of the agencies would present their views and why they backed their particular option. Nixon, of course, like most presidents, wouldn't make a decision at the meeting, he would listen and then go off and think about it and make his decision.

KT McFarland: And then was Congress ever brought in?

John Lehman: Let me talk a little bit about Congress. But first, the effectiveness of this five years, which, I don't think, ever been matched was due in no small measure, first to the concept of the President and Henry as how it should run. And that resulted in the recruiting of some truly first-class

unusual people. And it was kept small. If my memory serves me, there were only about thirty professionals on Kissinger staff. And there were, I think, a total including admin people, of only about one hundred twenty. And that was why it was so effective, because it was very agile, it could move quickly, all of the professional staff members' calls were answered by whomever was being called, whether there's a cabinet secretary or a Senate Foreign Relations chairman. And so in, particularly in crisis, things move very quickly and very credibly. Now, you contrast that with an I really believe as much-there are very strong things to say, on the Reagan system, which was really a version of the Nixon system. But that was clearly the apogee of the National Security Council as a structure that functioned. And it was because it was very high quality, it was very small, very agile. And if you look at the one hundred twenty of this apogee of how the system should work, compare it today where the number is seventeen hundred. We had one-

KT McFarland: I just want to repeat that seventeen hundred members of the group. Seventeen hundred.

John Lehman: When we were on the National Security defense QDR commission two years ago, that's what it was. My guess-

Richard Allen: -Quadrennial Defense Review.

John Lehman: Quadrennial Defense Review, excuse me.

KT McFarland: I just want to...just think this is a really significant point. So the National Security Council staff, which when you guys started out with Kissinger, 1969, was probably ten people and it may have gotten up to thirty professionals. By the time Kissinger-by the time the Nixon administration was finished, and maybe as many as eighty or a hundred people. That counts everybody from me typing the President's daily brief to Henry Kissinger, so the entire staff might probably be around a hundred, you're now saying it is seventeen hundred all in. By that I am just blown away. Where are they all, John?

John Lehman: I'll tell you where they're first. When we were there. We had some people down in the basement of the Little White House.

KT McFarland: That's where I was, that's where you were.

John Lehman: And then we had about, as I recall, three quarters of one floor-

KT McFarland: -Executive office building.

John Lehman: Today, they have taken over basically what used to be called the "new EOB". Yeah, just filled with NSC staff. So it's become another institution of government. And it's very bureaucratic, and they, you know, they still have plenty of good people, but they're embedded in a huge bureaucratic system. So it does not function today the way it did in either the Reagan or, and to a certain extent in, in

the Carter years. But the height of its effectiveness was the Nixon administration, and there was because it was lean and agile-

KT McFarland: -And could respond quickly to crises.

Richard Allen: Yeah, making a point. It's a little bit off topic here. But one of the things that drove President Nixon crazy was leaks. And the case can be made that John will remember from 1969 particularly, that ultimately it was this concern and passion about stopping leaks that led to Watergate. It is the direct connection. In early 1969, there was an odd little item mentioned that Senator Stuart Symington was going to create a subcommittee on American commitments abroad. And I happened to read it and John and I discussed it. And there upon began a long effort that culminated in the fall of 1969. And about a seventy page memorandum, which I believe that same topic, you turned into a doctoral dissertation at Cambridge, if I'm not mistaken. And we presented this memorandum. Oddly enough, the memorandum was not acted upon. It just went into limbo. In 1971, however, when I was preparing to come back to the White House, Bob Haldeman, then President Nixon's chief of staff called me in Denver, when I was preparing to return to set up the Council on International Economic Policy with Peter Peterson, and said, "The President remembers your memorandum from 1969 and would like to implement it and wants you to implement it". I said, "No, no way." Am I going to do that because among the other recommendations are review-we're reviewing everyone's security clearances. And I personally wanted no part of reviewing anybody's security clearances. I didn't want to see raw data. But the leakage came just as much from inside the White House. As it did from the bureaucracy, it was the bureaucracy that Nixon distrusted, and Henry also just distrusted. But in reality, there was just as much leakage coming right out of the NSC.

KT McFarland: This gets to the secrecy and back channels and all the rest.

Winston Lord: A major feature of this system was secrecy. And there are pluses and minuses. I've already suggested that the most urgent issues lend themselves to secret tightly held negotiations. The dangers as a general principle, and even on these issues, don't give illustrations that if you seek when you cut other people out, leave aside the morale and humiliation and so on, you may not get the full expertise of the other agencies to get you ready for what you're secretly negotiating. Now, we used to try, for example, to open China and get briefings on China generally, even though we were secretly going to China in a few weeks. Nobody knew about it. But we could still ask as a general proposition, the President would like to know more about Mao Zedong or Zhou En Lai, or their policy toward Taiwan or the Soviet Union, and so on. So that's one disadvantage another disadvantage, if you carry out something secretly, and then you announce an agreement, the agencies that were cut out in the first place, are all going to be tempted to say, "Oh, we could have done a hell of a better job", "You left this out", "If you'd known about this and our expertise". So that's a risky one. Now, the system was awkward, humiliating. But it produced terrific results.

So one of the problems was what led I'll give you one example of extreme secrecy. On the secret trip to China, we had a public trip to Southeast Asia, India, Pakistan, we were on a small plane. And there were three types of people on that plane. There were four of us who knew we were going secretly to China, because the trip was public for these other reasons. Other countries, there were two or three that knew we were going but weren't going in with us, but they had to stay behind in Pakistan

and cover the secret of the journey to Beijing. And then there was all the other ones who were there for India, Pakistan, and the other issues, and didn't know anything about China. So I was in charge of the briefing books, and I had to keep three different sets of briefing books, one for the four of us, one for the slightly larger group, and, and so of course, I would update them and go exhausted asleep. Henry's been napping, and he would wake up, he looked at him and you want all three changed all over again. And so this is the absurd. Now, the advantage on China was that if you had a lot of publicity about the opening of China, although we did send public signals as we discussed, the Taiwan lobby the the anti communist extremists, other allies would all be weighing in and you'd be hemmed in before you could even see whether you could strike a new posture with the Chinese. And your agenda would shrink, and so you'd be constricted. And of course, it was a dramatic opening. But the disadvantage was, for example, the State Department criticized the Shanghai communique a little bit because they weren't involved in it. In the case of Vietnam, you needed secrecy to have real negotiations. If you have a public forum like we had in Paris. It's just propaganda barrages from both sides. So you needed secrecy to have real candor and people to take risks.

The danger was, and we paid for it, is that we were making offers to end that war, from the very beginning to the Vietnamese that were beyond what the New York Times editorials were calling for. We were being very moderate. Hanoi was totally intransigent. So we paid a real public price because nobody knew we were negotiating with the Vietnamese, let alone what kind of proposals we were making. And finally, in the Soviet Union, the other one that Kissinger did secretly, he negotiated with some help from the arms control community, SALT 1, the first big treaty, but of course, he got criticized later for screwing up in a few details, that if he involved the bureaucracies, he wouldn't have made so many mistakes. So there are, I would say, the pluses won and outweigh the minuses because look at the results. But you did pay some price, not only in human terms, but in terms of bureaucratic strife.

KT McFarland: You know, I also wonder in not in the case of China, but in the case of the arms control negotiations with the Russians, the Soviet Union, and with the Vietnam peace agreements, there were in fact, public formal negotiations, which were going on by the State Department and, and yet you guys were doing the secret back channel trips, where you were doing the real heart of the negotiation was here, but the media and Congress and everybody could focus there.

Winston Lord: And you paid a price because the public ones look meaningless. And nobody realized we were really making a real effort to end the war, for example, but you should comment on the arms control board.

Bud McFarlane: Well, I was going to add to your own point, when about the China negotiations, I mean, people to this day, applaud the policy, but they said, "Did it really have to be secret?" Well, consider this. At the time, China was killing in the Cultural Revolution, that literally 10s of millions of its own people. Now consider the left wing and our country, every American really would have been revolted by the idea that we're going to be engaging and trying to foster relations here with a country that's doing that the right wing could have said, "Look, this, this is a country that's providing the AK-47 to Vietnam, killing Americans right now. This is a country that's in chaos literally, internally." So, if you had said, well, let's float that idea in public and see what people think about it would have been strangled in the crib, for sure.

Winston Lord: Plus, we'd be selling out Taiwan, which we didn't, by the way, but go ahead.

Bud McFarlane: That's right. So if you're going to take the country in a profoundly new direction of any piece of public policy that is vulnerable to being heavily criticized, as these particular ones were, later on, it came to a similar thing, but I won't digress on the Reagan years, but it had to be in secret, or it would never have developed as the success that it was the games that we made today. Well, that's self evident, of course, that was a good idea. But it would never have happened without-

Winston Lord: -We did pay a price with Japan and some of our NATO allies, but it was temporary, and we couldn't have consulted them, that would have leaked. And so just reinforcing your point.

KT McFarland: Let me turn to you, John. By the time Kissinger then became Secretary of State, the sort of the other major accomplishment was the Middle East shuttle diplomacy, and that was done in public and everybody knew Kissinger was shuttling back and forth. Is the secrecy part of it and the NSC and Henry Kissinger did not go on the Sunday talk shows to talk about American foreign policy, was that sort of all piece of the secret negotiations, the agility, all the rest? And yet, once he became Secretary of State, he had other more public responsibilities and had to be done in the public eye?

John Lehman: Well, let's come back to that. Because I'd never answered your question about Congress, which bears directly on secrecy. I think Henry's attitude to Congress when he first came in, was the same as Admiral Ernie King, who was a new CNO that Roosevelt put in at the beginning of World War Two. And he was known to be a pretty brusque character. There's a whole bureaucracy in the Navy of four congressional liaison called "OLA: Office of Legislative Affairs" and his OLA and Admiral came to him and he said, "Now, here's what we have planned for you to brief the committees." He said, "I'm not briefing any committees." "What should we tell them?" "Tell them nothing, and when the war is over, tell them who won." I think that was Henry's attitude towards Congress. That's why you don't see it in any of the preparatory doctrine, but he's a fast learner. And pretty soon he was finding Congress intruding and attacking on every level. And, luckily, he had three of the finest tutors that have ever been in the job and Tom Korologos and Bill Timmons and Bryce Harlow. And so he pretty soon realized that he had to start dealing with these people.

Richard Allen: Not to mention, Congress approved the NSC budget.

John Lehman: Right. And so it was an unending crisis and battle from the first day until Henry went to state and then it took on another level. But he turned out to be a natural because he learned so quickly that you, first, you can't tell him nothing. And yet be careful who you tell what to. And so, to summarize, a lot of different crises he was able to manage-and people think that they're polarized today. Congress is polarized today? It was nothing compared to those days. Right, Tom? I mean, the bitterness between the Democrats and Republicans, particularly on the Vietnam War was just, cut it with a knife, people weren't talking to each other. And-

Richard Allen: Before we forget, on who's watch the Vietnam War started. If you're being political about it.

John Lehman: But at that point, you know, that's, that's in the past and-

KT McFarland: There were also half a million people across the street on the Mall, students demonstrating there was civil unrest.

John Lehman: Yeah, well, remember, we had to come in to work, crawl under the buses that surrounded the whole White House and remember that-

Winston Lord: Part of the price we paid was the secret negotiations, which we had to do. But I'm not saying that demonstrations would have gone away if they knew we'd made these offers, but it would have helped. Because I remember I had all my liberal friends were beating up and "Why aren't you guys even negotiating with the Vietnamese?" Meanwhile, I just came back from a two day meeting in Paris.

John Lehman: You couldn't tell that to the committee's because Henry rightly knew that particularly the Foreign Relations Committee was a sieve. And so they since they felt very early on, they weren't getting really what was happening. A bill was introduced to subpoena him to testify, and to then go further and make him subject to Senate confirmation. So basically, we came up, Tom leading the fray, with a strategy to give them inside skinny briefings with no staff present and the Foreign Relations Committee. Nothing in writing, but to stroke them so that they were getting the truth of what was going on, to a point. And so that enabled them to take care of not looking totally out of the picture, then he would quickly, Tom would take us over to the minority caucus. And Henry was, I think, brilliant in being able to talk about the half empty part of the glass to those constituents.

And so, throughout the rest, he realized very soon that he had to treat with Congress and make deals and deal with crises just as important as dealing with the Chinese or the Soviet Union, because he almost single handedly had to block legislation that was constantly being proposed and easily getting a majority of signatures. And so that could be a book, a very thick book in itself, and the secrecy. It very much elided into how as he became more and more known, particularly after the China announcement, "Hey, whoa, this guy is really-we got to watch this guy." It was harder and harder for him to do secret kinds of things. So he was in the Middle East. The shuttle diplomacy, it was much more public than he would have preferred. But even there, and Winston would know more in detail. There were several layers of what was going on. In addition to the public-

Winston Lord: That was essentially a State Department operation. He was Secretary of State and most of the shuttles and so that was a different, that was under Ford, as well as Nixon. So it was a different environment.

Richard Allen: Let us also not neglect that dimension of Washington that is so terribly important. The Style section of the Washington Post and Henry quickly discovered that he could be socially active, shall we say? And I think it may have been the interview with Oriana Fallaci, the Italian newswoman.

KT McFarland: The very beautiful. Y'know, sirène...

Richard Allen: Very charming. And it was. In that interview, as I recall, he spoke about riding into town as John Wayne would or a cowboy would on a horse-

Winston Lord: This is a very unfair attack on Kissinger, by the way, who was not a secret swinger by the way. But, we once were in Paris for a secret negotiation. This case with a Vietnamese, we snuck away from the embassy, we were in Paris for another reason. And Henry had to sort of camouflage why we were there. So he left me and John Negroponte back to help draft the peace agreement while he went out to dinner with a beautiful blonde. So everyone paid attention to that. And while we were in town, so these are very important. He was sacrificing himself for the Style section.

Richard Allen: I didn't say it wasn't useful.

John Lehman: Just an added fill up, one of the reasons that he kept such an effective staff was that the people that he really wanted and didn't see as a threat he was totally loyal to. And he sent me off once to, to dinner an off-the-record, how naive I was in those days, dinner with foreign service officers to talk about how we could improve security because leaks were every day and in the above-the-fold Washington Post front page. So I dutifully did that. And, and said, you know, we have the same problem with Senator Fulbright and the Foreign Relations Committee. Next day is the above-the-fold headline, "Kissinger Aide Attacks Fulbright for Leaking."

Richard Allen: Which he was doing.

John Lehman: Which he was doing. So with that, I get a call from Al Haig, "Henry wants to see you." So of course, I was in the EOB. I figured, "Well, what am I going to do?"

KT McFarland: This was gonna not be a good meeting, you could tell.

John Lehman: Where am I going to work after this? And so I come in and he says, "Go on in." And, Henry is sitting there at his desk. And he said, "Lehman, the Secretary of State has said that you must be fired, that you are poisoning relations, which he has been working on for years to improve relations with Senator Fulbright. And so I was called into the president's office. And President Nixon said, "I know Bill called you, he called me" and he said, "You should be. You should fire this fellow Lehman." And Nixon said, "Well, what do you think Henry?" And Henry said "I was thinking of promoting him." And Nixon said, "Good."

Winston Lord: Probably wrapping up, it gets back to the system. You made a very important point about neither Nixon nor Kissinger moderate yes men or yes women, much fewer. They wanted honest points of view and debate before a decision was made. But then they asked that once a decision is made, if you're on the losing side, you carried out loyally and either leaking or, and if you feel really strongly you resign. When I first was interviewed by Kissinger to join the staff, that's what he talked about. I want strong views. But once we decide something, carry it out, and frankly, that's how I got to be a special assistant, because the first year '69, I was in the executive office building. And one of the things we did was send memos to Kissinger as a mini policy planning staff on contingencies and devil's advocacy. And I sent him a couple which my boss, Halperin, let me send on my own, criticizing some of

our policies. And frankly, that's why Henry was sufficiently, I guess, impressed with the argument even though he disagreed with it that he made me a special assistant. That just underlined the fact that Nixon and Kissinger both wanted fierce debate and real options, but then they wanted loyalty once you've made a decision.

KT McFarland: Yeah, I think we're needing to sort of wrap this up. So I'd love to get everybody's final thoughts on the NSC, the structure and how it worked and why it succeeded, and particularly to ask you to Dick Allen and Bud McFarlane And who then later became national security council advisors to President Reagan, how the system, you know, did it work? Was it just something that only worked with Nixon and Kissinger? Or did it work effectively? Going forward from that? So I'll let you guys think about it. And, John, do you want to wrap up your final thoughts?

John Lehman: Well, I believe that, that the national security system has never worked, as well, before or since, even in the Reagan years for different reasons. I think, perhaps a combination of the way it operated after Kissinger became Secretary of State, it would be a way to improve on it in the present day, because the cabinet officers need to be included in the real decision making. And if you keep them totally excluded, the way for the most part they were they go off and do independent scheming. I mean, Mel Laird was always cutting his own deals with Congress and not telling Henry or anybody else about them, because he was cut out of the inside game. So there would be ways to improve on it. But again, if you could talk all, I think Win put it perfectly, that really good people can make any system work. Although it can be much more cumbersome and less efficient, mediocre people, time servers, can't make the best system produce good policy. And that's what we've got to keep in mind, as we see every part of the government bloat to such a point that they don't function.

Winston Lord: My view is, it was in many ways humiliating for Secretary Rogers and many others. It did have an impact on morale, it was awkward, it was awkward for us to have to keep two or three different sets of memos and secret trips. And backchannels, we haven't really talked about both telegrams that were done to the CIA and secret meetings and trips. But having said that, you have to look at the results, which is what ultimately you're looking for. I think there were several factors that made it work. And we've already touched on them, the fact that you had a president who had this tremendous interest in background and strategic impulse and foreign policy, a strong national security adviser, the kinds of issues that lend themselves to this kind of system. When you're dealing with Europe and Parliament's and public opinion, it's got to be tougher to do what we did in some of these, these other issues.

The final point I make, which we haven't touched on, is the relationship between Nixon and Kissinger. And it was unique, it was filled with tension and ambivalence. But it was tremendously successful. And here, I give Nixon a lot of credit, he struck a perfect balance, in my view, between someone who was mired in details as President Carter, who had some good foreign policy successes tended to be and the other extreme of delegating all your foreign policy, I'm simplifying now, to someone else. He set the strategy. But he knew Kissinger and he had the guts to appoint this man. As I said, he had so many different contrasts to him, and was working for his opponent before the election, and had sufficient trust in him as a negotiator and the tactics to carry out the strategy, they would agree on the strategy, and then Henry would carry it out. And so you had Henry strikes, conceptual view of the world that was pretty much strongly in parallel on all the major issues. And Nixon, willing to be certainly

involved in making sure we did what we wanted strategically, but then letting Henry carry it out. And I think that balance was a crucial factor in the success of the administration.

KT McFarland: Dick, do you want to finish and then we'll go to Bud at the end?

Richard Allen: Well, there being nothing inherently wrong with the structure that was created at the outset of the Nixon administration, I saw no reason to change it by 1980 and '81. There was, it was a comprehensive system that integrated all of the elements of national power, and of what we call "national security" in the broadest possible implications of it. So I continued it and unashamedly so. One of the problems that arose, however, was at the very outset, Al Haig being named Secretary of State Reagan didn't really know Al very well. hardly at all. I, but I did-and there's all sorts of backstories here that I won't even bother to get into interim in meetings that I arranged for Haig and Reagan, but Al wanted to run everything outside the three mile limit. And on the first day, I'm just now contrasting, the very first day after the inauguration that afternoon presented a memorandum. And I had seen earlier drafts of it, telling him saying that it won't fly. It just won't fly with this man, this President, whom Al didn't know either. And basically, what happened was, we had no crisis management until March 23. That's almost three months or two, two and a half months, a long time into the first part of the Reagan administration. And finally, I broke the logjam by saying, because Al-

KT McFarland: Well, tell people what happened in March...

Richard Allen: Well, sorry, the President was shot. President Reagan was shot at the Hilton Hotel, and I raced back to the White House to implement that which had been just approved on the 23rd of March, seven days before the President was shot. And it was crisis management. I had proposed to break the logjam. Al wanted to do it and it really belongs in the White House. That's exactly where it belongs, to coordinate all of the elements flowing in and implemented, that process. That led to some misunderstandings about who succeeded whom, that day, a famous day. But the point was that the system really worked very well. And it works well, when we have an organization of the type that Nixon set up and with Kissinger and all of us in 1969. And that system functions with huge elements of tension, as has been pointed out by my colleagues here, yes, indeed. But the system worked and you could drive decisions home, you can't do that if all those decision making elements are dispatched to the bureaucracy.

KT McFarland: Bud, do you want to finish? Because then when you became national security adviser, you were one of the architects of winning the Cold War.

Bud McFarlane: Well, you're being very generous. But I think, to your question, it depends entirely on the president. And the degree to which he or she has the depth and vision of what American interests are, and how they can be advanced and defended in their term of office. And then, in addition to having some knowledge of what you want to do, you've got to have a sense of order, discipline. And looking back over the past several generations, President Nixon's model has stood the test of time, of having very good people have equivalent depth of knowledge and understanding of foreign cultures from the Middle East, to the Far East, to Russia, Latin America, and able to manage a system both for planning,

for decision making, and then for overseeing what you decide as the President gets done. So you need a highly talented group of people.

But it's the president who sets the tone, and cracks the whip, and hires and fires and moves us in a constructive direction. President Nixon's legacy speaks for itself. In all of these four areas, we've discussed in overview here, the China opening to ending the Vietnam War, to engaging the Soviet Union and reducing nuclear weapons over time later on, in the Middle East. Stability and those relationships, without question, were better under the Nixon presidency than when he had arrived, clearly. And the model stood the test of time through the Reagan years.

KT McFarland: You know, I think it's important, as everybody talks about the great successes of the golden era of American foreign policy, which was the Nixon-Kissinger period. What often people forget to talk about is the enduring legacy. Now we know there was the enduring legacy of the policy themselves, the opening to China. I mean, China isn't where it is today. Without the opening to China and the Nixon administration. Arms Control, Arms Reduction agreements never would have happened. Had they not happened? We've seen now the problems and getting into wars and getting out of wars. So the Vietnam legacy and certainly in the Middle East, we're still reaping the fruits of the peace of the Middle East that we've had since the 1970s. But what often gets overlooked is the enduring legacy of the people. The people who were on Kissinger's National Security Council staff, I mean, everyone is referred to the high quality of it. But when Henry Kissinger has his reunions, which happen every several years, and people come back, everyone in the room looks around and is stunned to see how many people went on from junior staffers under Kissinger and Nixon to higher positions in the Ford and Reagan administrations and people who went on to be cabinet officers themselves, national security advisors themselves, more ambassadors and flag officers than you can count.

And it was not just what the policies themselves were, but the people who were trained under that system, who then went on. I mean, the way I think of it is, you know, we walked with giants, you guys walked with giants when you were junior members, you know, young kids, to me old kids on Kissinger's National Security Council staff, but then you became giants of your own. I mean, Dick Allen, who was with Nixon on the Nixon campaign and Nixon's first deputy national security adviser went on to work for Ronald Reagan, California governor, and was the tutor for Ronald Reagan's national security campaign strategy and his campaign and went on to be Reagan's first national security adviser. John Lehman, who was the junior guy working for Kissinger, who almost got fired that fateful day, went on to become Secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration, built the 600 ship Navy. And it was one of the architects and was really the 600 ship Navy, it was the naval presence of the United States that helped convince the Soviet Union they had no choice but to accomp-the Cold War was over by the time we got our 600 ship Navy, it took a few years to play out. But John then went on to do that. Winston Lord became the sort of main point guy for American-Chinese relations for 40 years, your ambassador to China, Assistant Secretary for Asian Affairs, president of the Council on Foreign Relations. And so the job you may have started out with not knowing a whole lot about China. When I go to China today and mentioned the name of Winston Lord, you're kind of up there with the great superheroes. And then finally, Bud McFarlane, started out as Major McFarlane when I first knew you went on then to become Reagan's National Security Adviser, and the Reagan Star Wars speech. The one that Bud wrote, talked about how the United States would develop a missile shield-But anyway, those are for a different time and a different forum. But, Bud McFarlane was one of the people who was the architects of the ultimate takedown of the Soviet Union using all of the elements of American power. So the people who were in

their 20s and 30s, in the Nixon administration in their 40s and 50s, really became the men who won the Cold War. So I think maybe somebody is going to be on your speed dial wanting to know how we win the next one. Thank you so much for joining us. I hope this has given you a taste. And you come back to the subsequent Nixon legacy forums where we're going to talk about and drill down deeper into China, Vietnam, Soviet Union, and then this whole notion of strategic planning. So, thanks so much for joining us. That's it.