Matloff: This is Part III of an oral history interview with Dr. Harold Brown, held in Washington, D.C., on October 8, 1992. Again representing the OSD Historical Office are Drs. Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff.

Dr. Brown, at our meeting on February 28, 1992, we had begun the discussion of your role as Secretary of Defense--background of appointment, conception of role, approach to organization and management, and working relationships in and out of DoD. This morning I would like to continue that discussion and begin by asking what was your perception of the threat when you took over the Department.

Brown: When I became Secretary of Defense, there had been a degree of detente introduced into U.S.-Soviet relations. The SALT treaty had been signed; there had been, in 1972, a declaration by Nixon and Brezhnev, at Soviet initiative, talking about detente and its nature. Subsequently, however, it had turned out that the Soviet concept of that arrangement did not preclude their support of Marxist-Leninist, or more generally, antiAmerican governments and groups in the third world. These ranged from Africa, including Angola and Mozambique, to the Middle East, where they had sold arms at very liberal terms to Syria and Iraq and to Southeast Asia. In light of this behavior and of their continued military buildup, I considered that we still had a serious security threat from the Soviet Union, both because of their nuclear strategic capability and because of their massive conventional forces in Europe. Deterrence seemed to me the appropriate strategy to follow to counter that. We would continue to deter the nuclear threat by retaining a massive and invulnerable retaliatory capability. Deterrence of a possible Soviet conventional attack in Europe would operate both by the maintenance of capable U.S. forces as part of a much larger NATO conventional force and by a doctrine of flexible response. That doctrine included conventional defenses, followed, if those failed, by the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons. I conceived

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our principal security interests as lying in, and therefore was most concerned about threats in, several regions.

One, as I indicated, was Europe. A second was in Northeast Asia, that is, Japan and Korea, where the threat from the Soviet Union was less immediate. You didn't have there a massive juxtaposition of two conventional military forces along a well defined line but, rather, a more complex relationship among a variety of countries--Japan, the two Koreas, the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, next to Europe, Japan seemed to me to be the strategic, and especially the economic, area of most concern to the United States. Specifically, concern that if it became or fell into the influence of an adversarial power it could cause damage to the United States. Then there was the other area where I considered we had especially strong interests--especially the Middle East and Persian Gulf because of the dependence somewhat of the U.S. and even more of the other industrialized democracies in Europe and Japan on the oil of the region, and because of the special commitments that we had to Israel. The other distant regions of the world I did not consider to be of comparable importance to the United States. Not that they weren't significant in terms of possible threats to the evolution of democracy there, but they didn't pose any immediate security threat.

What I saw, then, in military/political terms, was a possible Soviet threat of nuclear attack. That wouldn't happen out of the blue but only, in my judgment, as a consequence of escalation from conventional conflict in one place or another. There was the large conventional military threat to Europe which, again, was perhaps more political than military in the sense of possible intimidation of the Europeans, especially the Germans, by a predominant Soviet military capability over a western capability to the extent that that such a predominance existed. Second, there was a concern about Northeast Asia. In military terms that was mostly about a threat from North Korea to South Korea, but even that was a matter of concern principally as it

might destabilize the situation in Japan and thus cause a more direct threat to the United States. Then, third world areas, principally in the Middle East, and to some degree Central America and the Caribbean, simply because they are close to the United States and therefore in our back yard. And then, vaguely, the rest of the world but at a much lower level of political-military threat there. Beyond that, it seemed to me that our security depended fundamentally on our economic capability. Even before I entered office, when my appointment was announced by President Carter, I made the point that our military and political standing in the world depended on our economic capability and, therefore, that would have to be weighed heavily.

Goldberg: You then regarded the threat to the United States itself as relating to the escalation from possible conflict in other areas?

Brown: No one was going to invade the United States. There was no conventional threat to the United States. The threats to the United States were to those of our interests lying geographically outside of the U.S. Those were, predominantly, and in order of importance as I saw it, in Western Europe, Northwest Asia--Japan, principally, and Korea, peripherally--and in the Middle East-Persian Gulf, because of our dependence and the greater dependence of both those other places on oil from the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. The question was, how might our interests in those regions be adversely affected and what might happen in those regions or conceivably, but very unlikely in my view, as a result of direct U.S.-Soviet relations, that might cause a threat of an actual nuclear attack on the United States to emerge.

Matloff: On what did you base your perception of the threat? reports of the CIA?

Brown: I had been involved in national security affairs in one way or another for nearly 30 years by the time I became Secretary of Defense, and had during that time paid a good deal of attention to CIA and other reports. I had been engaged in

negotiations with the Soviets about strategic arms for a period of seven or eight years before I took office. So I based it on those years of experience.

Matloff: Did you detect any notable differences in views between you and, say, the JCS, CIA, or State?

Brown: Where you stand depends on where you sit, of course. The Chiefs paid more attention to the strictly military balance. It's hard to say that they perceived the threat differently, but they perceived the appropriate response in terms of U.S. capability somewhat differently since the military always take the position, and they are correct, that having an overwhelming advantage militarily against all possible adversaries is the best situation. And so it is, if that is the only consideration. But there are political and economic considerations as well. The CIA evaluated the Soviet nuclear and conventional capability probably about as I did. They also paid attention to the three regions that I mentioned as being the most consequential-- Western Europe, Japan and Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf and Middle East. They perhaps viewed Soviet influence or Soviet capabilities in those areas as somewhat less strong than I would have, but I don't think there was a great difference there. The State Department people--Cy Vance, for example--saw the Soviets as less threatening, pretty clearly. I have not spoken about China. I think all of us saw the Chinese as not a substantial military threat, except that they were gaining a nuclear capability whose ability to reach the United States was very marginal. They had only a few long-range nuclear weapons. In that sense they weren't any particular threat.

Goldberg: Were you influenced by the Team B report of CIA?

Brown: Not very much. Remember, that did not represent the official CIA view. I was concerned, partly as a result of that and partly as a result of what I already knew, that the Soviets continued to have a massive buildup in their thermonuclear forces. But I regarded our retaliatory capability as sufficiently survivable to be a deterrent,

providing that we continued to modernize it. The differences in numbers didn't worry me especially, because although they had greater capabilities with land-based ICBM warheads, we had superior capabilities in submarine-launched ballistic missile warheads, and very much in bomber forces. But I did think that we would have to upgrade our retaliatory capabilities as the Soviets built their thermonuclear forces and increased the threat to the survivability of our forces.

Matloff: You touched on some of the conceptions of strategy growing out of this view of the threat. Did you agree or disagree with the concerns of your immediate predecessors--Schlesinger and Rumsfeld and the Republican administrations--on strategic policy and planning, or did you have a different emphasis of some kind?

Brown: I didn't think that my views differed greatly in nature from theirs. The evolution toward limited nuclear options initiated under Schlesinger made sense to me, whatever my doubts as to whether in practice they could be kept limited. On the question of nuclear targeting on our own part, we made our own examination, and we changed it somewhat over the first few years. But fundamentally I don't think there was a great difference.

Matloff: You were adhering to the principle of "essential equivalence" in nuclear competition with the Soviet Union?

Brown: Yes.

Matloff: How did you interpret that principle in practice, and what major programs did you support in the effort to maintain strategic parity?

Brown: We looked at the bomber force, the submarine-launched ballistic missile force, and the land-based ballistic missile. On the bomber force, President Carter had, during his campaign, more or less committed to canceling the B-1 program. We nevertheless made a rather extensive examination, and I recommended to him that we continue the program but not go into full-scale production. He concluded that we should cancel it, and we canceled production but, unfortunately, allowed the

research and development to continue, which made it easier for the Reagan administration to revive the program in 1981. On submarine-launched ballistic missiles, we decided to go ahead with the Trident submarine, which was a larger ballistic missile submarine, and with the so-called D-5 missile, which was a larger missile. It had a longer range, and could carry more warheads. The most difficult decision actually was how to deal with the land-based ballistic missiles. What we had was the Minuteman III, which by 1977 was starting to be an old system. More serious was the concern that an increasing accuracy of the Soviet land-based missiles, especially the SS-18 and to some degree the SS-19, would put the Minuteman at great risk with respect to its survivability, depending on what the accuracy of the incoming warheads would be. One or two incoming warheads could knock out a Minuteman silo, and as a result of the larger number of Soviet ICBM warheads compared to our number of silos, they could then destroy them in a preemptive attack. That would still leave, of course, our submarine-launched missiles and our bomber force, but I will come back to that. Since we were relying on a Triad, our ICBM vulnerability was a matter of some concern.

We went through an elaborate examination that lasted for at least two years. We finally concluded that not only should we have a new missile, the so-called MX, but that we should base it in a way that allowed it to move around among hardened shelters, quite rapidly in case of a crisis, and could therefore enable it to survive, since you could build a large number of shelters. This became entangled with a variety of considerations about arms control because it was important to limit the number of missiles, which we had agreed to do, and to distinguish the number of missiles from the number of shelters. It also became entangled with local concern about environmental effects in the Western states where it would have been based, and the effect, if a thermonuclear war started, of making that area into a special target. It finally got tangled up in the 1980 campaign, with the Reagan campaign

coming out strongly against the MX basing system. As a result, when they came into office, they were faced with the dilemma of finding some other basing system that would survive, and they never did. It's an example of how presidential campaigns lock the incoming president into an untenable position. It happens to just about every president.

Even before we canceled the B-1, we had decided to go ahead with an air-launched cruise missile as a way of assuring that the B-52 would be able to deliver a retaliatory strike that could penetrate upgraded Soviet air defenses. This also involved the arms control process, because at Vladivostok, where President Ford had met with Brezhnev, Kissinger and his staff had failed to lock into the agreement a provision that would allow us to put long-range cruise missiles up to 1500 kilometers on bombers. If those were in fact limited to 600 kilometers, which was the Russian understanding of the agreement, the penetration capability would be in considerable doubt. So we went ahead with a 1500 kilometer cruise missile range and negotiated it with the Russians and developed the Tomahawk cruise missile, which also later turned out to have important conventional capabilities. Those were what we proceeded with right at the beginning with strategic forces. We also, later, began development of a more advanced bomber, the B-2 stealth bomber, which would have greatly enhanced penetration characteristics compared with the B-1.

Matloff: Would the upgrading of the B-52 in your administration be part of this?

Brown: Yes, but that was a natural thing which went on all of the time as part of an upgrading program for existing systems. We improved the accuracy of the Minuteman, as well, with upgraded guidance systems. The B-52, the newest of which were in 1977 more than 15 years old, and the older ones up to 25 years old, had to be upgraded structurally. The structure had to be essentially refurbished, and electronic countermeasures had to be included. The most important upgrade of the B-52 was the addition of the cruise missile.

Matloff: How do you stand on the counterforce versus countercity doctrine?

Brown: My own attitude was that the principal U.S. retaliatory capability had to be aimed at Soviet military forces. The inevitable effect of that, however, given the geographical location of many of those forces, would be a large number of civilian casualties. The United States had also to be able to preserve a reserve force which could retaliate against Soviet attacks on U.S. cities. In other words, our strategic plan, the SIOP, had to be sufficiently flexible to be able to respond to an attack, depending upon what the attack was. If an attack was launched purposefully on our military forces, we would retaliate principally on military forces. Since I believed that an attack would probably cover U.S. population as well, our retaliatory attack would probably go that way. But we needed to be able to, and the SIOP provided for, a selective response withholding attacks from urban-industrial areas at various levels, and withholding from geographical areas such as Eastern Europe as contrasted with the Soviet Union. My personal belief was that if a thermonuclear war happened, it would be very difficult to limit it in that form. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that it was important to have that selectivity and we, as part of our review of the SIOP, added options to make our strikes more selective, depending upon how such a conflict evolved. So my answer to you is that I believed that we needed both capabilities and needed, insofar as possible, to try to maintain options that would emphasize one or the other; but, in practice, I doubted that it would be possible to maintain the distinction.

Matloff: Which leads me to two of those papers that came out, one on PD-18 and the other on PD-59. What role did you and your staff play in connection with both and what did you regard as the significance of both?

Brown: Remind me of the title of PD-18.

Matloff: It's the one signed by Carter in '77; it had to do with essential equivalence in nuclear competition.

Brown: PD-18 essentially expressed the views that I have outlined to you already. On such issues I and my staff, including, of course, the Joint Staff, played the leading role. We did the analysis. I probably chaired the National Security Council subcommittee that evolved the study and made the recommendations to the President for a presidential decision. I probably chaired the response to the presidential memorandum setting up the study and then making recommendations.

I don't think there was any special argument within the administration about these issues. Nor was there, really, with respect to PD-59, which came toward the end of the administration, in 1980, and generated more public controversy. PD-59 was a refinement of the previous doctrine, and was in the direction of a still more selective capability. PD-59 expressed the view that since we were trying to deter the Soviet leadership, we should be able selectively to target the assets and values they prized most highly. Those were, in order, their own survival, their own power within the Soviet Union, the military capability of the Soviet Union, productive capacity, and, finally, the people of the Soviet Union. PD-59 said make it clear to the Soviet leadership that in every stage of a conflict, including a thermonuclear conflict, any escalation on their part would leave them worse off than before they made the escalation. That is the way deterrence should operate. Therefore, we said we wanted to be able to target Soviet military forces, including Soviet conventional forces, which they prized as the basis on which they could threaten and intimidate others. Indeed, if a thermonuclear war were to leave them open to an attack by China, as a result of Soviet conventional forces being destroyed, that would be an additional deterrent. We should be able to target their command and control capabilities and, indeed, the physical survival of the Soviet leadership; that also would be a deterrent. In PD-59 we were careful to note, although unfortunately this got lost in the public exposition, that we would not target the Soviet leadership at the beginning of a conflict, because you wanted to preserve them to be able to

negotiate an end to the war before complete mutual destruction. On the other hand, if and when our cities had been destroyed, there would not be much purpose in keeping the Soviet leadership shielded from attack, and therefore we would want to be able to target them. So PD-59 fundamentally was a further refinement in the direction of more selective attack capability to fight a thermonuclear war if one happened. The perception that clearly evolved among some parts of the public that this meant that we thought that a war-fighting capability was likely to be able to allow survival in a thermonuclear war was an incorrect perception, but I think it was probably fostered by some of the statements made by some of the people in the administration. In all my annual reports to the Congress I tried to make it clear that these capabilities were prudent to have, but that I was myself rather skeptical that if a thermonuclear war began these distinctions could be preserved.

Matloff: President Carter approved PD-59 in July 1980. Do you recall if you ever discussed the meaning of this approach with him? Was he receptive?

Brown: Yes. I had no doubt that he agreed with my view of this. He didn't think that a thermonuclear war was likely to be containable but I think he agreed with me that it was worth doing what we could to give us the physical capabilities to do that.

Matloff: I take it that you regarded PD-59 as not a new strategic doctrine and not a radical departure. And yet, in his memoirs Brzezinski emphasizes PD-59 "as an important new step in American strategic thought with its concern for a long conflict rather than assumption of a brief, spasmodic, and apocalyptic conflict hitherto postulated in American war planning." Would you agree with his judgment?

Brown: It was new to him. Actually, in the 1960s McNamara had said we had to go from a spasm to an ability to be selective. It's true that the SIOP evolved very slowly, in that capabilities followed doctrine by a long period in most of these matters, but in fact it was not a new concept at all. It may have been new to Brzezinski, but I

think he also had rather more faith than I that this sort of salami slicing would actually work if a thermonuclear war took place, and therefore he probably considered it more groundbreaking than I.

Let me quote something from the annual report that I sent to the Congress in January 1981, at the end of the Carter administration. I didn't write this whole report, but there are quite a few paragraphs of it that I wrote myself, and this piece I did write: "The first point is this countervailing strategy is designed with the Soviets in mind. Not only must we have the forces, doctrine, and will to retaliate if attacked, we must convince the Soviets in advance that we do. The second basic point is that because the world is constantly changing our strategy evolves slowly, almost continually, over time to adapt to changes in U.S. technology and military capabilities. A strategic doctrine that served well when the U.S. had only a few dozen nuclear weapons and the Soviets none would hardly serve as well unchanged in a world in which we have about 9,000 strategic warheads and they have about 7,000. As the strategic balance shifted from overwhelming U.S. superiority to essential equivalence, and as ICBM accuracies have steadily improved to the point that hard target kill probabilities are quite high, our doctrine must adapt itself to these new realities. This does not mean that the objective of our doctrine changes; on the contrary, deterrence remains, as it always has been, our basic goal. Our countervailing strategy today is the natural evolution of the conceptual foundations built over a generation by men like Robert McNamara and James Schlesinger. The Administration's systematic contributions to the evolution of strategic doctrine began in the summer of 1977 when President Carter ordered a comprehensive review of U.S. strategic policy to insure its continued viability and deterrent effect in an era of strategic nuclear parity. Over the next 18 months, experts conducted an extensive review, and the broad set of principles this review yielded constitute the essence of the countervailing strategy. I outlined these in my FY 1981 Defense

Report and reviewed them at the NATO Nuclear Planning Group meeting in Norway in June 1980." Then I mentioned PD-59: "Our countervailing strategy--designed to provide effective deterrence--tells the world that no potential adversary of the U.S. could ever conclude that the fruits of his aggression would be worth his own costs." I go on to describe what the employment policy was--flexibility, escalation control, survivability, endurance. I go on to the targeting objectives--strategic nuclear forces of the Soviet Union, so that we could limit damage to ourselves to the extent possible, other military forces, leadership and control, industrial and economic base. Essentially what I told you. It's clear that my view then, as my view now, is that this was an evolution in strategic doctrine. It was not revolutionary; it was a natural change in response in response to changes in Soviet capabilities and our capabilities and to our perception of Soviet motivations and behavior.

Matloff: You were going, in a sense, one step further than your predecessors, Schlesinger and Rumsfeld, in codifying this approach.

Brown: Being more specific and more detailed. In fact, the capabilities that are required for that sort of doctrine didn't come fully into place probably until late in the Reagan administration. One can question, in fact, whether they are completely in place even now. Since the Soviet Union is no more, and the nature of what is required is changed, I suspect that they may never reach completion.

Matloff: Some critics have charged that since the almost simultaneous disclosures of PD-59 and stealth technology came in the midst of the 1980 presidential campaign that the Carter administration leaked them to counter charges of weakness and boost its reelection chances. Were you drawn in on that controversy?

Brown: Very much. Of course, any action in a year of a presidential election probably has some political component to it. Even if it doesn't, it is seen as having an enormous political component. I would say that the fact that there was a political campaign probably did influence the publicity that was given to it by both sides. To

some extent the decisions are influenced by the attacks of the political party that is out of power, and then after they are made, whatever they are, the party in power tries to use them to its own political advantage. But I don't think it changed either one of those decisions. I think that it probably did influence the public discussion on both sides.

Matloff: Some critics have even charged that PD-59 made it more likely that the United States would initiate a nuclear conflict.

Brown: If you read what PD-59 says, it is clear that that is not the case. The whole purpose was to prevent, not to initiate, a war. To some people, the fact that we had nuclear weapons made a nuclear war more likely; if the Soviets had them and we didn't, then there probably wouldn't be a nuclear war. It's a matter of the French statement "méchant animal, il se defend"--wicked animal, it defends itself. Some critics considered that the United States was principally responsible for tensions, and therefore the stronger the United States was the more likely there was to be a war. I did not have that view. My view was that America's strength prevented a war, and along those lines PD-59, both in its nature and in its rhetoric, took the position that anybody who attacked would lose by attacking, and that made war less likely. A situation in which somebody who attacks gains more by attacking, in my view, makes war more likely. But that was a substantive argument, and it is one that is now going to be fought by historians. In those days it was fought by those active in public policy.

Matloff: In connection with the Carter doctrine, the proclamation of the doctrine in the State of the Union address of January 23, 1980, were you consulted before its announcement?

Brown: Yes. I remember talking over its language with the President over the phone before he delivered it. I don't remember the effect I had on the wording, but I suggested changing some of the words to strengthen it, along the lines that any

attempt from outside the region to dominate resources of the region would be taken as a threat to American national security.

Matloff: The region meaning the Persian Gulf?

Brown: Yes. This happened after the Iranian revolution and there was considerable concern, which I shared, that the Soviets would attempt to take advantage of this to dominate or even take over parts of northern Iran. We were aware that the Soviets had carried out command post exercises that involved the hypothetical deployment of Soviet forces to conquer Iran, with Soviet forces reaching the Persian Gulf. Everybody has contingency plans, and that didn't mean that they were planning to do it, that they intended to do it; but if they had a plan that hypothetically would allow them to do it, we had to have one that would resist. The State of the Union address reflected the public posture analog of that. Whenever you have a contingency plan corresponding to your security interest in a region, it makes sense to set that interest forth publicly. My own approach to this is that the other side can't be quite sure what your capabilities are, and you won't know for sure what they are, yourself. You want to deter the other side. One way that you deter them is announcing that you have a doctrine, a position, a security interest in the region, that you are prepared to back up with force. Although you're not going to have the military capability to defend all those interests simultaneously, you can do several of them. To the extent that your potential adversary perceives this, and may well tend to overestimate your capabilities, it makes sense to announce a security perimeter somewhat larger than you would actually be able to defend simultaneously. The Carter doctrine was an example of that, because our ability to prevent a Soviet attack from penetrating fairly far into Iran at that time was pretty limited. We backed it up by the formation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, for which we established a headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida, and started to organize a capability that would be able to be deployed anywhere in the world, and

especially the Persian Gulf. Subsequently, in the Reagan administration, that became a unified command, the Central Command, and was the organization that fought the Persian Gulf war. Thus, you announce an intention before you have the capability, and then you develop the capability.

Goldberg: Who in the administration inspired this document? Drafted it for the President or persuaded him on this issue?

Brown: It was mostly done in the NSC staff, but Defense was involved.

Matloff: You touched on the RDJTF. Was the initiative for this coming from Defense?

Brown: Yes. We concluded that if we were going to say something like this, we ought to do something as well. This was just the very beginning of such a capability. There were extensive discussions during 1980 on just what we might be able to accomplish in the way of a military capability to be deployed into the Persian Gulf in response to a Soviet attack. We were not at that time thinking of a war with either Iran or Iraq.

Matloff: How closely did President Carter follow the development of military doctrine and strategy?

Brown: He was in on all of this. When it came to the RDJTF, for example, there were several discussions with him. When the NSC principals met on this subject, we had discussed the RDJTF with him before we announced. Those discussions continued through 1980. I remember when Ed Muskie became Secretary of State, in April 1980 after Vance resigned, those discussions continued. He was less favorable toward the idea that we might actually be able to resist a Soviet attempt to take over the Persian Gulf oil fields. He took the view that the American public wouldn't stand for a situation in which American forces were defending Persian Gulf oil that was of more interest to our European and Japanese allies than it was to ourselves. That was an interesting foreshadowing of the debate about the Persian Gulf war. I suspect that

to the degree that Ed was wrong, and the public supported the Gulf War, it was only because it worked so well. If it had been a matter that dragged on for some months of combat with lots of U.S. casualties, his view would have been right. Since it was so effectively fought, the American public turned out to be willing to do it.

Goldberg: Also, the antagonist was a Middle Eastern state and not the Soviet Union, which makes a considerable difference.

Brown: Both as to the outcome and as to the risk. I believe that it is no accident that U.S. and Soviet forces never directly engaged each other through the 40 years of the Cold War. Both sides perceived that the risks of thermonuclear war resulting from that would have been great, and were both very cautious. Viewed from that background, one can see that part of the purpose of the Carter doctrine, of the RDJTF, and of the Central Command that followed it was to put the Soviets on notice that that kind of behavior risked an engagement between U.S. and Soviet troops and therefore carried some risk of a thermonuclear war.

Matloff: The actual date when you activated the RDJTF was 1 March 1980. Do you feel, in retrospect, that your views on strategy changed as a result of your experience as Sec/Def? or did that experience confirm those views?

Brown: I think, if anything, my views on strategy were confirmed, with this reservation: my experience as Secretary of Defense intensified the duality of those views. That is to say, it is very important to have the selective capabilities to increase the survivability of your forces and to be able to target selectively and accurately so as to preserve the maximum flexibility of options, but at the same time my skepticism that a strategic war would remain limited also intensified. Therefore, when I came out, I concluded that the elaborate detailed plans--elaborate and detailed plans and selective capabilities--were even more important, but for a peculiar reason. That was that the more you had those capabilities and the clearer it was to the other side that you had them, the better deterrence would work. It was

very important that deterrence work, because if a war started, these plans wouldn't work out the way you said.

Goldberg: They usually don't.

Matloff: In his book, The Essence of Security, McNamara wrote: "Every hour of every day the Secretary of Defense is confronted by a conflict between the national interests and the parochial interests of particular industries, individual services, or local areas." Was that your experience? Would you agree with his statement?

Brown: It may not be explicit every hour of the day, but the problems that you are dealing with every hour of the day have that as part of their content. I would agree with the statement, but I would say that that is not unique in governmental or human experience. It is part of every political action in our form of government. The national interest is not a simple sum of all the individual and parochial interests, but it is a very complex and weighted sum of those. The Secretary of Defense is not the only person who is confronted with this. He, like the President and the Secretary of State, has a broader perception of one overriding national interest--the survival of the United States in the face of political or military threats from the outside. That's probably more true of the national security part of the U.S. government than it is of most of the domestic agencies. The Secretary of Health and Social Services, Transportation, or Housing and Urban Development, is more part of the special interests that he or she represents and seeks to control than in the case of the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State. The Secretary of Defense obviously feels strong pressures from the individual services and the military as a group, from the defense industry, and from the local people who have an interest in each military base or plant. He has to try simultaneously to meld those ideas, purposes, interests, and drives into the U.S. military capability and security interests. At the same time, he has to see the military security of the United States as part of a larger political-economic security and a larger national interest. Obviously, McNamara felt that very

strongly; I felt it very strongly; every Secretary feels it strongly. Each one balances these things differently.

Goldberg: Yes, but is the Secretary of Defense more subject than other department and agency heads to this competition and pressure from inside his own establishment? To a much greater extent than the others? The services, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, do exert, it seems to me, a great deal more pressure.

Brown: There are several factors here. Competition exists in other agencies--for example, in Health and Social Services--which are an amalgam also, like the Defense Department, of preexisting organizations that existed before there was a Health and Social Services, or, before that, an HEW Department. They contend with each other. The same thing is true in the Department of Commerce. They contend for funds. So that kind of competition goes on in every department. There's a peculiar intensity in the Defense Department, for several reasons. First of all, the services have an esprit de corps, a spirit, and an identity within each one of them that is much more intense and goes far beyond what is the case in the components of other departments. The Bureau of Standards, which became the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Commerce Department, of which it is a part, don't have the same kind of dedication to their institution that a three-star general in the Army or a captain in the Navy has. The identification with his service is of an altogether different kind of intensity. As I said on another occasion, the loyalty that extends up to the Chief of Staff suffers considerable attenuation when it gets to the Secretary of the military department and, in the past, often a complete break when it gets to the Secretary of Defense. That is especially the case in Defense although, again, even in the rest of the government, there is something of a separation between the civil service people and the political appointees. That's one effect. Another is an intensity that comes from the belief that the physical survival of the country depends upon the tank that you want to purchase, or in the case of a defense contractor,

upon having the government purchase the tank or aircraft that you produce. Or the feeling of the chief of staff of the service that whether there are 10, 12 or 15 aircraft carriers is going to determine whether the country survives. That is, in my view, in almost every case, an extreme overestimate of the importance of the individual decisions. But the intensity is there because of the belief that the survival of the country depends on it. In that sense you are correct--it is so different in intensity as to perhaps become a difference in kind, but it is the same sort of thing.

Matloff: Did you find the interservice rivalry a serious problem during your tenure? and how did you deal with it?

Brown: Sure it was a serious problem. The services tend to be organized each to believe that they ought to be able to defend the country all by themselves. The Navy is the most extreme in this regard. The Air Force somewhat less so, and the Army least of all, in my judgment. The Army knows that so long as it is not fighting on American soil, it depends on the other services to get it where it's going, supply it, and keep it from being attacked from the air. The Army understands that it can't do it all by itself, but it still has its arguments with the Marines about the ground force part of the job. The Air Force had in the past, and has again revived as a result of the Persian Gulf war, the belief that it can do the whole job in a relatively sterile way from the skies, if only it gets enough budgetary support. The Navy is the most extreme, partly because it has its own air force and its own army, and it has been able to make the best argument that all you need is the Department of the Navy. That's true, providing you don't need to fight very far inland. Interservice rivalry is a serious problem. It showed itself in competition for budgets; it showed itself in the willingness of all of the services, but not all to the same degree, to go around the Secretary of Defense and around the President, which the Congress encourages, and showed itself in opposition to attempts to try to make the forces more able to fight together. I can give some examples. There were, for example, differences about the

relative size of land-based and sea-based air. There always are. The Navy was especially unhappy at suggestions that cruise missiles, including by the way sea-based cruise missiles, might be able to replace some naval air. There were difficulties because Navy and Air Force aircraft weren't able to refuel in the same way. In that case, when it was brought to the attention of the respective chiefs of service they actually fixed it. It wouldn't have happened naturally; it had to be brought to their attention. The Marines wanted their own close-support aircraft--the AV-8B--and were unwilling to use even Navy aircraft, the F-18s, instead, let alone consider the idea that the Air Force might be able to support them with fixed-wing aircraft. The Air Force was never particularly willing to contemplate giving up its helicopters and letting the Army operate all the helicopters. We also got into difficulty when the suggestion was made that we have a small group of civilians review the operating plans, the war plans. Dave Jones and I had agreed on that but none of the other Chiefs were eager to have something like that done. They didn't want a situation where you had a joint military-civilian team doing this.

Goldberg: What kind of civilians did you have in mind?

Brown: People from ISA and from the Under Secretary of Policy office. How did I get around this? I tried most of all to use the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for this purpose. I would have him attend budget meetings, for example, and get his individual opinion. Of course, that depends upon the willingness of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs to be a purple suiter, to put aside somewhat the interests of the service from which he comes. I think some of them are able to actually do that more than others.

Goldberg: It often hurts them, doesn't it?

Brown: In the case of Jones, he already had a purple suit reputation within the Air Force, so that he was kind of stuck with it and therefore was probably more willing

to do it. I suspect that Bill Crowe was somewhat in the same situation. I'm quite sure that Tom Moorer didn't behave that way.

Goldberg: How about George Brown?

Brown: George was kind of intermediate. George had a lot of purple suit service. He had been McNamara's military assistant in the early '60s and, therefore, I think had some degree of willingness to override his own service's views. But he was very reluctant to overrule any of the Chiefs. In other words, his tendency, and it was only partly his own nature and partly the state of the organization at that time, was to give at least some support to what any of the Chiefs were for. One way out of an argument over roles and missions or splitting up the budget is to give everybody what he wants, to duplicate the roles. I think Colin Powell is showing a little bit of that now. Perhaps at a time when push used to drive down military budgets and capabilities as far as the Congress and the President are able to do it, it is not an unreasonable reaction to try to defend everything, but it won't work in the end.

Goldberg: When you came in, was there any tendency on the part of the services to connect you with McNamara? Look on you as somebody coming back from the McNamara era?

Brown: Some, although the Air Force people knew that I had been willing to stand up for them when I thought they were right. I think the Navy, always the most difficult problem for any Secretary of Defense, was especially suspicious of me because not only was I a McNamara "Whiz Kid," but I had also been Secretary of the Air Force. So I think they were probably quite suspicious and concerned. Toward the end, one would see complaints in the press or from retired people saying, "Not only did he come from the Air Force, he has an Air Force Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and has passed over the Army." The Navy also complained that Admiral Tim Holloway had been passed over as a possible Chairman. They would talk about Carl

Smith, my (Air Force) military assistant, neglecting the fact that I had had two Navy principal military assistants before that.

Matloff: You alluded to this earlier, in connection with particular interests involving the bases. What was your experience with Congress when you launched your base-closing initiatives?

Brown: We tried to close them, and we didn't succeed. The same Congress that was complaining about waste reacted by passing a law that made it almost impossible to close bases. And they have made it still more difficult for subsequent Secretaries of Defense. They also made it more difficult for themselves; so difficult that they had to give the authority to somebody else, to a commission. They made it impossible both for the Secretary of Defense and for the Congress, and they finally had to give it to somebody else to decide, neither the Executive Branch nor the Congress, which shows you what trouble you can get into when you get too deeply into the pork barrel.

Goldberg: They can change their minds again, too, for that matter.

Brown: What will happen now is not obvious to me. They barely made it the last time.

Matloff: What was your approach to defense budget formulation? Did you feel that changes were needed in the system, and how did you see the roles of OSD, JCS, and the services in that process?

Brown: As usual, you have a programming system and a budgeting system. They never quite come together, because you never know what the budget is going to be until very late in the game, and it never quite fits the program. The only time it did was in the Reagan administration, when the President essentially gave the Secretary of Defense the authority to come in with any budget he wanted, and the Secretary of Defense produced the budget by stapling together the requests of the services.

Goldberg: And adding to them, also.

Brown: Aside from that anomaly, what happens is that you make up a program and it always turns out that the program costs more than you think it will and you have less money than you thought you had, so you have a double gap to fill and you try to do that in the last months of the year before the budget finally is put to bed--in the '60s it was in November, and in the early '70s it was December, and now it is often not until January. During that period you reexamine all your program decisions, you defer things, cut some things, and occasionally cancel some things. How do you do this? The services send in their program objective memoranda; they send in a budget. This was complicated during the Carter years by the idea of zero-based budgeting, in which every year you reprioritize everything and say what you would buy if there was only one dollar in the Defense Department, and what if there were two dollars, and so on. I thought that was not a great idea. Maybe for the budget of the State of Georgia, but not for the budget of the United States. Because you 're stuck with some things and you can't look at every thing. You can't keep pulling up the plant to look at the roots every year. This was not unique, by the way, to the Carter administration. In the Eisenhower administration, Frank Lincoln, who was then Defense Department Comptroller, took the position, "the budget starts at zero."

Goldberg: He was only there for a year, so it didn't make any difference.

Brown: That's right. I only met him afterwards, but I know this was his position. I don't know how McNeil did it.

Goldberg: McNeil was a different story. He marked up the budget himself and eliminated systems to do it again.

Brown: OK. That was unusual. We didn't do it that way. We had a whole series of meetings. First with each of the services, going over its budget and trying to get a sense of what was important and what could be done. This was all against the background of a program that had been made up during the year. Most of the

budget was established during that programming cycle. But when you get down to the end of the year, then you look at the marginal things, and occasionally you will go back and look at a major item. I'd do it first with each of the services with the secretary and chief of the service, and the budget and program people from the service, and then we would have a meeting of the OSD people without the service secretaries present but with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs present and with each of the functional parts of the Defense Department present. I chaired those; sometimes I would ask Charles Duncan or Graham Claytor to do it. But the final sessions I was always in on and made the decisions myself or with Charles or Graham.

Matloff: How often were you dealing with the President and OMB over problems with the Defense budget?

Brown: There are two pieces there. Early in the Carter administration, the President himself would take the OMB approach. OMB can't admit that it has a number that it wants, it has to pretend that it's doing it on a program basis by looking at individual programs and coming up with some alternatives. Sometimes they are actually good ideas, more often they are off-the-wall and produced out of thin air in order to justify preconceived conclusions. This, of course, is the same charge that the service makes against OSD sometimes, but that's how it seems to me. The President early on would sometimes himself listen to these and, again, affect to make the decision on the basis of the program. That was the first couple of years; after that he didn't do it any more. He would meet with me; we'd discuss it and he would tell me "This is what the budget is going to be, go back and do it." Which, as I say, is different from the procedure at the beginning. My experience was that the President was more inclined than his budget directors to cut the Defense budget. Lance, briefly, and McIntyre at some length--McIntyre and John White--were prepared to have a bigger Defense budget than President Carter was. But not by much.

Matloff: What were your tactics in dealing with Congress over the defense budget?

Brown: I defended the budget, and I thought it was right. I mentioned that experience in which Tip O'Neill and my friend John Brademas adopted the unusual position that the Secretary of Defense had no right to defend the President's budget, that the Congress made the budget. Again, that was a political ploy.

Matloff: Your successor was certainly quite confrontational in his dealings with the Congress over this.

Brown: I defended the President's budget, but I never accused the Congress of being unpatriotic.

Goldberg: What did O'Neill and Brademas mean by that?

Brown: The point is that the budget resolution is something that is entirely for the Congress. And, indeed, it is. The administration has no say, except that it submitted a budget. My position was that if asked what the defense budget should be, I will say it should be the President's proposed defense budget. Their position was that they weren't dealing with the President's budget; they were dealing with the congressional budget resolution.

Matloff: How much of your time would you estimate was spent on preparing and defending the budget?

Brown: It's hard to separate it out, because the Defense program and the Defense budget are two parts of the same thing. It, of course, varies over the year. There are times of the year when you are totally immersed--February and March, largely. But it must be at least 10 percent.

Goldberg: How much time do you estimate you spent dealing with Congress?

Brown: If you include the budget, it could probably be as much as 20 percent. I was fairly successful in adopting the position that I would testify only before a full committee. The only subcommittee I testified before was the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. I got away with that pretty well, and that tended to

limit it somewhat. Again, a big difference from the '60s, in numbers of subcommittees.

Goldberg: The first secretary of defense, Forrestal, estimated he spent 14 percent of his time dealing with Congress. How he arrived at that, I don't have the slightest notion, but that was the estimate that he gave personally.

Brown: I don't think it has changed a lot, myself. It has changed probably more for subordinates, who now have to spend more time.

Matloff: You spoke about zero-based budgeting, so I won't go into that.

Brown: It was worth trying, but I don't think it worked.

Matloff: During the 1976 campaign Carter had criticized Defense spending levels of the Ford administration and promised cuts to be between 5 to 7 billion dollars. How did you react to that?

Brown: I thought it was a mistake. It's another example of a candidate locking himself into an unfortunate position, which we spent some time getting ourselves out of. I think in the end we did, by twisting it around to say, "5 to 7 billion dollars less than the Ford administration would have spent. We did achieve that, but it's clearly not what he was promising.

Goldberg: Do you think Clinton is in a better position now of promising 5 percent less than Bush is proposing to spend?

Brown: Yes. If the Defense budget is actually that large, I'll be surprised.

Matloff: How do you account for the fact that budgets during your term generally moved upward; and for the departure of the Carter administration from its earlier emphasis on curtailing the Defense budget? And what role did you play in that movement?

Brown: The statement during the campaign was a mistake. The external world required a defense capability in budget of the kind that we produced, or actually somewhat larger, and I think I played a significant role in that.

Goldberg: Do you think that you inherited from the previous two administrations a hollow Army and a hollow military force?

Brown: They had actually demobilized very substantially, but during Rumsfeld's short tenure they had forecast the turnaround. It's easy for an outgoing administration to include a budget proposal for defense for the year after its departure, if that is popular with the public, that is larger than they would actually carry out if they were in office, and to include revenue projections that pay for it that are also unrealistic. We proposed a five percent real increase when we went out. The Ford administration had proposed a budget that was on the way up. We continued that. Although we cut back from what they proposed, we made a real increase. As to the state of the military, indeed it was in fairly bad shape when we took office. We had improved it, in my judgment, somewhat when we left, but we had not by any means fixed it completely. I think that they had programmed more new systems and capabilities than their budget plans would have allowed for, and we pruned those back. I think we pruned them back more than we pruned the budget, so that what we did more completely funded what we were planning to do than was the case with what we inherited. But I think there was still a hiatus between what we programmed and what we had allowed funds for. I think that we actually improved some of the training rates and did more exercises and so forth, especially in the Army. There is a tendency, in fact, for Democratic administrations to fund the Army more than Republican administrations. I haven't quite figured out why, but we do tend to do that. I would not say that we inherited a hollow military, but there were significant deficiencies in it. We fixed some of them, but we didn't fix them all.

Goldberg: And the services would have to accept responsibility for a lot of the significant deficiencies, because of choices and allocations that they made.

Brown: The services, in my time, when it came to a choice among force structure, modernization, and readiness, tended to make force structure the highest priority. Modernization was next, and readiness the last, because they figured that if they had the force structure, it was easier to get the money for modernization and they could always take care of readiness later. I think that has changed since, but when I was there it was very difficult to get them to give readiness a high enough priority. I tried to order things the other way. Readiness is the most important, modernization is next, and though force structure is important if all you have is force structure and it is neither modern nor ready, then you are like a third world military force. The unified and specified commanders tend to put readiness first, and partly as a result of the change in relative influence between the CINCS and the services, those priorities have changed. But indeed, in those days, the late '70s, given complete authority to allocate money within their own budgets, the services would have put readiness quite low.

Goldberg: That is a large part of the explanation for the hollow Army, then, isn't it?

Brown: If they had had more money, it wouldn't have been so hollow. Incidentally, the phrase was abused and misunderstood. When Shy Meyer used it, I think he meant that we have a capability to fight for a short time, but follow on forces are not there. It was interpreted by the press and some politicians to mean that we couldn't fight. Indeed, part of the reason for Shy Meyers's concern was something that had been done in the Nixon and Ford administrations. Actually, Jim Schlesinger did it, and I think he felt it was a good idea at the time. I'm not so sure that it is, and I think that the Army wants to change it. It is a source of argument between the regulars and the reserves. Schlesinger told Abrams he could have two more divisions but no more people and would have to put the combat support into the reserves. That gives you a hollow Army if you don't call up the reserves.

Matloff: Do you recall, in connection with the negotiations in the fall of 1979 over the budget, did President Carter agree to support higher increases in the Defense budget partly to placate Senate opponents of the SALT II treaty, in which you were very much involved? Were you consulted and did you advise on that?

Brown: Yes. I told the President that would make a difference in Senate support, and he believed it, and I think it was true. We made a decision that we would go for a 5 percent real increase. That was something that came out of discussions I had with Senator Nunn and others, whose support was very important.

Matloff: Looking back, were you satisfied in general with Defense's share of the federal budget during your tenure?

Brown: I believed that somewhere between 3 and 5 percent a year in real growth during those four years would have been the correct judgment as to resources. Given the other economic problems, I can understand why the President made the decision he did. He felt, correctly, that there was significant waste within the Defense Department. What he may not have given full enough consideration to was that if you cut the budget, it is not necessarily the waste that goes first. The unjustified things are in there because they are politically strong, and the politically motivated things are not the first to go. Be that as it may, I can understand why, instead of somewhere between 3 and 5 percent, we had something like 2 percent real annually averaged over the 4 years. I also think that President Carter, because he had been in the military, probably overestimated the waste in the military compared to that in all the other departments of the government.

Matloff: How successful do you feel you were with the Congress and the President in building real growth in national security before the end of your term?

Brown: Others tell me that my dissatisfaction with my performance is excessive; that changing things around from a campaign commitment to cut the budget by 5 to 7

billion dollars to a couple of percent a year rise in real terms was a significant accomplishment. But I wasn't satisfied with my performance; I'm still not..

Matloff: What was your attitude on the draft versus the volunteer force?

Brown: It was a settled issue by the time I came. I considered that the gain in public acceptance of the military that was achieved by the end of the draft was worth whatever deficiencies it introduced, because I didn't believe that we could go back to the situation in the fifties, in which everyone was expected to serve and therefore you got a real cross-section of the public. If you reintroduced the draft, it would be like the situation during Vietnam, where it was not uniformly applied. I accepted the end of the draft as probably inevitable and appropriate. I was concerned about the quality of the people that we were getting and therefore pressed for increased pay for the military. What had happened was that the military had received pay increases during the first half of the '70s that put them in fairly good shape, but when inflation ignited they rapidly went downhill compared to the rest of the public. That made it hard to recruit good people into the enlisted ranks. But I never concluded that a reimposition of the draft would solve that problem.

Matloff: You mentioned some of your strategic assumptions that guided your decisions in connection with weaponry. Were there any other basic principles that guided your preferences and decisions on research and development as well as weapons acquisition?

Brown: On research and development, I believed that it was important to continue to develop the research and technology base, which was only about ten percent of the whole R&D budget. I felt strongly that that should be continued and that supporting universities ought to be continued. Most of the R&D budget went for advanced development or weapons systems. Advanced development would include prototypes, applied technology, and so forth. Weapons systems, of course, consumed the big expenditures, involving the systems development either before or

in the course of producing a weapon. DARPA was an excellent vehicle for technology development and advanced development. Indeed, Stealth technology and precision-guided munitions were all incubated there and then handed over to the services. I had a strong view that there were some force multipliers, especially in data processing, precision-guided munitions, cruise missiles, Stealth, plus several others that I can't mention at this level of classification, that deserved special push-- extra funding, special handling, setting up a special program office that would have a clear line of communication to the office of the Secretary of Defense. In the case of cruise missiles, for example, we did that--we set up a joint program office. Precision-guided munitions also fell into that category. So did the AWACS aircraft, command and control systems, some intelligence systems--all things that proved their worth during the Gulf war. In Bill Perry I had someone with whom I agreed completely on this and could turn it over to, and I did.

Matloff: I take it that you believed in a balanced strategic nuclear triad, as you said earlier; and further work on advanced nuclear bombers, as well as submarines. How about nuclear aircraft carriers?

Brown: My view about aircraft carriers was then as it is now, that it's extremely important to have some aircraft carriers, because they provide a visible presence in peacetime, and they provide an ability to operate from offshore when you don't have access to land bases. I thought the attack carrier would play little role in any European war, but a substantial role in East Asia where, however, the intensity was likely to be less. Therefore, I would have preferred to have more and smaller carriers, but, unfortunately, that argument had been lost and we couldn't afford to junk the carriers we had and put in a 50 percent larger force of smaller carriers. When it came to the balance between land-based air and sea-based air, I believed that land-based air, whenever you have access to land bases, is far more cost effective over a protracted period. The Vietnam War experience, with which I was

well familiar, proved that. So large a fraction of an aircraft carrier's complement is devoted to defending the aircraft carrier that it really has only a small power projection capability, which is fine in some situations, but not in a major conflict. So at that time I would have said, "You don't need 15, you need 12." Now I'd say, "You need 9 or 10," and for a somewhat different purpose now. I thought that aircraft carriers could be a useful way of assuring sea lines of communication, but they are not the only way. I did prefer aircraft carriers to battleships. So I thought we needed some aircraft carriers, but not as many as we had in the program. Incidentally, there is always an argument between the Navy and the Air Force as to vulnerability. It's a matter of judgment. An aircraft carrier is much harder to find than an airfield, but it's a lot easier to sink or to put out of action once it is found.

Goldberg: The Navy is very sensitive to its vulnerability.

Brown: It is harder to find. If the other side has good aircraft capability, it can put your airfield out of action because it knows where it is. We did that to the Iraqis. But an aircraft carrier is also vulnerable to submarines.

Goldberg: Exactly, and it is operating off-shore and projecting a broad target.

Brown: We need some of both, but the question is the mix. I have always felt that our mix leaned too far in the direction of aircraft carriers, given how much they cost.

Matloff: This might be a good point to stop. Not that we are finished.

Brown: You're never finished. What fraction of your questions have you finished?

Matloff: The greater part. We are heading down the home stretch.