INTERVIEW II

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INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

PLACE: Dr. Sisco's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

G: Can we begin, Dr. Sisco? What in general would you say have been the significant trends in the United Nations during your service with the international organization?

S: Well, I was involved for much of the twenty-five years and I think you can see really three distinctive periods in the evolution of the UN [United Nations] and how the United States relates to it, from the point of view of our foreign policy. There was the initial period in the immediate aftermath of World War II, where the organization was roughly fifty-five countries and where it was a UN that was totally dominated by the United States, both in political results as well as economic support. Then, with the addition of eighteen new members, bringing it to roughly eighty-two countries, in the sixties there was established an equilibrium in terms of voting power between the Soviet bloc and the United States. Therefore you had a substantial period in which neither side could get its view [to be] predominant within the organization. That manifested itself in [the] form of a compromise expressed in the phrase "Give it to Dag," meaning hand the problem over to the then-Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, who in turn tried to maneuver politically between the two blocs and to get the organization to act when the formal mechanisms either of the Security Council or the General Assembly were not able to act

in light of the relative equilibrium and impasse between East and West. Now, the third phase is the current phase, with the preponderant addition of developing countries, with a diffusion of power worldwide, with bipolarity really manifesting itself in a number of power centers, where we are dealing with our allies as equals, where within the other side of the Iron Curtain there is a certain semblance of some--and I don't want to overdraw this--increase of independence of the eastern bloc from the Soviet Union. But you have a situation, then, in the UN where we are overwhelmingly outvoted as a result of the accretion of the developing countries.

However, that really doesn't tell the story. The meat-and-potato issues still focus in the UN Security Council where each major power has a veto. And the fundamental assumption of the UN at the outset was that the Soviets and the Americans could cooperate with a view to applying collective security measures as well as peaceful resolution of problems. That cooperation never has occurred. The divisions within the United States and the Soviet Union are as pronounced today as they have been and that is reflected in the world organization. From our point of view, the Security Council still remains a mechanism where we can mobilize support and at the same time through our own veto protect our own interests. But in the General Assembly where it's only a recommendation rather than a mandatory legal decision that could be taken, we have now become a minority in the organization.

G: How was the UN viewed by senior officials at the time of your appointment as assistant secretary?

S: It was viewed in a mixed fashion. An organization both with capacities and limitations. If you take it during the period of the Johnson Administration, it was a UN in transition.

It was no longer that UN of the early days that the United States could dominate entirely, but neither had it become a UN that in certain instances from a propaganda point of view could be used against us. So that it was recognized that there were capacities but that its use had to be limited and to be selective. And I think that's basically the philosophical approach that existed at that particular juncture.

G: I noted one reference in the documents to the UN as the, "cave of winds."

S: Well, that is not an inaccurate expression in this sense. I don't take that phrase in the broadest derogatory sense. One of the functions of the UN in the UN General Assembly is to act as a safety valve. It gives smaller nations, developing nations, an opportunity to display their badge of independence and to be heard. It's the only world forum that a number of these countries have. On the other hand, the negative aspect of that is that power and responsibility are skewered, that the one nation-one vote does not reflect the realities of power, politically, economically and militarily in the world. And it would be a mistake to perceive these overwhelming General Assembly votes as necessarily reflecting the power realities of the world. Now, these votes of course have tended to debase the coinage, but I think the function of blowing off steam is still a useful function because there are many instances where the realities of concrete action are much more serious than rhetorical expressions. Take the current situation in which the Soviets brutally have shot down a Korean airline--really murdering two hundred and sixty-nine people. You have to distinguish here between rhetoric as against action, and rhetorically the world has reacted with vehemence and with a certain unity in condemning the entire action. At the same time, when it comes to practical actions that can be taken against a major power, whether you're talking about a practical action within or outside the

framework of the United Nations, obviously this is limited by the realities of the power situation.

G: Did you think that Vietnam should be brought before the Security Council?

S: Well, there were two stages. I took over as assistant secretary under the Johnson Administration in September of I think 1967 [1965] and in the first few weeks of my stewardship the question arose as to whether we should bring the Vietnam situation to the UN Security Council. At that time Ambassador [Arthur] Goldberg had just taken over as the United States ambassador to the UN and he made this recommendation to President Johnson. President Johnson asked for my views, and in my previous oral history I have outlined in detail what actually happened and I've reviewed it and it's quite accurate. But the fact of the matter is that I was against recourse to the UN Security Council in September of that year on two grounds. One, the inevitable result in the Security Council would have been a resolution for a cease-fire and the kind of a UN involvement in the negotiations, which I felt at that particular juncture was not in our interest and we were not ready for. But subsequently, in January of the next year, within the framework and the context that we were ready to stop the bombing and, secondly, that President Johnson had dispatched a number of high-level officials worldwide in getting our point of view across, I strongly supported the notion of bringing the matter to the Security Council. We got it there, and it's interesting because that at that juncture the Russians didn't want the UN Security Council to consider the Vietnam matter. And all that we succeeded in doing was merely getting the matter inscribed on the agenda, which required a majority vote. We never were able to achieve any concrete action which we would have favored at that particular juncture, because we were in favor of stopping the bombing as well as

some form of a cease-fire.

G: Let me just insert a date here. You said 1967. My recollection would have been 1965.

S: 1965, well, don't--I'll have to check 1965. It was early. Excuse me, I took over in 1965, that's right, 1965. That's correct.

G: Then in January we had the bombing, the Christmas bombing.

S: That's correct, that's correct.

G: Ambassador Goldberg wanted to bring the matter before the UN, is that right?

S: Yes.

G: There were frequent rumors that Ambassador Goldberg was dissatisfied with the way Vietnam policy was being conducted. Did you see any sign of this?

S: Oh, I think there was every sign, and I saw frequent evidence of Ambassador Goldberg not agreeing basically with the policy. And in fact throughout that entire period Ambassador Goldberg developed and wrote a good many memoranda expressing his views at a given juncture. What has been highly publicized over the years has been the role of devil's advocate that George Ball has played, and he did play that role to a degree. What has not, in my judgment, ever received the attention that it merits was that Ambassador Goldberg was in the forefront, within the administration, of those who tried to get an alteration of the direction of the policy. And that was a consistent pattern. There are a number of memoranda on the record. There were certain instances when he showed me these memoranda; there were instances when I helped work on the memoranda with him. So we worked very, very closely, and, even though as assistant secretary for IO [International Organization] the function was primarily in relationship to our UN duties, I was fortunate enough to establish the kind of relationship with

Ambassador Goldberg where I believe I became a close adviser across the board. I happen to believe that he was one of our truly outstanding United States ambassadors to the UN, that what he did, for example, in achieving UN Security Council Resolution 242 on the Middle East--which today still remains the basic framework for a peace settlement--that he's never really been given the kind of proper credit that he deserves for what I consider to be an absolutely major achievement of American diplomacy at that time.

G: Did Ambassador Goldberg ever tell you why he took the job at the UN?

S: No, and I still remain quite confused about how it all happened, because, as you know, there are various kinds of explanations. I would offer this speculation, but it can't be based on hard evidence. It's more retrospective than anything that I can really put my finger on. In retrospect I have the distinct impression that Ambassador Goldberg had gotten thoroughly bored with the [Supreme] Court. Secondly, in describing the job at the UN, just about every president when he has sought to interest an outstanding figure to that job--after all, it was [Adlai] Stevenson who preceded Goldberg--presidents had a tendency to define the job in broader and more important terms than the reality. The implication being that that individual was free to involve himself in any major aspect of American foreign policy, and the job being described almost--almost--synonymously with that of being a secretary of state. One, you're in New York and not in Washington; secondly, there can only be one secretary of state. And therefore there was a tendency to oversell the job, and I think President Johnson probably did a little overselling in this regard. So Ambassador Goldberg defined his mission in the broadest kinds of terms, and he therefore did seek to influence, and here I think he was entirely within his prerogative

and he, I think, did it in the best sense of the word, namely by writing telegrams, writing memoranda, doing as one should do within the bureaucracy. But he sought to influence not only the policy on Vietnam; he was, I think, a very significant influence in the whole arms negotiations approach of the administration. And you've got to remember that when you're the United States ambassador to the UN, there is a General Assembly every fall, and there are a hundred items on the agenda, and quite frankly they touch on every aspect of American foreign policy. So even in the most formal sense that UN ambassador has a parameter, if you will, that is almost synonymous with the entire spectrum of American foreign policy.

G: Who did Ambassador Goldberg consider himself to work for?

S: He considered himself to work, first of all, obviously for the President as an appointee. But let me say to you that Ambassador Goldberg and [Secretary of State] Dean Rusk got along extremely well, that Ambassador Goldberg was very sensitive and careful in his relationships with Dean Rusk, that when he wanted to take up something with the President, he inevitably worked through Dean Rusk. I can recall--I've got a wonderful basis for comparison, having been at it for some time. I know how Stevenson operated, I know how Lodge operated, I know how Goldberg operated, and others. Goldberg and Rusk got along very well. Goldberg was very careful about the lines of communication, probably one of the most careful of the United States ambassadors that operated there. My job description as I really perceived it was that it was very important for me to know what was on Dean Rusk's mind and what was on Arthur Goldberg's mind. And I helped in a small, modest way in assuring that when there were policy issues that these two individuals got together and talked about them. Dean Rusk was very marvelous in this

regard. Just as he allowed George Ball to express a divergent view, he consulted, they talked, and if Goldberg had another point of view, Goldberg was entirely free to send memoranda and so on. But he was very careful in touching base in one way or another--impeccably in my judgment, and probably better than any United States ambassador that I can recall--with the Secretary of State. And therefore they had a good relationship. And, moreover, on the Middle East, which was the primary concern of Ambassador Goldberg, largely because of the crisis situation that developed, President Johnson and Dean Rusk gave Ambassador Goldberg as our ambassador to the UN the broadest kind of mandate that one could imagine. They delegated a tremendous area of responsibility to him, because they felt that he knew what the traffic would bear at the UN as well as what the traffic would bear domestically.

G: This question comes up later, but it seems to me this is a good place to put it. Superficial observers have commented on the prominence of advisers with Jewish backgrounds. There was of course Ambassador Goldberg, there were the Rostow brothers for another, there was Ed Weisl, any number of people. And it seems to me that an Arab would say that the President was listening to the Zionists among the advisers. Was there any evidence of this at the UN?

S: Well, I'm sure there must have been this undertone, but I am struck with the fact that--and it was not only true of Goldberg, but others subsequently of the Jewish faith that have worked in this whole area of the Middle East, whether it's within the UN or outside the UN--I am struck with the fact that, one, policy is made by the president; secondly, that the national interest was defined by these individuals in a basic and fundamental sense. Moreover, I would make this very strong argument, because it relates to Ambassador

Goldberg's stewardship in particular. It was the period in which in November of 1967, Security Council Resolution 242 was adopted. Because of the special relationship which Ambassador Goldberg enjoyed, both with the Israelis as well as with various elements of public opinion domestically, we were able, in my judgment, to achieve a result in that UN Security Council Resolution which we might not have been able to achieve otherwise. Therefore I am sure that there are individuals in the Arab world, in our country, who would view this as too much deference to the Jewish lobby in our country, or Zionism. I don't accept that view. In the number of years that I have dealt with this problem in the State Department I was struck with the fact that a variety of influences and pressures are applied. And this is fair game; every constituency has a view. It's the fundamental bedrock of our democracy. I saw as many heads of oil companies that came into my office while I was assistant secretary for IO and subsequently assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs and under secretary later on as I did leading members of the organized Jewish community. And we are, after all, a "government by pressure," to quote one of the most prominent political scientists of many, many years ago, Mr. V. O. Key, whose book [*Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*] on constitutional government and the way our government operates, in my judgment, is still a classical fundamental in this field. The danger today, if I might offer this observation, is that we are in some danger that the constituencies or the parts become more important than the totality, and that's because there's been a certain fractionalization in our body politic in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate. But that's another story.

G: You mean single-issue politics--

S: Right.

G: --are beginning to dominate.

S: That's right.

G: How did our involvement in Vietnam affect our standing, our prestige and so on in the UN? Did this have a significant impact?

S: That is very difficult for me to make a judgment on. Certainly, the UN being a sounding board, you would have found manifestations of adverse criticism there which perhaps had a greater resonance and intensity than one might have heard on a one-to-one bilateral diplomatic basis. But in a sense the UN is a reflection of many of the conditions and environments that exist in the world; it's a mirror that reflects that situation. Therefore I think that basically you got that kind of a reflection on Vietnam itself. I saw no concrete evidence that an India that was particularly critical of our policy on Vietnam would have voted another way on a given issue, take for example the arms control measures and their commitment to disarmament and so on. While there is a certain amount of logrolling and bloc politics that has become increasingly more characteristic of the UN over the years, I don't believe that you can really point to that difficult period of Vietnam having had a specific, concrete, deleterious effect, an impact on our support on other given issues.

G: This question is not on the sheet, but it just occurs to me that maybe a specific example of--at one point and I believe it was l965 there was a tremendous furor which arose over our use of riot control agents in Vietnam.

S: Vietnam.

G: The memos seem to indicate a good deal of surprise on the part of American officials that this occurred. The British, I think, were quite critical of the use of I quote, as I remember, "gas." Do you remember anything specific about that?

S: That does not strike a bell with me at all.

G: You said in your previous oral history that there was discussion as to whether we should change our policy toward Red China. What were the pros and cons of that at the time?

S: Well, the pros and cons have been fairly constant. Those basically on the pro side made the argument that became the compelling argument when the policy was ultimately changed, namely, that relationships do not imply moral approbation, that you had the reality of a mainland China, both large geographically as well as in population, and for us to disregard that reality no longer made any sense. That was the argument. The other, and it's still with us because we're pursuing really a very delicate balance here, how all of this could be done so as not to adversely impact on our security and strategic relationship with Taiwan. I think that once President Nixon achieved the breakthrough, we are treading this careful balance of having accepted and faced up to the reality of Communist China on the mainland, while at the same time adhering to our support and security relationship with Taiwan. Now, I think the other big, big factor that changed the situation was the fact that in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962, the Soviet leaders announced they were going to seek equilibrium with the United States. The achievement of the Brezhnev era is that he did achieve nuclear equilibrium with the United States. Now, that meant that the Soviet Union has become a global power with a global outreach. And that brought in to train the increasing reality of the question of the balance particularly in the Far East and Southeast Asia, where there has developed a parallelism of strategic interests between the United States and the People's Republic of China against so-called hegemony of Communist China [the Soviet Union?], which of course is another way of saying that we have a parallel interest in confining the

opportunities for the Soviets for possible expansionism, particularly in Southeast Asia and the Far East but obviously globally, even though we both continue to have different ideological systems and we continue to co-exist on the basis of that limited parallelism.

G: What sort of advice did you give on this question?

S: Well, there was--and I wish I could pin this down as to dates--a period when I felt that the proper approach was basically a two-China approach within the framework of the UN. And it was for this reason: my concern was not only the fundamental argument, but there was a very significant strategic and tactical consideration in my own mind as it related to the United Nations itself. I felt at that juncture that a policy that would have admitted Red China was the best guarantee to protect the position of Taiwan within the organization. I took careful nose counts and came to the conclusion that we could achieve this dual objective of "Red China in but not at the expense of Taiwan out." In other words, a result where both would be in and it would be left to Communist China whether it was willing to come in on that basis. My concern was that if the situation continued year in and year out, that the vote was such that we could get a vote against us which would have said Red China in and Taiwan--or Formosa--out. That was my primary consideration. It was a very significant consideration of timing.

G: How close to that situation is the one that we have today?

S: Well, I think what we have really is Communist China being fully represented throughout the entire UN organs, and you have a very definite limited status as far as Taiwan is concerned in various places. But that is a manifestation of the fundamental policy change that came in the aftermath of the Nixon meetings with Communist China. Once the United States recognized the fundamental principle of "one China," then what we have

seen subsequently has followed. By the way, I have no hesitation in making it quite clear that I think that what President Nixon did in this regard is a major, significant, positive development, and that it ended twenty years of non-recognition and non-interaction. I think that the policy being pursued now by the Reagan Administration--which I don't find distinctively different from the policy pursued by the Carter Administration, which in turn built on the Nixon opening--I think is quite realistic. And I think we have achieved both objectives. We're dealing in a pragmatic sort of way with a Communist China, as we should, but at the same time we have fully protected our security interests *vis-a-vis* Taiwan.

G: Could Lyndon Johnson have achieved what Nixon achieved with respect to China? Was it politically possible?

S: In the context of the difficulties which the Johnson Administration increasingly experienced on Vietnam, in my judgment that result would have not been possible at that particular juncture.

G: For no other reason, I suppose than that we had said too many things about the role of Red China in Southeast Asia.

S: Yes, and, secondly, you've got to remember that Vietnam was in an extremely active phase, we were definitively involved, and, after all, Communist China was supporting our adversary. This could not have come until the later stage and in the aftermath of Vietnam.

G: The Tet Offensive of February 1968 was a sensational event. What were the reactions of the various delegations of the UN? What sort of impact did this have?

S: The only thing that I can really recall, and I'm not sure that this is much of a contribution,

was that the doubters and the critics took the view that the policy had been wrong all the way along and that the United States should get out. Those that were basically sympathetic to our approach, obviously saw it as a very, very significant, major military defeat with major political consequences.

G: How did you perceive it?

S: I perceived it in terms of a significant setback for the following reasons. Basically my approach has been that when either military action is taken or a policy of military support is being pursued, that it has to be linked and tied directly to political objectives. Take the situation in Central America today. If we are going to support the El Salvadoran government, and I favor this, then its purpose has to be a political purpose, to try to contribute not only to stability there but to contribute to an environment where one can move towards some form of negotiation. And therefore the classical linkage between military options and the use of military assistance and support to achieve political objectives. I felt that it was a major setback in that not only you had the image of a major power applying limited military power in that situation that had been soundly defeated, but I felt that it was a major reversal in terms of any opportunity for a political solution. And above all, given the amount of domestic opposition that had been increasing, and I felt that that weakened the administration's approach very fundamentally and quite frankly as far as I was concerned it was the sign on the wall.

G: Do you recall where you were when you heard President Johnson give his famous speech of March 31 [1968] when he announced the limitation of the bombing and his non-candidacy?

S: No, I don't. If you were to ask me where were you when John Fitzgerald Kennedy was

assassinated, I could tell you exactly where I was in Texas and what I was doing and so on. I suspect that I was probably in the bowels of the State Department, since for too many years it was largely a seven-day-a-week job.

G: Were you in Texas when President Kennedy was assassinated?

S: I certainly was.

G: I hadn't heard that.

S: I was making a speech.

G: Where?

S: In Dallas--not Dallas, in--trying to think, I think it was probably Lubbock or something, I can't recall now, but in a small city in Texas and that's where I heard it.

G: Well, as long as you raised the subject, why don't you tell me that story?

S: Well, the only thing I can recall is obviously shock, and I contacted the sponsors of the speech and immediately cancelled the speech for that evening and made quick arrangements to get on a commercial flight and to fly back to Washington. So it was a very sad occasion indeed.

G: Do you recall the reaction in the UN to President Johnson's March 31 speech?

S: I do not.

G: Something that has puzzled a number of people is the rapidity of the response that Hanoi made to Johnson's overture. How did this strike you at the time? What did you think was behind Hanoi's response?

S: I have no judgment on that.

G: Once the Paris talks got under way, where does this leave the Vietnam issue as far as the UN is concerned?

S: Well, largely in the secondary role that it had been in all the way along, particularly in circumstances where there had been made a serious attempt at getting the UN involved. Some have argued that that was really quite a cynical move and cosmetic and so on. I am of the view that whereas President Johnson strongly opposed the involvement in September, in the context of January he was entirely serious about involving the UN. And my own judgment is that the principal focus obviously had to be around the conference table, and if the UN was in a secondary role up to that point, the visible, overt, concentrated effort there around the conference table probably moved it further back into the shadows. I think it was recognized that the UN could not be effective and that the only way in which accommodation could occur would be face-to-face discussions. There wasn't any particular serious meddling on the part of the UN in this regard.

G: Let me ask a couple of questions about strategy of negotiation. Some critics have said that as long as we were not winning in Vietnam, we didn't want to negotiate because we were negotiating from weakness. Others have said that once we did perceive that we were winning, as indeed some people did, they didn't want to negotiate, because what's the point as long as you're winning? This is a catch-22 situation.

S: It's the classical dilemma that we and many other nations have faced many times, and that is that if you're winning militarily, then you are achieving objectives by military means and there is the tendency to eschew the conference table. But in other circumstances where you're not able to achieve your objectives by military means, you are much more disposed to seeking those by peaceful means. The truism is still a reality that you can rarely achieve by peaceful means what you've not been able to achieve by military means

on the ground. You have a classic example of the situation in Lebanon right now. The Israelis have redeployed and withdrawn from the so-called Shuf area, the Christians and the Muslims and the Druze in particular are seeking to fill the vacuum. Now, as long as the Druze feel that they have the upper hand militarily, there will be a disinclination to sit down with the Christians and to negotiate a cease-fire, in addition to the fact that the Druze in this situation have linked it and want a more equitable power-sharing with the Christians and the other Muslims whether they be Sunni or Shiites.

Well, governments historically have tended to act in this way where the timing has been very, very difficult to achieve. It's a very wise government that can find that particular juncture where from a military point of view they're in a reasonably good position and it's time to negotiate. The whole historic record of the effectiveness and the timing of cease-fires throughout the Middle East and elsewhere in this post-World War II period touches on this fundamental question that you've raised. You take, for example, the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, in the first forty-eight hours when surprisingly, as a result of the intelligence failure, the Israelis were very much on the defensive and they came to a near-defeat as a result of the Syrian-Egyptian pre-emptive attack on the Israelis. We sought a cease-fire in that early forty-eight hours, but the Egyptians and the Syrians weren't interested in the first forty-eight hours, largely because they were winning on the ground. Later on, of course, the situation changed. It's the Clausewitz--

G: If you can recall your contemporary view, what would have been a satisfactory result of a negotiated settlement in Vietnam? Would a coalition government have been the thing to look for?

S: Well, my own feeling at the time was that there were periods when there was a relative

equilibrium in the military capacity of each to impose his will or his solution on the other, and therefore, that it had to be within a unified context and a more broadly based government. I felt, not that I approached it--I hope I didn't approach it naively, and one had to take into account the possibility or probability that Hanoi might not want to play on this basis. But I felt that that opportunity at least ought to be offered or kept open if for no reason other than, having demonstrated a willingness to do that, that it would strengthen the consensus back here at home and it would have demonstrated that the United States was genuinely exhausting all diplomatic remedies. We have a little problem like this on Central America today, and that is that our prime problem is developing and maintaining a domestic consensus. Vietnam has taught us the price of factionalization. There are two lessons from Vietnam, as far as I'm concerned, and too often only one of these lessons is cited. One lesson is the need to avoid overextension in a situation where our interests are not necessarily vital. But the other lesson is that we have to involve ourselves in areas where it is vital, and that's the second lesson of Vietnam and I think that means that we have to engage ourselves selectively and on the basis of priority.

(Interruption)

We do in the West have a propensity for coalition governments, and one has to be realistic. There are pluses and minuses. The danger of coalition governments, as we've learned, is that you have a situation where the more radical elements then are able to take over the power of government by legal means.

Take the situation in Nicaragua today. [Anastacio] Somoza was overturned, the Sandinistas have taken over. In the first year the United States basically accepted the

Sandinista revolution. It was willing to proceed on the basis of a pluralistic democracy, as is evidenced by the fact that we provided aid to the Sandinista-led Nicaraguans in this first year. But what happened in this coalition--and I'm using the word coalition in the loosest sense in this instance, because it really was not a coalition in the classical sense--but the directorate of the Marxist ideologues have now taken over the Sandinista revolution, and it is not the pluralistic democracy that we had hoped for. And that's the danger of the coalition government.

But here, as I say, I don't know whether that would have worked. I don't know whether Hanoi would have accepted it and I don't know whether that kind of a reconciliation was possible. But it would have transferred the problem into one of internal political dynamics of Vietnam and certainly would have provided the basis for a much more orderly withdrawal of the United States and would have been perceived as a form of a political solution rather than a military and political debacle with all of the domestic implications from which we have not yet overcome. There is a Vietnam residue in this country. We are very, very fearful of involving ourselves in areas where it is absolutely indispensable and essential for the United States to involve itself in order to protect its overall national interest.

Take the peacekeeping force in Lebanon. It's unfortunate that we're in this crossfire and we're in the middle of a situation where the elements of internal sectarian strife have ended up killing a number of marines. But the fact of the matter is that the Middle East is a vital area. There is no way in which the United States can cut and run from this particular situation. Peacekeeping and peacemaking are hand in glove.

So we're not over the Vietnam experience, either from the point of view of the

political divisions that have occurred within our country, the weakening of the presidency as an institution, the more independent Congress--almost to the point where 535 would-be secretaries of state would like to be conducting American policy. Our most productive periods have been periods of strong presidential leadership supported by a bipartisan Congress. And our number-one need in this country today is the restoration of that pattern of cooperation between the executive and the legislature, so that both friends and adversaries can know the direction of American policy with a certain amount of assurance. So that these things have a way of staying with us for a very extended period.

G: Let me take us to the Middle East for a minute. When you became deputy assistant secretary, what--?

S: Assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs in 1968.

G: Excuse me. Okay.

S: Under secretary in 1974.

G: Right.

S: What are you referring to?

G: The deputy assistant secretary for IO.

S: Well, let me straighten out the positions for you. I was deputy assistant secretary for IO, then assistant secretary for IO. Now, which period are you referring to?

G: The earliest period.

S: Okay, I'm sorry.

G: What were the major ingredients, if we can use the term in the political ferment, the mix. I'm referring to such things as the Palestinian issue, the riparian rights business, the pan-Arab movement, and so on and so on. How did all of this set up?

S: Well, one, you had, as you have rightly said, a strong pan-Arab nationalist movement reflected in the phrase Nasserism. That's one element. Secondly, the Palestinian issue was one that was recognized, but in a less politicized sense than it is today, where it reflects itself in a politically-stated objective of an independent Palestinian state. In the sixties it was still viewed primarily within the context of the Palestine refugee problem, humanitarian in the first instance and, secondly, political primarily within the context of intra-Arab politics rather than a Palestinian threat *vis-à-vis* Israel, because that didn't come until subsequently when the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] began to get armed and the principal objective of the PLO became the so-called armed struggle. So in that period that we're talking about, we're beginning to see the glimmers or the transition, if you will, from the essentially depoliticized context of the so-called Palestine refugee question our support for the Palestine relief agency in all of these camps, and the care of the Palestinians and its more politicized manifestation in the last decade and fifteen years.

G: You mentioned Nasserism. What is Nasserism?

S: Well, I use it quite loosely as a Pan-Arab nationalism which Nasser projected, an Arab world with Egypt and Nasser in the lead. A non-aligned set of individual Arab states, in sharp contrast to the John Foster Dulles period of alignments and bilateral pacts and Baghdad pacts, because you've got to look at this in broad terms. That period where we had a number of these countries specifically and formally aligned to the United States in these pacts, with Nasser taking an anti-[im?]perialist, pro-nationalist, Pan-Arabist, Egyptian leadership sort of role, which became weakened, of course, after his debacle in Yemen. It manifested itself in the Suez crisis in the earlier period; it was directly related

to the decline of British power, and the most crucial development was the decision subsequently in 1967, which was later, where the British had made their decision to withdraw east of Suez, and we were then faced under the Nixon Administration with a new major dimension with two principal options: either we fill the vacuum directly, or pursuing a policy of stimulating regional cooperation. President Nixon opted for the second option, rightly in my judgment, namely, trying to stimulate and encourage and support Iranian-Saudi Arabian complementary interests in the Gulf in giving primacy to a regional constellation rather than the United States seeking to fill the vacuum directly, which we now have had to do with our concept of the rapid deployment force and so on.

G: What weight should we assign when we look back to the various elements seeking to influence U.S. policy in the Middle East? Now, let's begin with Congress. What were the special interests in Congress that were heavily taken into consideration on policy?

S: Well, there's no question that Congress plays an absolutely major role on American policy in the Middle East, both from the point of view of security interests as well as the special interests that are involved, not only domestically in terms of the Israeli angle, but we after all have two objectives. One, the maintenance of the special relationship that has transcended political parties between the United States and Israel, and the second prong of the policy has been and continues to be to deepen and to strengthen and to nurture the fabric of relationship with those Arab states that are committed to the principle of co-existence, and the strategic interest in terms of continuing U.S. and western access to the energy resources of the Middle East. And regardless of the fact that in the aftermath of the embargo, we had an OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries] that became an absolutely dominant feature in this situation. And you have

today, because of the change in the worldwide oil market, an OPEC which is no longer in the driver's seat as it was and it's not apt to be over the next decade. It is not the kind of cartel that it was able to perform in that post-1973 embargo period. I say this, however, with tongue in cheek, because I still believe that we are much too dependent on the Middle East and the Gulf for our energy resources, that the situation still remains difficult, and while we have made some very important and significant structural changes--conservation, moving to other fuels, the miniscule beginning of a synthetic fuel industry in this country--we still have a long way to go in reducing that particular dependence on an area which is obviously going to remain a very, very uncertain and unstable area for the unpredictable future.

G: You're not optimistic about the chances of lasting settlements in the Middle East?

S: Well, I don't like to use the word optimistic or pessimistic for this reason. You have to look at this thing from the point of view of historical perspective. For thirty years there was no contact, no negotiation, no recognition. And yet if you take the last ten years, what you have gotten is two disengagement agreements between Egypt and Israel, one between Syria and Israel, the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, Camp David, and now we're at the difficult phase of a Palestinian phase and nobody thought this was going to be very easy. Therefore, the trend of the last ten years, despite the fact that we had a war in 1973, a couple of civil wars within Lebanon and the situation is quite unstable, a stalemated Iranian-Iraqi Gulf War, nevertheless you have ebbs and flows. And while I don't see in the short run, over the next eighteen months, any major advance, either within the context of Lebanon or in the peace process itself, I'm not pessimistic as to what the ultimate outcome will be in the next decade or two.

G: Well, we've talked about Congress. Let me ask a question we've touched on already, and this is the so-called Jewish lobby in the United States. How important a factor is this in making policy in the Middle East?

S: It's an important factor, and I think that anybody that's been at the policy level would be undeniably naive if he didn't affirm this. But having said this, I am very quick to add that this is an effective influence but it is not the only significant influence. The influences are multi-faceted and they--when one begins to focus on what the influences are, one tends to get away from what the underlying realities are. As you look at the area politically, economically and strategically from the point of view of the U.S. relationship with Israel, this is a friend and an ally and therefore reliable. Now, from the point of view of American policy, this cannot be the exclusive instrument of American policy. Our interests go beyond any one country in the area. Therefore, the second factor is the continuing improvement in relations with the key Arabs in the area.

Now, there are instances where obviously these two things come in conflict. Any American policy has to seek to avoid making choices and, more importantly, to pursue the policy so that they are complementary. And the only way in which they can remain reasonably complementary is for the United States to remain the indispensable third-party element in promoting the peace process. There is no way in which the United States can protect its overall political, economic and strategic interests in this area, which are of a vital character, without playing the lead role politically, without playing the lead role diplomatically. We are the only power acceptable to both sides and we are the only power that has been able to produce some practical political results. The strength of America's position has been not only the fact that we are a Mediterranean power and we

can project power in this area, but the strength has been that America has been the only country that has been able to produce political results, unsatisfactory from many points of view, never meeting what the expectations of one side or another may be, but nevertheless I think we're recognized as that indispensable element and we cannot disengage from this situation, either politically or militarily. It still remains, in my judgment, the one potential area for confrontation with the Soviet Union which is much more serious than probably any other part of the world. I agree with what President Johnson used to say, that the Middle East was a very, very significant, important danger spot where the possibilities of trouble were all too obvious. After all, if you look at NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], if you look at Western Europe, the lines are reasonably clearly drawn between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. There's no ambiguity. The wall is up. You've got an East Berlin and you've got a West Berlin. There is a *modus vivendi* as it relates to Berlin. Both sides know that someone unilaterally seeks to upset the status quo in Berlin, that the dangers of a direct confrontation over that issue between the two colossi are extremely high, and therefore both the Soviet Union and the United States have been very careful in this regard. So that the line has been drawn. In the Middle East, the lines are much more opaque. Each major power to a certain degree is working through various surrogates. This is an area that is also ten thousand miles away from us and it is much closer in the contiguous sense to the Soviet Union. Basically most of the Arabs are anti-communist. They have no interest in a Soviet dominance or a peace that's brought by and under the aegis of the Soviet Union. We have many elements of advantage. And the special relationship with Israel has to be used in the most positive sense in part of the process of reconciliation and co-existence. When

we stop doing that, or we stop being successful in progress to this end, then our influence in this area will diminish. One of the great dangers today in the current situation is that we've had essentially a year--or put it this way, since the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, there has not been a further major diplomatic breakthrough in relationship to the peace process. And that the most that we've been able to do--and I don't want to underestimate the importance of this--is to help bring about cease-fires and help keep a lid on the situation. My concern is that over the next eighteen months at least, we are largely going to be involved in a damage-control crisis management sort of approach rather than the environment being such to promote an opportunity for further progress in the peace process.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II

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