The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR DONALD K. STEINBERG

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Q: Today is the 28th of April 2005. This is an interview with Donald K. Steinberg. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Don, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

STEINBERG: I was born in Los Angeles, California on March 25, 1953.

Q: Tell me a bit about the Steinberg family. What do you know about them and what they were up to?

STEINBERG: My father was a second-generation immigrant. His father came from Russia in the early 1900s. He was a restaurateur and eventually became manager of the Hillcrest Country Club in Los Angeles. This is where many of the Jewish entertainers were members because they weren't allowed to join other clubs.

My father grew up on the laps of Groucho Marx, George Burns, Georgie Jessel and all those great comedians. After college and the Marine Corps, my father went into education and taught at inner city schools in Los Angeles for much of his career, and then went into administration and became a high school principal in Los Angeles. He was also active in human relations. He had earned a doctorate writing about the response to the riots in Watts in August 1965. One recommendation he made was to establish a Human Relations Commission for the city, and when it was finally set up, my father was its president for many years.

On my mother's side, a very similar background. Her grandparents came over from Poland and Russia, as well. Her mother passed away early on, and she was essentially raised by her older sisters. Both my parents went to UCLA (University of California Los Angeles) in the 1940s, which is where they met. She was the editor of the UCLA college newspaper, The Daily Bruin, and my father was the sports editor of the newspaper. It was a marriage made on Fleet Street. [Fleet Street is an old reference to the street in London where many newspapers had their headquarters. It came to be used as a short-hand for any newspaper or journalist-related activity. –Ed.]

Q: In your family background, how Jewish was the family when you arrived?

STEINBERG: Our family was culturally Jewish, but not very religious. We didn't go to temple regularly. We celebrated the holidays, especially with our cousins, who were somewhat more practicing. That said, we were raised with what we considered to be strong Jewish ethical values. The important thing was how much you did for other people. Not how much money you made, how many degrees you'd earned, or what kind of car you drove.

Q: Where did you live?

STEINBERG: We lived in West Los Angeles, probably about three miles away from UCLA, in a nice but modest middle-class home.

Q: Did the Hillcrest Country Club and that whole thing spill over at all or was that whole thing just a memory for you?

STEINBERG: For me it was just a memory. My grandfather passed away soon after I was born, so that didn't really play out in my own experience.

Q: Was that the place that Groucho Marx says, I don't want to be the member of a club that would accept me?

STEINBERG: Right. Also, Groucho Marx married a non-Jewish woman and said that while he knew he couldn't join restricted his half-Jewish daughter should be allowed to join and swim in the pool up to her waist.

Q: Did you grow up in the very sizable Jewish community in Los Angeles.

STEINBERG: No, we grew up in a mixed neighborhood. In my elementary school I was one of the only Jews there, and a little bit of an oddity. Then we moved to a home about five miles away, and my Junior High School and High School about one-third white, one-third African-American, and one-third Jewish.

Q: That is an interesting area. A little about family home life. Brothers and sisters?

STEINBERG: I have two older brothers. One of them, Leigh, is one of the leading sports agents in the country. He was the basis for the 1996 movie, Jerry McGuire – the film's director, Cameron Crowe, followed Leigh around for two years to get the zeitgeist of his life for that movie. He represents a lot of football players, mostly quarterbacks, and is known for having his athletes give back substantial parts of their salaries to charities in the communities in which they live. My other brother, James, is a religious leader, involved with a group based in Northern California and Fiji that follows a form of Buddhism. He is one of the community's scholars and spiritual interpreters, and translates scriptures from the original Sanskrit into English. He has written many books and travels frequently to India, Fiji and other sites. I'm quite proud of both of them.

Q: Just out of curiosity, what set him off on that course, an unusual one for an American?

STEINBERG: In his early twenties, James was looking for a greater purpose in his life after university and tried a lot of different routes. He was at Woodstock, for example. Then he met the spiritual leader of the community and that was it. Now, James essentially views himself as a disciple of a great religious teacher.

Q: That's great. More power to him. At home, were politics discussed at home?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. Both of my parents were very liberal and strong Democrats. My father said that he never voted for Republican in his life. They grew up idolizing Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. My mom used to say that when she was a little girl and would pray, God had FDR's face. But more than politics, they were engaged in social issues in line with their ethical values. My father was an early fighter for racial equality. At one point, he circulated a petition in our neighborhood saying that we welcomed blacks and Hispanic as neighbors and he was a leading advocate of bussing to end de facto racial segregations in schools. We would occasionally get our hate mail and threats because he was fairly well known in that regard. My mom was less politically active, but shared these same values. I remember early on working for James Roosevelt who was running for Mayor of Los Angeles in 1965. At the age of 12, I was banging out pamphlets on my manual typewriter telling people to vote for Roosevelt for mayor. He lost, but that didn't dampen my enthusiasm for politics or social change.

Q: How did this translate in high school? Do you find yourself on the outs or the ins?

STEINBERG: My high school was liberal, and I fit right in. These were the late 1960s, and coincided with the protest against the Vietnam War, racism, sexism, and all the rest. We organized students strikes on various issues. It was like James Dean said: "What were we protesting against? What have you got?" I was deeply involved in high school in what you might call, "counter-culture."

Q: What schools did you go to?

STEINBERG: I went to Stoner Elementary School in Culver City, then one year at Overland Elementary School in West Los Angeles. Then to Palms Junior High and Hamilton High School, both in the same community.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

STEINBERG: I started reading only in my mid-teens. Before that, I was out playing sports, going to the beach, playing piano, and enjoying the outdoor life in Los Angeles. There was too much going on out there to stay in a room and read. It was until my college years that I discovered reading for enjoyment.

Q: How about movies and TV? You are near Culver City. This is the heart of the entertainment business.

STEINBERG: Big time. In her thirties, my mom became a film librarian, and she would bring home feature films and documentaries. We had a 35 mm film projector and we would project it on the wall, so films were a large influence in our lives. Every Saturday we'd also go to a movie theater. I got my sense of social justice from Frank Capra and my sense of humor from the Marx Brothers. I also watched too much television as child. I often wonder how much more I could have achieved in life if I had been reading or doing something productive instead of watching Leave It to Beaver and Gilligan's Island.

Q: Did you ever have any contact with movie people at all?

STEINBERG: Yes, we did. A number of my parent's friends at UCLA went into the film industry as writers and directors, and they would come over for charades parties. One was Stanley Roberts who was probably best known as the screenwriter for The Thin Man (1947) and The Caine Mutiny (1954). Another close friend of theirs was chief publicist for MGM, so we had a passing involvement with that industry.

Q: In High School what subjects particularly interested you?

STEINBERG: Social Studies, whether that meant history, economics, journalism, or current affairs. Plus I enjoyed math, algebra, and geometry. The sciences were harder for me, as were foreign language studies – ironically, given my choice of profession.

Q: You were going there in the 1960s. What was the situation; this was after the Watts Riots in August 1965, yes? How was black-white interaction working in those days?

STEINBERG: I had number of close black friends, but I would say the communities at the school remained fairly divided. There was less social interaction than I would have liked. That said, I played sports high school basketball and Junior League baseball, so there was a lot of interaction on the fields. Racial issues were indeed hot then, but given that almost all the whites were liberal, they didn't play out in confrontational ways at our school itself.

Q: How did Hispanic group fit in?

STEINBERG: Again, there wasn't much social mixing, but not much overt racism or racial tension.

Q: And the Asian community?

STEINBERG: It was a very small community.

Q: How do these protests work at a high school? Were you one of the instigators of figuring out issues and then going out?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. We had demonstrations on both local issues and big global issues. Everything from petitioning for an elimination of the dress code at the school, to

demonstrating against a proposal to cut sports program, to the need for draft counseling on our high school campus. Mostly it was the Vietnam War. On three or four occasions, I traveled up to San Francisco for moratoriums. That was a real consciousness-raising period because we'd hop on a bus for San Francisco and stop on the way at the site where Caesar Chavez was organizing farm workers against their exploitation. We'd then go up to Golden Gate Park and Haight-Ashbury and sit on the lawn with 300,000 other people listening to Crosby, Stills and Nash, and Joan Baez, and Bob Dylan protesting the war with their songs.

Q: Great time. Also, great weather. You couldn't do that in New England, except during the spring and early fall, I think.

STEINBERG: I also respected my parents for letting me do that. You know, I'm a 16-year-old kid and I'm jumping on a bus and going 400 miles to demonstrations in San Francisco where there was at least the possibility of arrests or violence. They not only accepted, they encouraged it.

Q: Did you find, participating in these events opened your eyes to social analysis, who's manipulating whom and that sort of thing?

STEINBERG: Not really. At this point, unlike my older brothers, my engagement wasn't based on deep political analysis. I was in sort of the second wave, more of a fellow traveler, you might say. The biggest exception came when the principal of our high school removed several student council officers – including me – for minor violations of rules. The student body president, the editor of the school newspaper, and I organized a student strike that essentially shut down the school. The principal was forced to hold a referendum, which restored us to our positions. That experience taught me a lot about how to plan and organize a campaign to achieve our goals.

Q: How did your father as the principal go along with it?

STEINBERG: It was hard for him, especially since he knew the principal. I have always respected him for the fact that when I was removed from office, he defended me. Yes, he punished me for by breaking the rules, but I was his son and he honestly thought I wasn't being treated fairly. He came to school and helped find ways to protect my rights. Later, when we organized these demonstrations he was completely supportive. No criticism what so ever. That was a real bonding experience with him.

Q: You graduated from high school when? And what was the draft situation then?

STEINBERG: 1970. In those days you had a draft number assigned at the age of 18, and I graduated high school when I was 17 years old. At college, there were still student deferments and I never had a period where I was vulnerable to being drafted. At that point, I was strongly pacifist, and I tried to become a conscientious objector, but it's very difficult to do that as a Jew. The only basis the Government considered at that point was

organized religion, and since Judaism doesn't really have a pacifist tradition, they never seriously considered that argument.

Q: Up through high school, did foreign affairs cross your radar very much?

STEINBERG: Not much. I'd occasionally do papers on foreign countries and issues, mostly in Africa and Latin America. The Vietnam War opened my eyes to international issues, but I wasn't considering a career in foreign affairs at that point. I always assumed that I'd become a civil rights lawyer and represent poor people and the down trodden. I was strongly influenced by television shows like The Defenders, where the lawyers were the good guys fighting for social justice. And my uncle, Larry Steinberg, was a civil rights lawyer who took on the system in defense of Hispanics, blacks, and other marginalized groups. He influenced me a lot, as well.

Q: What about Israel? In your family, up through high school, was it much of an issue?

STEINBERG: Not that much of an issue. As a Jew, I felt kinship with Israel and one aunt and uncle emigrated there with my cousins. One of my cousins is a leader in the Peace Now community. I do remember that during the June 1967 Six-Day War, many kids in my junior high school rooted for Israel almost the way they'd root for their favorite sports team. But there wasn't anything sophisticated about my vision of the Middle East.

Q. Was your family particularly involved in various organizations?

STEINBERG: They were deeply involved in the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish organization that fights anti-Semitism and racial and religious injustice of any kind. My aunt Eleanor Blumenberg – another great positive role model -- served as their national political director.

Q: 1970 you are off to college. Where?

STEINBERG: Reed College in Portland, Oregon, which is perhaps the most radical school in the country. As a liberal democrat, I felt myself one of the most conservative people on campus. In the 1972 presidential elections, the campus newspaper's poll had Richard Nixon third, George McGovern second, and Mao Zedong as the candidate of choice. It was enough to be a socialist – you had to be a Maoist or a Bakuninist or a Trotskyite. This was a very radical school.

Q: I interviewed someone prominent in the Foreign Service who graduated from there. Tell me, what did you know about the background of Reed. How did it get that way?

STEINBERG: It was started as a non-denominational school in the early 1900s. From the beginning, it was a place of intellectual independence. The founder's prohibited fraternities or sororities and did not permit formal intercollegiate athletics. There was an honor code that said you could do whatever you wanted as long as it didn't hurt yourself or other people. The students received grades, but were never told what they got unless it

was under a C, in order to limit a concentration on grades. Almost all the classes were small seminars, and professors were measured on how well they taught, not how much they published. And the emphasis was preparing us for lifetime learning, not teaching "facts."

Q: How did you run across Reed and what attracted you to it?

STEINBERG: The freedom, the openness of the school, and the intellectual challenges. It had a strong reputation for academics, including the highest percentage of people going on to PhD's of any school. It teaches you how to think. The whole curriculum is geared toward independent analysis. I took a Shakespeare class and we read just two plays the entire year, analyzing the language, the cultural and historical context, the racism and sexism of the times, and the psychology of the lead characters. I would meet with a friend who went to UCLA and took a Shakespeare class there, and at that point he could spout out quotes from all these different plays. I felt disadvantaged. But since then, I have read and learned from Shakespeare's writing my whole life, whereas I suspect my friend has never gone back to them. I gave the commencement address at the Reed graduation four three years ago [Ed: May 15, 2000], and I said that the great legacy that Reed left me was the ability to think and reason with utter clarity. I said it was akin to getting "laser brain surgery."

Q: It sounds like the St. John's approach, heavily weighted toward the classics, but getting really into it in depth.

STEINBERG: Yes, there are a number of colleges like that: Antioch, Swarthmore, Brandeis, UC Santa Cruz, and others.

Q: Was there a way of teaching you to think? A method of doing this? Thesis, antithesis and synthesis?

STEINBERG: Nothing that formal. The real emphasis was on being able to explain and analyze. In the speech I gave at Reed, I said that Reed teaches the difference between explaining and justifying. You can explain anything if you're clever enough, but to justify an action requires the application of intellectual and moral rigor.

Q: This is the period in social history where you don't trust anyone over 30. The government always lies to you and all this, which is all well and good, but people do get past 30 and the government is what runs things. At the time you were getting this education, were you having problems adjusting to reality?

STEINBERG: Probably. Reed was a little bubble where being a liberal Democrat was the equivalent of being conservative. When we tried to take over the President's office in protest, he essentially they handed us the keys, told us where the liquor was, and asked us not to break anything. We always knew that this wasn't the real world. As I got toward my junior and senior year, I was looking more towards government as a place where I wanted to serve. That is largely due my parents, who always taught us that government

was a force for good. This notion of government as an evil force never penetrated my psyche. Richard Nixon might have been the enemy, but not government per se. Government looked after the poor, the marginalized, the civil rights protestors in the South. The court system was where you took social grievances and resolved them. Government assistance programs and public education lifted people out of poverty. It was education. No, I never developed this "government as enemy" mentality.

Q: Did one major at Reed?

STEINBERG: One did. I majored in economics and focused on developing countries. You were required to write a thesis at Reed during your senior year. It was equally rigorous as many graduate theses. Mine was on the process of economic development in Japan in the late 1800's and Mexico in the mid-20th century, how they managed to move from extreme poverty up the ladder, and the lessons for developing countries today.

Q: How did you find your teachers? I can see a problem of a place such a Reed by having teachers so well intentioned that they are moving away from reality.

STEINBERG: That was never the case. The classrooms were places where you got to test your theories. The teachers were very qualified and they took teaching seriously. As I said, there was no requirement to publish. I remember three or four professors, who to this day influence the way I think. There was great focus on writing with clarity, which still resonates in my work. I found the education itself to be just a remarkable experience. Again, it had to compensate for so much because Reed doesn't have beer bashes, football games, or fraternities. Education in the classroom is all that mattered.

Q: Tell me a little bit about, were there a lot of bull sessions. Guys and girls, how did they mix? How did this thing work?

STEINBERG: It's hard to generalize given how individualistic the students were. In my case, life revolved around classes and sports. I was as close to a "jock" as Reed had. We didn't have inter-collegiate athletics, but we organized a schedule of basketball and baseball games with other colleges. I credit that for keeping me sane. Reed's athletic director, my dear friend Jerry Barta, violated the rules and awarded me and another student with the first lettermen sweaters in the school's history. I would go to class during the day, play sports in the late afternoon, eat dinner, and head off the library. We all studied a tremendous amount there. At midnight I would go off to the coffee shop and play pool or pinball or talk about Vietnam with friends. Then go off to bed. You build small groups of friends there. To be honest, there was wide spread use of marijuana and hallucinogens on campus as well, although there weren't harder drugs.

Q: Did you study foreign affairs? This was the period of Kissing, the Cold War was big, but a lot was changing, like the opening to China and all that stuff..

STEINBERG: I became much more aware of the world of foreign affairs during this period and much more convinced that that's where my future would lie. I studied

American and world history, including diplomatic history, during that time. One professor was a career Foreign Service officer who was a diplomat-in-residence, and it was the first time someone was giving me a paradigm to look at the current role of America. We read Henry Kissinger, but we also studied many leftist historian and economists like Williams Appleman Williams, Paul Baran, and Paul Sweezy who were trying to sort out America's role in the world. We studied China and the Soviet Union and superpower relations. The Vietnam War was still going during that period and we were still protesting. I got interested in developing countries and studied a lot about India and newly-decolonized African countries. I started to think, "Hey, maybe this is how I want to spend my life."

Q: You graduated in 1974. What did you do?

STEINBERG: I had already taken the Foreign Service written exam during my senior year and had passed it. I was waiting for the oral process to get underway, and I decide to go to University of Toronto and get a master's degree. I went to Toronto not because I was evading the draft -- I got asked that a lot – but because they had a great program in political economy; that is, the study of economics as a social science surrounding the distribution of economic power. That was much more attractive to me than traditional economics, which was increasingly mathematical and theoretical, or political science, which I thought was meaningless.

Q: How did you find the oral? Was it a three-person panel?

STEINBERG: Fascinating. Yes, three people. At that point it was just a one-hour interview. To this day I remember a number of the questions. For example, if you sneaked into Secretary Kissinger's office and saw a "to-do" list regarding Latin America. what would be on that list? If you showed up at an Embassy as a junior officer in your first meeting with the Ambassador, he says "There is a morale problem at this Embassy and I want you to report back to me in 30 days about it," what would you do. You're at a cocktail party in Paris and a French official comes up to you and says, "I love America, but you don't really have much of a culture there," how would you respond? To this day I think about questions but I'm not sure I could answer them any better today than I did then. I thought it was an excellent test. I found myself challenged.

Q: My other two colleagues and I were pretty shocked at how obviously bright people weren't aware of what was happening. When we gave it say in Boston or Washington, DC or something everybody reads the Washington Post or New York Times in that area. In that area anyway, you can't help being pretty well up. All of a sudden you drop off the edge of the universe when you go across the Mississippi.

STEINBERG: That was me.

Q: At Toronto, what did the courses consist of and what was the focus?

STEINBERG: With a few exceptions, we focused on economics as a set of social dynamics, including class struggles and the distribution of power. I also took a few courses in development economics, including with the great economist, Gerald Helleiner.

Q: Was the dominant model suggesting more government control, as opposed to the capitalist model?

STEINBERG: No one doubted at that time that government was a positive and indispensable force in the process of development. Most schools at that point were teaching a centralized approach toward developmental economics, so government had a major role in the economy. The real question was how government should engage and what levers were available for us. I knew from the word go that this was my calling.

Q: During this period, did you have any chance to go overseas?

STEINBERG: Just to Canada, Mexico and Europe on vacation. I took a trip in 1973 to France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland and England. I had never been in a developing country outside of Mexico.

Q: Did the Peace Corps come across your radar?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. I often thought that if I had had any practical skills worth teaching at that time, I would have joined the Peace Corps. It was a real option, but I also viewed the State Department as just as positive a force for good. I saw the Foreign Service as an equally viable for addressing poverty and suffering globally.

Q: At University of Toronto, how was America viewed by the faculty and student body?

STEINBERG: As the somewhat wayward older brother who is off doing some nasty things around the world, while its somewhat purer younger brother was pursuing great thoughts and great deeds. I didn't feel any antagonism towards me as an American, but I did feel antagonism towards America.

Q: You were there how long?

STEINBERG: Just 15 months. And in 1975, I went straight into the Foreign Service.

Q: I assume you went into the basic officer's A-100 course. How would you describe the composition and the outlook of the members of the course?

STEINBERG: It was a good mix of upper middle-class America. We had everything from civil rights lawyers and Indian rights advocates to former military officers. Ethnically, however, it was almost pure white. Maybe a quarter of the class were women. I gravitated towards the more liberal members of the class. My hair at that point was very long. I guess my baldness today is a way of paying dues. I wore flowered shirts. I had a little necklace ring. It was a much different period. I go back and look at those pictures

with a little bit of embarrassment. It was a different period. [Ed: Mr. Steinberg was a member of the 121st A-100 Class and was sworn in in the Benjamin Franklin Room on September 26. Classmate Leslie Gerson has her oral history on the ADST website.]

I found the A-100 class to be an excellent introduction, but also a clear attempt to deflate the egos of the people in the class. You know, we all came in thinking we were these hot-shot diplomats who were about to change American policy and the world. I felt the course leaders were trying to remind us that for the next decade, we weren't going to influence much of anything while we paid our dues, learned our trade and stamped visas.

Q:Was there much attrition among your colleagues or they stay in the Foreign Service?

STEINBERG: I would say that one-third of the people are still in the Foreign Service thirty years later. There were three periods of departure. One was after about two to four years – people who said this isn't for me and left. There was another exodus after 10-12 years, mostly people who saw their careers going nowhere and wanted to pursue different paths. And finally, when people had served 20 years, were 50 and had their pensions.

Q: At that time was the cone system in place where you selected your specialization?

STEINBERG: Yes, they did. Obviously, I wanted the economic cone and was put there.

Q: So, where did you want to go and what happened to you?

STEINBERG: Africa. It's funny, because the person in charge of matching up the posts and the new officers told me later that he would go home and say to his wife, "I have got to fill this position in the Central African Republic and I don't know who's going to take it. This guy Steinberg seems to want it and he seems to be a decent guy and I just don't know if I can do this to him." No, I wanted to go to Africa. The Central African Republic was open, so it was a nice match.

Q: I mean this is the Central African Republic (CAR) at that time. It became an empire?

STEINBERG: It became an empire while I was there. I went to the imperial ball the night before the inauguration and I danced with Emperor Bokassa, who at that point was not viewed as malevolently as we do now. At that point he was sort of a comical figure and a minor violator of human rights. We later found out differently.

Q: You were in the CAR from 1976 to 1978. Did you take French at FSI in preparation?

STEINBERG: Yes, I had taken 20 weeks of French and passed the proficiency test.

Q: What was the embassy in Bangui like?

STEINBERG: It was a very small embassy. Everyone who was there was serving for the first time in the position that he or she was in. It was almost like a starter embassy. Tony

Quainton, was the ambassador [Ed: February 20, 1976 to June 9, 1978. He has an interview on the ADST website]. This was his first ambassadorship, he was an excellent mentor, and went on to have a great diplomatic career. When I first arrived, Bill Swing was the Deputy Chief of Mission, so I had a brief overlap with this remarkable man. Soon thereafter, Grant Smith, who was later our ambassador in Tajikistan [Ed: July 1995 to August 1998. His interview is on the ADST website], became DCM and my boss.

As I said, the embassy was small -- basically, one American per cone. I was doing the economics and cultural work. We also didn't have a USIS officer because USIS had been kicked out by President (Jean-Bédel) Bokassa previously. Bokassa [Ed: he named himself Emperor on December 4, 1976] was a space buff, so he loved following our rocket launches. You'll remember that there was a problem with Apollo 13 [Ed: launched April 11, 1970], and we didn't know where the capsule was going to land. All U.S. embassies were instructed to ask their host governments for permission to land in their territorial waters.

Now, as a landlocked country, the CAR has no territorial waters, but President Bokassa sent a cable to President Nixon that it could land in the Ubangi River. Bokassa sent his canoes up and down the river to look for this space capsule that was going to land in the river. Apparently, Washington did not respond to Bokassa's offer, and he was so offended that he kicked out our USIS program and cultural affairs officer. So I ran both the economics and cultural affairs programs, and helped the DCM on the development assistance program.

Q: When you were preparing to go there, what were you hearing about CAR?

STEINBERG: It was dirt poor and still a French backwater. The French ambassador pretty much ran a lot of what went on in the country. The French had a military base in Bouar in the northwest of the country. That was their base of operations for all Central Africa. The CAR government, military and police had a very bad human rights record. Political opponents would disappear in the night. It didn't reach the levels of some countries in Africa, like Uganda or Equatorial Guinea, but still outrageous. In truth, the United States had few strategic interests there. If it weren't for the policy of universal presence of U.S. embassies, we could have probably gone without an embassy there.

Q: Was there any reflection of the problems of the Sudan, Southern Sudan or Zaire?

STEINBERG: No. In a strange way, it was a bastion of stability – using that word advisedly. In Central Africa, fighting was going on in many of the countries around it, Chad, Sudan, Angola, and the Congo, but there wasn't much to fight over the CAR.

Q: As an economic officer you were reporting on a poor place. What were you doing?

STEINBERG: I used to say it was a strange place to be an economic officer since there wasn't much of a local economy. In the area of economics and trade, we had few interests. They had discovered uranium and American investors were somewhat

interested. There were some commodities, including cotton, timber, diamonds, and coffee, but it was mostly subsistence agriculture. All the economic officers from the various Western embassies would get together and compare thoughts on the level of commodity production and report back to our governments. I remember once sending these statistics off to Washington, knowing they were just educated guesses. Two months later, we got a World Bank report and I said, "Wow! We got all the numbers right!" And then I saw an asterisk saying that the numbers were sourced from the American Embassy. That's when I learned to have a healthy skepticism of statistics.

Q: How were relations with the French Embassy?

STEINBERG: They were solid. They didn't view us as much of a competitor, since they were still in charge in a neo-colonial sense. For me, it was a good place to learn how an embassy operates. Ambassador Quainton was an excellent ambassador and mentor. He was very activist. He wanted us out in the community and travelling around the country, which I did extensively. We had a large Peace Corps presence in health, English language, wells, and fish culture. I'd travel go up country and stay with them frequently.

Q: Talk about your view and what developed with Bokassa.

STEINBERG: He became increasingly dictatorial and erratic as the years moved on, and by the mid-70's, he had lost touch with reality – including with his declaration of the Empire. He had a coronation that cost $40 million, a scepter worth $2 million encrusted with diamonds. His robe had 80,000 pearls strung together. He was still in power when I left. In 1979, a couple years after I had left, he was deposed. The French finally lost their patience with him when he went into a prison and beat school children who had protested having to buy expensive school uniforms produced by his wife's company. The French finally said, "Enough is enough," and deposed him.

Q: You were there during the coronation, and all that.

STEINBERG: Yes. But I had malaria the day of the coronation, which gave me a reason not to go to the actual ceremony.

Q: The French supported all of this stuff. Were they indulging him overly much?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. The French conducted a lot of business there. Virtually everything produced there was exported to France, including diamonds, and French investments were everywhere, so they tolerated Bokassa. This was one difference with our Embassy. Early on, Ambassador Quainton highlighted the problems of human rights, and we ended up cutting direct financial assistance to the government as a sanction.

Q: Were you there during Libya's strongman Qadhafi's visit? Ambassador Quainton describes in his account about sitting there with Qadhafi when they had a performance put on by the ladies of the Central African Empire. They were bare breasted dancing away while Qadhafi and his Muslim followers were sitting there stony faced.

STEINBERG: I wasn't at that performance, but I was there during Qadhafi's visit [Ed: October 17-20, 1976]. This was just another sign of Bokassa's craziness. He converted to Islam in order to receive money from Qadhafi, and when the money didn't come he converted back to Catholicism. It was a crazy period.

Q: What did this do to your mental set on economic development and what could be done? Did you see any hope there?

STEINBERG: Yes, I did. I helped Grant Smith develop a USAID project providing $2 million a year for rural health in the Ouham province that showed the potential. Instead of building big, unsustainable infrastructure projects that the government was advocating, we consulted with the local community – including women traders in the marketplace under those great baobab trees. They told us that problems of child stunting, infant and maternal mortality, unsafe water, malaria, and others could only be addressed by small-scale, sustainable programs and training. Community health huts; child feeding programs; fish culture to provide protein; building and maintaining water pumps and wells; training midwives – those sorts of activities. And we made sure that the local population, especially the women, were trained so that the programs would continue after we had left, especially given the weakness of the national and local authorities. Our $2 million a year went a long way. By the time I left, we could already see a real decline in infant mortality, child stunting, and the prevalence of preventable disease. I was hooked on development, local capacity-building, and the role of women in decision-making.

Q: Did you get a feel for what a lousy government can do?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. Again, I learned that foreign donors and grass-roots citizens have a key role to play in these societies. The only real accountability you are going to get in a lot of these places is from foreigners and the local community.

Q: Were you able to report on the problems of the country at all?

STEINBERG: Sure. Ambassador Quainton encouraged us to develop our reporting and analytical skills focus. As this was my first tour, I was getting my feet on the ground and trying to figure out what my role as a Foreign Service Officer was going to be. I was not a good traditional officer. I didn't host many dinner parties; instead, I helped coach the national basketball team. In fact, I've been an assistant coach in three of my tours and enjoyed that.

Q: Did you feel that you wanted both to remain in economics as a specialty and in Africa as regional area of interest?

STEINBERG: Both yes, I was hooked. But I also wanted experience in different areas of development and regions. I pretty much had outlined in my mind that I wanted to serve in three different regions with three different languages and three different religions.

Q: Sitting off there in the Central African Empire how did you get what you wanted?

STEINBERG: Because I was in the Central African Empire, there was a sense among the assignment offices that I had paid my dues, and deserved a "good" onward assignment. What I wanted was a posting in Latin America. My next tour was economic-commercial officer in Rio de Janeiro.

Q: You left the CAR in 1978. Did you have language study before your next assignment?

STEINBERG: Yes, I studied Portuguese. I loved the language instruction process. I felt privileged to get training to move from zero to professional proficiency in 20 weeks.

Q: So, you got to Rio in 1979. By that time Brasilia was pretty well established.

STEINBERG: Brasilia was well established, and the consulate was still getting used to not being the embassy. That resulted in friction between the consulate and the embassy. A number of our senior national staff were coping badly with the decline in status, in addition to the normal problems of constituent posts.

Q: What was your job in Rio?

STEINBERG: I was economic-commercial officer, and my portfolio was coffee – a huge issue for us --, civil aviation, developments in the province of Minas Gerais, and the labor movement. I also ran the newly created Foreign Commercial Service operation.

Q: Who was the consul general?

STEINBERG: When I first arrived, it was John Dexter. At the end, it was John Dewitt.

Q: What was the political, economic situation in Brazil when you arrived in 1980?

STEINBERG: It was in a state of change. This was during the period called "Abertura"-- the "opening" of the political system -- which was moving from a military dictatorship to a transitional structure that would eventually lead to the restoration of democracy. So it was a hopeful period. Civil society institutions were forming, there was greater openness in freedom of speech and the arts, labor unions flexing were their muscles. People were looking back at what the military had done in terms of human rights violations, and were starting to think about the need for accountability for that period. But there was a nervousness about not moving too far too fast. It was an exciting time to be there.

Q: In your commercial side, was there a problem with Brazilian economy?

STEINBERG: It was a protectionist economy, still using tariffs and quotas to promote infant industries. We had real problems getting U.S. exports in. Brazil was generally open to U.S. investment because it created jobs and economic growth, and I spent a lot of time working with potential investors, including in the Brazilian automotive industry.

Q: I assume you learned an awful lot about the economics or politics of coffee?

STEINBERG: I did, and it was fascinating. In fact, the first big success of my Foreign Service career was when a new finance minister took over of coffee export marketing policy, an important issue to the United States. I went back and read the doctoral dissertation that he had written 25 years before on this topic, where he advocated a massive change in how Brazil would market his coffee. I wrote a memo to Washington telling Washington, "Look out; this change is likely coming down the road. Here are a few ways to protect American consumers and importers." People paid attention, and two months later, the finance minister did change the policy as had outlined. I received kudos and recognition. It was sort of like the first success.

Q: How did you find the Brazilians?

STEINBERG: I loved Brazilians. Rio de Janeiro itself was tough place to live – I know that sounds odd, but it was crowded, crime-ridden, polluted, noisy and trafficky. I lived in a building opposite a samba school, where they were dances going on all night four days a week. I never slept in my apartment during that time. Rio was also the most stratified and segregated city I've ever live in. The beautiful Copacabana and Ipanema apartments were literally a mile away from some of the worst slums in the world. We would occasionally go into the slums to document what was going on, but it was dangerous. We hoped that if the Brazilians got the macro-side right that somehow it would take care of that situation. We tried to encourage American investment in job-creating sector, but we knew that this in itself wouldn't end the massive social problems.

That said, the Brazilians from Rio – the Cariocas – had an appreciation for the enjoyment of life that was contagious. I loved Carnival, I loved travelling in northeast and the Amazon region, and I learned to love soccer. It was just a fun place in a lot of ways.

Q: You were there during the last part of the Carter Administration. Did you feel the human right side, or any of the Carter initiatives? Were they having any impact there?

STEINBERG: Yes. I felt we were on the right side of the political opening. We defended human rights advocates, made demarches regarding political prisoners, and promoted openness of unions. I was the labor officer, so a lot of my work was trying to encourage the free labor movement in Brazil. We definitely felt the effects of Carter and Pat Derian and her shop in that area.

Q: Right now the President of Brazil is a labor leader. Lula [Ed: Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the 35th President of Brazil, January 2003 to January 2011]? How did you view the labor movement from the perspective of where you were in Rio?

STEINBERG: The labor movement was centered in both Rio and Sao Paulo, with a number of the federation headquarters in Rio. There were three types of unions. There were unions associated with the General Workers Federation, which was tied to

communists around the world, and we did not work with them. There were in-house unions that were run either by the government or the industries. And then there were actual "free labor movement unions," with which we spent a lot of time. We gave grants for them to organize, to travel to coordinate with international federations, and to train recruiters and negotiators. I worked with the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organization), which was a positive force, not only for worker rights, but for the political opening of the country.

Q: Was it your impression; were the soldiers back in the barracks at this point? Were they sort of coming out every once in a while saying don't do that?

STEINBERG: Less than one might think. The economy was a disaster and the military was happy to have the civilians have to deal with it. Inflation was out of control, and retail shops would literally hire people whose only job was to go through stores and put new price tags on goods every day because prices were rising so rapidly. They indexed most major economic relations, including salaries and rents, which has its own internal inflationary impact. They devalued the currency two to three percent a month because of the inflationary pressures. The military was always watching out for social pressures that would spew out, but they were pretty much back in the barracks.

Q: How was living there with the dollar? Did that work pretty well?

STEINBERG: It was fine They devalued the exchange rates along with inflation.

Q: We leave Rio in 1980 and where did you go?

STEINBERG: I went to Malaysia after 30 weeks language training in Bahasa Malaysia.

Q: You studied what I would say is Indonesian. What do they call it?

STEINBERG: They call it Bahasa Malaysia, or just Bahasa. It is essentially Indonesian – probably no more different than British English and American English. It was a fascinating language because there was not grammatical structure whatsoever.
There were no tenses. To say "I went," you say, "I to go yesterday" To say "he will go," you say, "he to go tomorrow."

Q: What's the catch? There is always a catch in languages.

STEINBERG: There were almost no natural cognates with English. Therefore, you had to learn every word, most cases without any clue of its meaning. Lots of memorization.

Q: I would suspect though as time is moving on that the cognates were creeping in as there was radio, TV, all that stuff?

STEINBERG: There were some. Anything that was invented after about 1900. But Malay also has a system where most every word has a base and then a prefix and a suffix

depending on who's benefit it was being used for, what the shape of an object was, or how many times you expected this situation to arise. It got very complex.

The real problem was that when I got to Malaysia, I didn't use Malay almost at all. The myth is that Malaysia is a Malay country, but the cities are largely dominated by the Chinese and the Indians. All of them speak English. When you dealt with the government nearly all your conversations were in English. I think my Malay was better when I left the Foreign Service Institute than when I finished my tour there.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time? What was your job in Kuala Lumpur?

STEINBERG: The ambassador was Ron Palmer [Ed: Ambassador Palmer presented his credentials on June 24, 1981 and finished his tour in October 1983].

I was an economic officer, one of three in our section. I did macro-economic reporting, covered most of the commodities – tin, palm oil, rubber, and electronic components – and dealt with the labor unions, which were getting more and more restive. I was also responsible for reporting from the east coast of the country, which was a Malay area, and for Sabah and Sarawak, the two provinces on island of Borneo. That made for a much more interesting tour.

Q: Well, we will come back to that. How did Ron Palmer operate?

STEINBERG: Ron was a very personable ambassador who wanted to get to know all the people at his mission. He was as interested in the people in the motor pool as he was his economic and political counselors. It was a hands-on, human approach.

Q: Describe the situation in Malaysia in 1980 and the state of U.S.-Malaysian relations.

STEINBERG: The key issue in Malaysia was ethnicity. The country is probably about 50 percent Malay, 35 percent Chinese, and about 20 percent Indian. The government and military were in the hands of the Malays, but the Chinese were dominant in the economy. There had just been serious riots among the Malays who felt alienated. Just before I arrived, the Malay government had adopted what they called the "New Economic Policy." It was less an economic policy than a massive set of preferences for ethnic Malays. It gave them all the key spots in the government. It reserved almost all the teaching and student positions at the national university for Malays. It was a deal whereby the Chinese could continue to play a lead role in the economy, but they had to sacrifice their political and social rights to do so.

Relations between the United States and Malaysia were fairly good. We were the major importer of palm oil, electronics products, and tin. There were occasional trade disputes, but nothing serious.

Q: This is five years after we left Vietnam. How was the whole military and power situation in that area reflected in Malaysia at the time?

STEINBERG: Malaysia was focusing on its own internal problems far more than playing a regional role. They were a part of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), and there focus here was on regional economic integration. They were looking towards an improved relationship with Japan as a dominate economic power in the region under what they called the "Look East" policy. Malaysia was pretty independent at that point. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was a strong Malay chauvinist, and singularly dedicated to improvements for the Malay people. That was his principal priority.

Q: Relations with Singapore? Was it held up as being well run place?

STEINBERG: Relations were strained. This was after Singapore left Malaysia in 1965. The break came in part because of ethnicity, since Singapore was almost entirely Chinese and was looked at as a place where Chinese privilege was being manifest.

Q: As you're economic officer, how was the Malay economy at that time?

STEINBERG: It was booming. Malaysia was among the world's leading exporters of tin, palm oil, and rubber. They were getting into the electronics industry – all the companies from Silicon Valley and beyond were producing semi-conductors and other electronic products there. Plus, they were just starting to get into petroleum. They had huge oil deposits that Esso, now Exxon, was producing off the coast of eastern Malaysia. They had large natural gas deposits. In fact, they were facing the problem of too much foreign exchange – the so-called Dutch Disease. They are one of the few countries to effectively manage these resources, because they used the generated revenue for industrial projects like liquefied natural gas plants, power plants, infrastructure and even a Malaysia car assembled from mostly imported components. As a result, they weren't faced with the tremendous problem of inflation and the boom-bust cycle that affects so many resource rich countries.

Q: How did you feel about how the school system was using these resources? Were they training these people to grab the Silicon ring?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. They invested in world class university and vocational system, but they were also sending more and more students overseas for university level. There were about 40,000 Malaysian students in the United States alone, in addition to all the students who went to the UK, Australia, Canada, and Japan.

Q: Were the Chinese part of this group?

STEINBERG: No – that was part of the "Grand Bargain." Essentially, Chinese could control the economy and reap all the benefits of the private sector they wanted, but any resources from the state are going to the Malays.

Q: Well then, how are the Chinese coping with this?

STEINBERG: By keeping their heads down and focusing on their businesses.

Q: Were they training their kids?

STEINBERG: Yes. They were sending their kids to the United States in equal numbers. Later, as a journalist, I wrote a story in the Asia Journal about a young Chinese Malaysian woman who was at Columbia University. She felt like she was betraying her country by going off to study in the States, but she felt there was no alternative because she was excluded from going Malaysia's national university. She wanted to contribute to her country, but she saw no possibility of a job working with the government, so essentially she was forced to leave.

Q: Did she come back?

STEINBERG: I don't know what happened. That was her dream, but she kept saying that there really weren't opportunities for her back in Malaysia.

Q: You were reporting on labor. One of the reasons why Silicon Valley and other places were so eager to get in there, you had clever people who didn't cost a lot. You throw labor unions into the equation and that begins to change things. How did that work?

STEINBERG: The government didn't allow unions in the electronics sector itself. These were free trade areas and the law of incorporation said these were exempt from unions. That said, the government used the threat of unionization as a means of forcing the international investors, the Texas Instruments of the world, to treat their employees fairly.

Q: Did you observe how American firms were using this? There was the time we got concerned about clothing and this sort of thing. Was this happening?

STEINBERG: Malaysia wasn't in that business. Its workers were generally high quality and medium cost, so they were involved in upper end production. It wasn't a place where 10 year-olds were stitching up sneakers for a dollar a day

Q: How did you find political life there? Was there a free press?

STEINBERG: There was a moderately free press, but a lot of self-censorship, especially around the racial question. Everything had a racial component, even the electoral processes, where people voted by blocs. There was a Chinese political bloc associated with the prime minister's party and one associated with the opposition. It was very tense.

Q: How about the Indians? What sort of role did they play?

STEINBERG: Again, they were involved in the private sector. They also provided security forces. They were 15-20 percent of the population. They had their own political blocs that supported either the opposition or the government.

Q. Was there a crime problem?

STEINBERG: No. Kuala Lumpur was a very safe area. Again, this was during the huge economic boom fueled by petroleum, electronics, and the traditional commodities: tin, rubber, and palm oil. Everybody wanted a piece of the action.

Q: Transnational corporations, were they a problem or just seen as beneficial?

STEINBERG: They were generally viewed as contributors to the economy. They created a lot of jobs, especially for first time workers; they brought in some capital; they bought packaging from the local economy. Still, they were really just assembly operations.

Q: As an economic officer did you find yourself dealing with a lot of American business people coming from these electronic businesses asking what's the market, how do I set up, and that sort of thing?

STEINBERG: Yes and no. By that point the Foreign Commercial Service had been established and had a strong FCS officer, Ted Villinski. My time was spent more giving these business people the lay of the land, talking about the economy and the overall development of the country. I advised some business executives how to operate locally, but that was primarily the job of the FCS operation.

Q: Let's move over to Borneo?

STEINBERG: Well, there were two Malaysia states that made up a third of the island, Sabah and Sarawak. These were literally centuries behind in terms of the level of development. There were still "long houses", communal places where extended families would live up above the jungle. There was a couple of colonial-type cities, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching. Development was starting to take off in both those places based on commodities, mostly timber operations and natural gas. It was far from the Chinese controlled economies of the mainland.

Q: Who was running things there? Were these Malaysians then?

STEINBERG: These were still Malaysians. The Central Government appointed governors who were in charge of the two states.

Q: Were the Indonesians interfering on Borneo there had been this confrontation or whatever at one point. Was this no longer an issue?

STEINBERG: Not at that time. By this point Malaysia had put to rest its own internal rebellion. It had normalized relations with Indonesia. Again, people were too busy making money to worry about the politics of the region.

Q: Were there any noises from the international community about the logging industry?

STEINBERG: Not really. At this point, most of the logging activity was relatively respectful of the tropical forests. They looked at this as a long-term resource and generally didn't strip logging or that sort of action. Later, this behavior deteriorated, especially when forests were cleared for cattle grazing, palm oil or soybeans.

Q: The general feeling was that the Malaysian government was acting responsibly across the board, instead of, say, Nigeria?

STEINBERG: Yes. Again, this is one of the few cases globally where commodity revenues have been a positive force for a country as opposed to simply distorting the economy. While I never served in Nigeria. Angola was a case study of the opposite. We now know that oil is a very mixed blessing for countries. To use it effectively, there must be a political structure that can resist corruption, deal with the boom-and-bust nature of the industry, and force expenditures into long-term investments as opposed to current consumption. Malaysia did that, invested in infrastructure, manufacturing facilities, and other capital expenditures.

Q: While you were there, 1981 to 1983, was Vietnam at all a factor in the area? Were you seeing Vietnam as becoming one of the Asian Tigers? Or was this later?

STEINBERG: That was off in the future, although there was a sense that Vietnam was soon to be a major regional power. They were in Cambodia at that point, something that the our administration was resisting. The Vietnamese had invaded to get rid of the genocidal Khmer Rouge, but they had left troops behind and installed a puppet government in Cambodia.

Q: How did we view ASEAN at the time?

STEINBERG: Quite positively. We saw ASEAN as a means of drawing together mostly democratic states to support each other, and these states were mostly cooperating with us. We had good relations with most of the ASEAN countries. One of my assignments was to identify opportunities to support ASEAN regional integration projects. Each of the countries within ASEAN was in charge of a integration efforts for different sector of the economy; in Malaysia it was the agricultural sector. We had exchange and development programs with American farmers and scientists helping to encourage the Green Revolution in the agricultural sector.

Q: How were relations with Thailand?

STEINBERG: Generally good. Malaysia was cooperating with the other ASEAN countries, for the most part. There were some concerns that the Islamic community in southern Thailand was being persecuted by other ethnic groups with the Thai government looking the other way. That created tensions, but no blow-ups occurred while I was there.

Q: Where did Malaysia stand Islam-wise?

STEINBERG: The population was between 40 and 50 percent Muslim. The leaders of Malaya had converted to Islam many hundreds of years before, and the population followed. There were a number of very devout senior officials, but it was a relatively loose Sunni form of Islam, certainly compared to Indonesia or the Middle East. People who considered themselves devout Moslems would drink alcohol, eat during Ramadan, and not necessarily obey other Islamic tenets.

Q: Where other countries messing around there, like the Soviet Union or the Chinese?

STEINBERG: Not much. There had been an internal communist rebellion, called "The Emergency" that had been defeated in the 1950s using severe counter insurgency techniques, and the governments of the Soviet Union and China knew they would be on shaky grounds in active engagement.

Q: So, you left in 1983 for where?

STEINBERG: Journalism school. I felt like I needed to reassess my future and take some time off from going from diplomatic assignment to assignment. I had applied for a year-long Council on Foreign Relations fellowship to research American trade and economic relations with advanced developing countries, like Malaysia. I was selected by the State Department as its candidate, and assumed that this was all set. But I was turned down for the fellowship by CFR. Fortunately, I had also applied to Columbia Journalism School in New York City for their one-year masters program and was accepted. I took a leave without pay and went off to the Big Apple.

Q: How did you find it?

STEINBERG: I loved it. After working for the State Department, doing a graduate program on journalism was like a breath of fresh air. I enjoyed improving my writing and developing my own voice to engage the reader, as opposed to the State Department writing where there's a captive audience. I loved the reporting part of the picture, getting to interview and research and learn. It was also a chance to enjoy all the cultural richness that New York City has to offer. It was a fabulous experience.

Despite being an Ivy League school with a world-class reputation, Columbia Journalism School is really a trade school. They want you to get your hands dirty. I was out in the police precincts, I was in the schools and the hospital. I remember one story I wrote on the public sanitation department and talking to the garbage workers. Again, I had a real good chance to get to know the city and improve my reporting skills.

Q: Very good for your skills, but what was your goal? To move over into journalism?

STEINBERG: That was always a possibility. I always thought I was going to do was to serve in the Foreign Service for a decade and then go off and get a "real" job. My first three tours were in Africa, Latin America, and Asia; I learned three foreign languages, French, Portuguese, and Malay Indonesian. I was exposed to three different ethnic

groups. Three different religions, nativist, Catholic, and Islam. I felt this was my preparation for doing great things.

Q: A foreign correspondent with a trench coat….

STEINBERG: Possibly. But I also discovered that journalism is a hard life. You're only as good as your latest story, and you have to prove yourself every single day. While your stories can have an impact, you're generally a bystander rather than an actor. Also, if you make a mistake in journalism, you immediately affect lives. As part of the journalism school process I wrote some articles that got published in real papers and came close on a couple of occasions to making some serious mistakes that would could have had dire consequences. To be frank, I was a little intimidated. By contrast, if you made a mistake in the Foreign Service reporting, you sent back a note saying, "Oops, I got this wrong," and the world goes on.

Q: Was the State Department treating this leave without pay seriously? In other words, you could come back?

STEINBERG: Yes, and that's what ended up happening. I did well in journalism school. I won the school's prize for excellence in writing, and also was named a Pulitzer Traveling Fellow, which was given to the top three graduates. I published a number of articles in The Nation, the Asian Review, and other places. But I also realized how much I enjoyed being overseas and how much I enjoyed the Foreign Service – especially the fact that you have structure and you're being paid to learn about a new culture and society and report back to Washington on it. And I was getting the management bug and wanted to run something myself. As the journalism program was ending, I was offered a number of DCM positions. I was only 30 years-old at the time and it was too much to pass up. I ended up in Mauritius.

Q: One myth about the Foreign Service is that you get a lot of bright people that come in who try it for a while and then they leave. The point is once you get in, it's seductive. People don't leave.

STEINBERG: Being away from it for a year reinforced how special the position and the life can be. To love the Foreign Service, you need to get away from it for a while.

Q: Mauritius is one of our oldest posts. It was a whaling post with a U.S. consulate going way back. Where is Mauritius and what's the situation there?

STEINBERG: It's in the middle of the Indian Ocean. To get there, go to South Africa, then out to Madagascar, and then keep on going. It is 500 miles off the coast of Africa. It is an island about 30 miles by 40 miles. Mark Twain visited there on his trip around the equator and said, "God invented Mauritius and then he modeled paradise after it." It is gorgeous in all respects. In terms of the topography, beautiful mountains just come out of nowhere. There are 50 different micro climates on this island. The beaches are just

lovely. Reefs surround three quarters of the island, so it is fabulous for snorkeling and scuba diving. It has a huge tourism industry.

It has a population of a million people, most of whom are of Indian origin, both Hindus and Muslims. They came over as indentured servants to work the sugar cane fields. There is also a substantial Creole population. It is a democracy. They change governments like other people change their t-shirts. They love the political game. It has a free press environment. It fully respects human rights. It's a fabulous country.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you were there?

STEINBERG: George Andrews. [Ed: Ambassador Andrews served from November 7, 1983 to August 16, 1986.] He was a career Foreign Service. It was after him that people finally discovered what a fabulous place this was and we started to get a string of political appointees. Most of his work had been in Latin America. He had been DCM in El Salvador at the time of the Contras, and so he had paid his dues. He also traveled a lot, so it was a real chance for me to have some fun as Charge.

Q: Did the island of Reunion play any role where you were?

STEINBERG: Not really. It's near Mauritius so I would go over there occasionally for a vacation, but no, it was French-controlled and pretty much separate.

Q: What were we interested in on Mauritius?

STEINBERG: We didn't have deep interests in Mauritius. We had an embassy there in large part because we had embassies everywhere. That said, we had some concerns because Mauritius claimed to own Diego Garcia. That mattered to us. Diego Garcia was an atoll in the middle of the Indian Ocean, owned by the British, who made it available to us as a strategic military base. The Mauritius claim to it was a bone of contention.

Equally important, Mauritius was an example of how a country can prosper as a free market democracy. When I was there, Mauritius developed a large textile industry and would sell large amounts of clothing to the United States. The Mauritians were so ingenious that they would find niches in the global market and just run with them. They became a leading producer of sunglasses and other glasses frames. They had all these educated young men and women who were unemployed, so they linked with European book publisher and Mauritius became the place where these books were typeset with computer experts. They would just keep finding these niches and exploit them, even as they continued to produce their sugar cane and develop tourism.

Q: Was there any connection either to India or to Madagascar or Africa at all?

STEINBERG: The connection to India was pretty strong. Again, the Mauritians were mostly ethnic Indians, so they had family and business ties to the sub-continent. Madagascar far less.

Q: Were the Indians pushing for sea of peace or something like that at the yes.

STEINBERG: Yes, the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace and Freedom. The Mauritians bought into this agenda. Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth gave powerful speeches at the United Nations where he warned that super-power competition and the militarization of the Indian Ocean had potentially dire consequences. Still, Mauritius had such a great relationship with everyone and they didn't want to blow that by taking strong ideological positions on the international stage. So even as they condemned this tendency, they welcomed American naval ship visits to the country.

Q: Were they at all involved in our space coverage at all?

STEINBERG: No. The Seychelles had a tracking station, but not Mauritius.

Q: I would think zoologists of all types were wandering around these different zones.

STEINBERG: They were. Its isolation in the Indian Ocean didn't quite spawn the same species development as occurred in the Galapagos, but this was the home of the dodo and other unique vegetation and bird life.

Q: How about the Embassy? I think they would get somewhat involved in the care and treating of American tourists.

STEINBERG: Actually, not so much. It is so far away from the United States that it can't compete with the Caribbean or other tourist destination sites. My parents lived in Los Angeles at this point, and we used to note that if you go straight through the middle of the earth from Los Angeles the closest point you hit when you come out is Mauritius. The tourists were generally Europeans and South Africans.

Q. What were your principal activities in Mauritius?

STEINBERG: As a development economist, Mauritius represented for me a model test case of a small country that could succeed in the global economy by getting their policies right. The Reagan administration was working with Congress on the African Economic Policy Reform Program (AEPRP), a precursor to the African Growth and Opportunity Act adopted later a decade later. We said, "Let's develop together a long-term strategy to grow through international trade and investment, and we will cushion the risk through open markets, cash subsidies, technical assistance, investment missions to and from the States, and good prices for your sugar production." They bought into it, including through the establishment of export processing zones throughout the island, and the results were impressive. High growth, virtually full-employment at solid wages, and development of increasingly high-tech production. This pattern of growth continues even today, some 30 years later.

One key focus was on education. The model only works with an educated, flexible work force. And at the time, my father was a high school principal in Los Angeles. So we arranged for Prime Minister Jugnauth and his wife, an educational expert, to travel to Los Angeles for an observation mission. They all hit it off, and later, my parents came to Mauritius and were honored at a State Dinner. I was acting as Charge at the time, but in truth, for that one evening, I was just Dr. Steinberg's youngest son.

Q. Did you take full advantage of the tourism opportunities in Mauritius?

STEINBERG: Sadly, no. Despite my California roots, I'm not much of a beach person. My free time was spent climbing the mountains with my dog and serving as assistant coach for the Mauritian national basketball team. This was a period where the Mauritians were just starting to get serious about the sport, and we arranged for a talented U.S. coach from Arkansas State, Terry Garner, to come out and do a number of trainings and host two Mauritian players and a coach to come to his school. One of the highlights of my Foreign Service career was standing on the podium when the Mauritians received their medals during the Indian Ocean Games.

Q. You left Mauritius in 1986 and finally came back to Washington?

STEINBERG: Yes, but with a twist. I had now been in the Foreign Service for 11 years without ever serving in Washington, but I still didn't want to serve in the Department. In truth, I was uncomfortable with a number of the policies of the Reagan administration, especially with respect to engaging in proxy wars in Africa and Central America, and our "constructive engagement" policy toward South Africa. I didn't want to put myself in a position where I had to implement or even defend those policies. So I applied for a State Department fellowship to spend a year on Capitol Hill, under a program managed by the American Political Science Association.

Q. Where did you end up?

STEINBERG: We started out with fascinating a month at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced and International Studies learning about the Hill. Then I made the rounds of House and Senate offices offering my services. It quickly boiled down to three possibilities. One was a position with Senator John Kerry doing non-proliferation work, something I knew little about but had always wanted to learn. A second was working for the House African Affairs sub-committee under Congressman Howard Wolpe. I always had tremendous respect for him: coincidentally, he was a Jew from west Los Angeles who went to Reed College and ended up focusing on Africa. Not a lot of us out there. But in fact, neither of those jobs materialized.

Fortunately, I also met with Mike Wessel, the super-talented staff director for Congressman Richard Gephardt of Missouri. Mike outlined a position focused mostly on international economic issues, including trade policy. He also pointed out that Gephardt was planning to run for President in 1988, and while I couldn't work directly on the campaign because of Hatch Act restrictions, it would be a great chance to learn about the

U.S. political process and share my views with a national audience. Gephardt had a great reputation as a pragmatist who brings people together, and while he was more conservative and more of an economic nationalist – others said, "protectionist" -- than I was, I signed up for the position with him.

Q. How did it turn out?

STEINBERG: A great professional experience. Gephardt and Wessel turned out to be every bit as impressive as I had hoped, and they knew how to empower staff. I remember asking Gephardt, "What's our policy on auctioning off import quota rights?" and he answered, "I don't know. What should it be?" Most of my time was spent working on the Trade and Competitiveness bill. This was a period of large U.S. trade deficits, and most Democrats felt the Reagan-Bush administration wasn't taking them seriously enough. Gephardt led an effort to put a provision into the bill that would impose tariffs on countries that were enjoying large surpluses with us through unfair trading practices.

We all knew that this isn't the primary solution, but we wanted to press the Reagan Administration to take actions to support trade adjustment assistance, expand U.S. manufacturing competitiveness, and negotiate with our trading partners for greater access to their markets. The so-called Gephardt Amendment ended up passing the House in an exciting 218-214 vote, and while it never became law, it served its purpose.

Q. And Mr. Gephardt based much of his Presidential campaign on these issues.

STEINBERG: Yes, he did. His promotion of these policies had the intended result of building his relationships with the labor movement, which helped his campaign. He announced for the president in February 1987 at Union Station in St Louis. I paid my own way out there to attend. While I had to maintain a healthy distance from the actual campaign, my work on trade policy fed into his speeches and policies, and helped differentiate him from the other Democratic candidates. He won the Iowa caucuses a year later as a dark-horse candidate. That win didn't translate into the kind of momentum he was hoping for, however, and after a number of primary defeats thereafter, he withdrew from the campaign.

Q. So over-all a good experience.

STEINBERG: Yes. I got tremendous insights into the legislative process in particular by watching the work of Mike Wessel, the legislative director Andie King, and others. It's a whole other world, one very few Foreign Service officers understand. I learned about constituent pressures; I learned about back-room horse trading. I discovered the difference between authorizers and appropriators. I gained tremendous respect for the substantive expertise and dedication of Congressional staffers. And I built relationships that remain to this day and helped my career immensely.

Q. And then?

STEINBERG: The Department of State came calling. Twelve years without a Foggy Bottom assignment ended. My former boss in Malaysia, Don McConville, recruited me to direct the office of textiles and apparel in the economics bureau. This office worked with the other agencies to run the complicated textile import program. I saw it largely as an opportunity to ensure that smaller developing countries maintained access to the U.S. market by restricting the sales of the largest suppliers, especially China, but in fact, most of the rest of our government saw it as a way to protect American companies and workers and curry favor with senator like Jesse Helms. The U.S. Trade Representative's office ran the negotiations with foreign suppliers, and State, Commerce, Labor and Treasury were on the teams. State's role was to protect foreign policy considerations, while Commerce represented textile producers, Labor represented American workers, and Treasury represented U.S. consumers and importers. Always a delicate balancing act.

Q. Indeed, the Hill, unions, producers and importers all put pressure in different directions. Who generally won?

STEINBERG: The protectionists. The system was effectively rigged in their favor under the Multi-Fibre Agreement and the U.S. quota regime. I saw this even more clearly later, when I ended up at USTR as the acting Chief Textile Negotiator in 1988.

Q. How did that happen, and how was your experience?

STEINBERG: Early in 1988, the Chief Textile Negotiator Bill Houston and his Deputy Ron Sorini both left their positions to work for the presidential campaign of George HW Bush. Ron was a talented negotiator with a deep reservoir of credibility and recommended to the White House that I be brought over in an acting role. For most of 1988 and early 1989, I was in charge of the negotiations and learned how incredibly hard it can be. I negotiated dozens of trade agreements, traveling to India, Korea, Thailand, Russia, Pakistan, Argentina, Peru, and even the United Arab Emirates. I was proud of the agreements, but in doing the job, I ended up alienating everyone in my inter-agency negotiating team, the industry, the labor unions, and the importers. It was one of the only times these folks agreed on anything: I had out-worn my welcome and it was time to move on. And when George Bush was elected, the new Trade Representative Carla Hills mercifully put an end to my tenure, and asked Ron Sorini to return as chief negotiator.

Q: Sounds like a wild merry-go-round. But you were left without a seat.

STEINBERG: Up the creek without a paddle. It was out-of-cycle with the assignment process and happened quickly. Fortunately, I had kept my friendship with the folks in Congressman Gephardt's office, and asked them whether they needed help. Gephardt had just been made head of a new House Task Force on Trade and Competitiveness, and they were trying to figure out how to use it most effectively. So Gephardt wrote to the Secretary of State and asked if I could come back to his office, this time under a Pearson Congressional Fellowship. The Department said yes. I became director of the Task Force, with Mike Wessel serving as executive director.

Q. Back to the future. What did the Task Force do?

STEINBERG: It consisted of about a dozen members from both parties who had a special interest in economics, labor, business, and trade, mostly from industrial states being battered by imports. The goal was to change the terms of the discussion on these issues from protectionism versus free trade, industrial planning versus free markets, or labor versus management. Instead, we tried to bring the groups together under the banner of competitiveness – ensuring that American companies could compete globally rather than cower behind trade barriers. We commissioned reports, arranged congressional hearings, prepared drafts of legislation, and the like.

Q: Where did the Task Force come out?

STEINBERG: Not too many surprises. American business and labor needed to be more flexible, workers needed better training and greater mobility, investors had to adopt a longer-term time frame rather than focusing on quarterly earnings statements, and the government needed to create incentives without picking winners and losers. We also needed to shift into growth industries, high-tech and services. We did a series of reports on specific sectors. We talked about how specific provisions of trade policy – like anti-dumping laws -- influenced competitiveness.

We were in the middle of our work when Gephardt moved to a new position as House Majority Leader. When he made that transfer, he gave up leadership of the task force.

Q: So, then what did you do?

STEINBERG: I went with Gephardt to the Majority Leader's office. This was when Speaker Jim Wright and Majority Leader Tony Coelho both encountered difficulties that led to their resignations. Tom Foley became Speaker and Gephardt became Majority Leader. He asked if I would stay for an undetermined period of time as his senior advisor for foreign policy and defense, and so I did, starting in mid-1989.

Q: Of course we are talking about the summer of 1989, when you-know-what hit the fan in Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed.

STEINBERG: It was amazing. I went with Congressmen Gephardt and Tom Lantos, their wives, and Paul Begala to Europe two weeks after the Berlin Wall fell. We all went with our pick axes to help tear down the Wall and collect souvenirs. More importantly, we met with officials in East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, The excitement in each of those places was palpable. I remember meeting in a beer hall in Prague with Vaclav Havel's brother, where Gephardt gave the leaders of the Civic Forum movement a framed copy of the U.S. Constitution. In Budapest, Tom and Annette Lantos took us on a guided tour of the places they took refuge while the Nazis rounded up the Jewish population.

When we came back, Gephardt asked me to help assemble legislation to assist those countries. Working with Congressman Steve Solarz and others, we put together the SEED Act -- Support for Eastern European Democracy Act. To this day, SEED is the principal mechanism to promote democratic and free market transitions in that region. Gephardt was courageously speaking out on all these issues. He gave a speech to the Center on National Policy as the Soviet Union was falling advocating that we get in there, support the democratic transition, and assist peaceful change and a measured movement from Communist to the post-communist world. It was a gutsy speech, and Gephardt was accused of being soft on Russia and naïve, but history vindicated his approach.

So many other things were going on as well. We went to Panama in the wake of our military action against Noriega there to review how things had gone. We went to Mexico to look at the basis for NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), 0which was still just a twinkle in people's eyes at that point. Gephardt, in his position as majority leader, was the head of the arms control caucus and we went to Vienna and Geneva to review progress on different agreements with the Soviets. It was just an incredibly exciting time to be there.

Q: It's interesting. One doesn't think of the House Majority Leader as having a lot of power on international issues. Has that changed or was this unique to Gephardt?

STEINBERG: A lot of it was Gephardt himself. He was a former presidential candidate, a highly respected leader, and a very decent man who inspired loyalty. But part of it was the times. So much was changing in international relations and everyone wanted to be a part of it. Plus there was a sense that Gephardt would be back in the Presidential race in 1992, and he attracted an incredibly talented and dynamic staff. George Stephanopoulos was our floor assistant; Paul Begala was a speech writer and all-purpose smart and savvy advisor; and David Dreyer -- who later became the head of communications for the Clinton White House – was his communications director. Combined with the old-timers like Mike Wessel and Andie King, the skill level in the office was off the charts.

Q: We are now in the pits as far as relations within Congress. What was the spirit then?

STEINBERG: The Democrats had been in power for so long in the House, and it was clear that they were the ones who called the shots. That said, there was a large bloc of conservative Democrats, so we had to cobble together coalitions even within the party. We tried to work in a more bipartisan way, for example, when Gephardt and Newt Gingrich traveled to Panama in the wake of our military action there. We made sure that all the reports being issued by that trip were bipartisan. Part of this was Gephardt himself. He was a natural negotiator and conciliator. He cared about people's sensitivities. He wanted to bring people into the process. Still, I suspect if I was Republican member at that point, I'd feel I wasn't getting a fair shake.

Q: Did you find, as you were dealing with the re-creation of the world, that there were particular areas that you have an impact?

STEINBERG: Well, one area was the Eastern European democracy and free market programs. This was also a time of historic change in southern Africa, as Nelson Mandela was being released from prison in South Africa and transitions were being negotiated in Namibia and elsewhere. I spent a lot of time working on legislation designed to support the transition to democracy in South Africa.

Q: Was Gephardt and his staff concerned about portraying the Soviet Union imploding, but we don't want to crow too much. In other words, we are going to live with whatever comes after the Soviet Union and so we were careful not to parade around?

STEINBERG: Gephardt was. Others weren't. Again, going back to the speech he gave at the Center for National Policy, Gephardt was arguing that a soft landing for Russia was in American national interest and we had to support this through assistance measures.

Q: Was your office fairly comfortable with the foreign policy of George H.W. Bush?

STEINBERG: For the most part, yes, but Gephardt was also a partisan Democrat and the 1992 elections were coming soon. Gephardt was openly critical of George Bush in a number of areas throughout this period. He believed that Bush was vulnerable, despite the fact that his approval ratings were off the top of the charts at this time. Gephardt was prepared to take him on in the foreign affairs arena. There is a famous interview where Bush said that Gephardt just got under his skin.

Q: Again, was the presidential bug at work?

STEINBERG: Perhaps. Everyone expected him to run in 1992. When he declared in 1990 that he wasn't going to run, much of his staff left. George Stephanopoulos, Paul Begala, and David Dreyer went to work for a little-known governor from Arkansas.

Q: You mentioned you went down to Panama with a mixed group. What was your view of Newt Gingrich then? I have heard various evaluations.

STEINBERG: Mr. Gingrich was very conservative, very feisty, very partisan, and very ambitious. You had to be careful working with him, however, because he could act in self-interested ways. At the same time, he was an internationalist and a strong ally in resisting the isolationist wing of the Republican party. We took his concerns seriously, and our policies were better because of it. He and Gephardt often disagreed, especially on domestic issues, but we worked with him and his office on most foreign policy issues.

Q: Did other embassies, acting as lobbyists in Washington, make contact with Congress? Did you get much of that?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. Gephardt was viewed as a "player", and foreign visitors in particular wanted to meet with him. I had great fun helping organize their visits, including that of Vaclav Havel.

Q: Havel addressed the Congress and they all rose and applauded some incomprehensible statements. Here is a man who had earned great admiration, but he was way over the heads of just about everybody.

STEINBERG: Exactly. In contrast to the earlier speech by Lech Walesa, which was down and dirty, Havel delved into the depths of existentialism to show that Communism had been doomed from the start. I didn't understand much of it, and I suspect that few of the 535 members of Congress did either, but we were on our feet giving every other line a standing ovation. At one point, Vaclav Havel argued that the real tragedy of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia was that the government became all-powerful at the expense of civil society. He said that the leaders of the reform movement didn't just want to take over that power, but to diffuse power throughout society. Essentially, he was criticizing centralized power in the halls of Congress, and he was getting applause left and right. It was amazing.

Q: Did people genuflect when they came to your office?

STEINBERG: Not to my office, because it was a rat-hole. In order to be physically close to the Majority Leader, we had to jam into tiny cubicles in the Capitol Building. This was true for all Gephardt's staff. And reflective glory only goes so far.

Q: What about your relations with the State Department at this point?

STEINBERG: They were better than they had been when I worked for Mr. Gephardt before. People understood that the Majority Leader mattered, so I got my phone calls returned. When he traveled overseas he got very respectful treatment. I will always remember our trip to Mexico, where Ambassador John Negroponte was dutifully at every single meeting that we held, no matter how big or small. We also got a lot better briefing material from the State Department, so I think people understood his importance.

Q: Well then, in 1990 where did you go?

STEINBERG: It was a tough decision because we couldn't keep extending my fellowship. Mr. Gephardt asked me to leave the Foreign Service and to stay on his staff permanently. I was very tempted by that offer. He even asked Madeleine Albright, who was one of his close friends, to take me out to lunch to convince me to stay on staff with him. That was pretty heady and flattering.

But in early 1990, I got a call from Bill Swing, who had been my first DCM in the Foreign Service, and was then ambassador in South Africa [Ed: September 1989 to July 1992]. Nelson Mandela had just been released from prison and the excitement was irresistible. Bill asked if I would come out and serve as economic counselor at our Embassy and serve as officer-in-charge in Pretoria half the year. I was always excited by the possibilities of building non-racial democracy in South, but because I wasn't comfortable with the U.S. policy of "constructive engagement," I hadn't wanted to serve there. But now Mandela was released, it was the dawn of a new era, and I couldn't resist.

Q: On constructive engagement, when you got to South Africa did you take a look at it again? How did you feel about it, in retrospect?

STEINBERG: I still believe it was a misguided policy of currying favor with leaders who didn't warrant our engagement. I respect the architect, Chet Crocker as a man, a political leader, a negotiator and a thinker, but I believe we were on the wrong side of history. We were sending a signal to the rest of the world that we were prepared to treat racists and torturers respectfully. I know the arguments on the other side and in retrospect, our engagement facilitated the transition in Namibia in particular. Still, a harder line would have likely sped up the over-all process. And when you don't really know what will be the outcome of a policy, you should always err of the moral side.

Q: Where were you located, Pretoria?

STEINBERG: I was located in Pretoria. South Africa has the strange arrangement where their government essentially moves to Cape Town for half of the year during the Parliamentary session. During that period the Ambassador and the DCM would travel to Cape Town and they would leave me in charge of the embassy, which was a huge 350 person embassy. I wasn't Chargé. I wasn't acting DCM. I was a position we called, "officer-in-charge." I should say that Bill Swing called with his offer at the exact right time, because I had just been watching Mandela's speech from Cape Town upon his release and was feeling euphoric. It was perfect timing.

Q: You are there from 1990 to 1993. Had you been to South Africa before?

STEINBERG: I had visited South Africa, but I had not served there for the reasons I described earlier.

Q: When you got there, you say Mandela had been released.

STEINBERG: Yes. He was the president of the African National Congress, but everyone suspected it was just a matter of time that free and fair elections would take place and he would assume control. People forget that it took more than four years between the time Mandela was released from prison and the time he became president of South Africa. That was an essential period because it gave the ANC time to move from being a revolutionary movement to a political party that would soon form the government. Assisting this process was part of our job.

Q: You were there still during the Bush Administration? Where stood the constructive engagement policy at that point?

STEINBERG: We had essentially moved beyond that policy because the white government was committed to seeing a transition to apartheid to non-racial democracy. It became legitimate to deal with the South African government. Also, George Shultz had met with Oliver Tambo, who was the head of the ANC's international movement and

bestowed legitimacy on a movement that up until then we had been calling terrorists. The thing about constructive engagement is that it was tied to a number of other developments in Southern African, in particular to the independence of Namibia, and the end of civil wars in Angola and Mozambique. Those processes were moving in the right direction. In Namibia it had achieved the independence of that country. In Angola and Mozambique, there were negotiations for lasting peace.

Q: Can you describe where Pretoria fit into the equation? It was the heart of the homeland of Afrikaners, but what was the situation when you went there in 1990?

STEINBERG: Pretoria was still an Afrikaner stronghold. There was a black township nearby named Mamelodi, but the town itself was essentially a whites-only city. It was a bit sleepy at that point. It hosted national government there six months out of the year, but six months out of the year it was down in Cape Town. There was also the big commercial city of Johannesburg just an hour away. In a sense, Johannesburg was like New York City, and Pretoria was like Washington in the pre-World War II years.

Q: What was our mission like there?

STEINBERG: It was a large embassy with about 350 South African and American staff. There was great interest from Washington in what was going on. Part of our mission was to assess movement of the government of South Africa in taking enough positive steps to warrant removal of the sanctions under the U.S. Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA). My principal job as economic counselor was to help prepare the ANC for leadership. We held the first meeting of the ANC with the American business community in my living room, and sponsored regular roundtables thereafter with ANC leaders and people from the academic, political, foreign affairs and business community. We called these, "The Wise Men" sessions, although we involved many women leaders as well. We had 12 to 15 people at each session to talk about the future of South Africa, but also to overcome the suspicions among them.

We arranged for training for the leading ANC economists. Instead of collectivizing agriculture, we sent them to University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center to study land reform programs. Instead of seizing private businesses and wholesale nationalization, we sent them to MIT to study anti-monopoly and competition policy. Instead of kicking all whites out of government and the security forces, we sent them to learn about affirmative action. It was an exciting period because all bets were off. No one knew what the new regime was going to look like or how it would deal with the white business community. We are talking about a government that would be made up of people who had pledged support for the most radical policies until that point.

Q. Were the South African economist amenable to this training?

STEINBERG: Not at first. Mandela had just been released from prison, and they expected him to become president rapidly. They didn't want to leave the country at this critical time. But Mandela told them that there was time, because he knew that the

negotiation for transfer of power would take several years. The whites needed time to adapt. But he also saw it as a time to mend the wounds in the black community. I remember him tell his leadership team, "We need to allow the bitterness in our hearts to heal before we gain power. Moses took the Israelites into the desert for 40 years to cleanse their souls of bitterness. If they could take 40 years, we can take four years." I was floored by the insights and generosity of this man who had just been released from 27 years in prison.

Q: In a way, correct me if I am wrong, it was fortunate that the failure of the policies of collectivization and socialism in countries like Ghana and Tanzania was pretty clear by then, and the bloom was off the rose. Was the ANC seeing that?

STEINBERG: It took a while. Again, the four years between Mandela's release in 1990 and the ANC coming to power in 1994 was an important period. It gave the ANC and others time to go around Africa and look at what had happened elsewhere. It gave them a chance to look at European economies, the American economy, and the former socialist economies. It gave them the opportunity to put aside their preconceived notions of what ought to be in South Africa. Absolutely, it was fortunate.

Also, the Cold War was over and they weren't caught up in debates between socialism and capitalism and all the rest. But it was also important to remember that despite how powerful the South African economy was in comparison to the rest of the continent, it was an economy distorted by racism and sanctions, and was failing. Massive unemployment, housing and education deficit, poor health standards, and inefficient manufacturing facilities. Not only for the majority community, but also for the whites and ethnic minorities. The economy was heavily dependent on subsidized energy, mostly from coal, which was causing huge environmental problems. It was also dependent on gold and other minerals, which were based on artificially cheap black labor. There was a lot of fragility, and everyone accepted that the status quo wouldn't work.

Q: Were there strong advocates within the ANC or out who were pressing for the standard African Socialist economy?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. Not only elements within the ANC, but also the labor movement. COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) wanted to see, nationalization of the gold mines and other key industries. The South African Communist party had a large following as well. And there was pressure on the ANC from the left-leaning Pan-African Congress, pushing in a more radical direction. The ANC found itself flanked on the left by COSATU, PAC, and the Communists.

Q: You mention you and embassy were sponsoring these meetings. Was there a fight for the soul of the ANC? Were they having meetings?

STEINBERG: I don't think so. Mandela was the unchallenged leader of the ANC and he understood that moving in a radical direction would be unwise. "We would inherit the wind," he said. Instead, he wanted to share a with a vibrant economy that could produce

the wealth needed for the housing and the education and the healthcare needs of the country. He had made it clear that pragmatism was going to be the order of the day.

Q: How about the Afrikaners where you were? What were they doing?

STEINBERG: With the exception of a small group of perhaps 20-25 percent, including a neo-Nazi group called the AWB (Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging), most Afrikaners saw the writing on the wall. They knew that in order to be a vibrant economy, in order to maintain their position in Southern Africa, they were going to have to change. One of the key events was a referendum among the whites that F.W. De Klerk [Ed: South African President] organized. This referendum essentially said asked: "Are we going to change or are we going to fight to the bitter end?" With his usual sense of history, Mandela allowed the all-white referendum to take place. Seventy percent of the whites voted for change. That consolidated the sense of movement in that society.

Q: The Afrikaners have the same system that one thinks of in Zimbabwe, large efficient farms, and all that. Is that where they were?

STEINBERG: We shouldn't overstate efficiency of these farms. They were largely successful because they benefited from government subsidies and cheap black labor, just like the rest of the economy and business community. The white community was divided between those of Dutch and British origin, and both them benefited from this system of institutionalized racism where only they could occupy key positions in government and business, own property in urban areas, receive government subsidies, and so on

Q: The embassy numbered 350 people. What was the job of such a large embassy?

STEINBERG: We had a broad range of interests. We had more than 100 companies there, and they were working their way through difficult challenges of complying with the Sullivan Principles for employment practices. Our political section was working with the ANC, other parties, and the government on constitutional issues. We had to monitor sanctions under the CAAA. We had the usual range of sophisticated political, economic, and commercial reporting. We also had concerns about the nuclear program, and the need to ensure that non-proliferation treaties were respected. We had a large aid program that was designed to assist the black South Africans, and many, many American civil society groups that were seeking to link with their South African counterparts. Finally, there were more Congressional delegations visiting than at any post I have ever seen. Everyone wanted a chance to help, or at least to be a piece of the action.

Q: You mention all the American firms there. Had there been a decrease because of the sanctions, businesses selling out and getting out?

STEINBERG: Yes. The numbers decreased from 260 American companies, with about $2.5 billion worth of investment to about 100 companies with $1 billion. Most U.S. companies decided that it was too difficult to deal with the sanctions or defend their continuing role in South Africa to their shareholders meeting.

Q: As sanctions were removed, did we try to get the companies back?

STEINBERG: Yes, but largely unsuccessful. Most companies had buy-back provisions for them to return, but once they left, it was difficult to get them to come back.

Q: As South Africa moved forward with the transition, how are you feeling? How is this going to work?

STEINBERG: I had tremendous confidence in Mandela's leadership, and that of our two ambassadors while I was there, Bill Swing and Princeton Lyman. Mandela was a godsend for that country. He was rightly perceived as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy put together. He understood his place in history and how to reassure the whites, mixed-race populations, and the non-Xhosa blacks that they had a place in the new South Africa. That said, we all understood though how tremendous the challenges were going to be. The 85 percent of the population that was not white lacked access to health care, good housing, electricity, education, and job mobility. They had been shunted off to Soweto, Khayelitsha, Transkei, Bophuthatswana, and the other townships and homelands. We all knew there was going to be a tremendous challenge ahead in the socio-economic realm. Remember as well the amount of violence occurring in South Africa at that time. There was a lot of black-on-black violence between the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party. Some that that there were 25,000 deaths from 1990 to 1994, especially in the townships and KwaZulu-Natal province.

Q: What was motivating most of this violence?

STEINBERG: Part of it was encouraged by the extreme whites, who encouraged agent provocateurs to stir up trouble to get the South African blacks to fight among themselves. Part of it was inter-ethnic violence between the Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana and other communities. Part was economically motivated, with competition among blacks for the few scraps of business – such as taxi routes and funeral services – that the whites allowed them. And part was competition between the ANC and the Inkatha, which many perceived as having conspired with the government during apartheid.

Q: This is Buthelezi? He was Zulu, right?

STEINBERG: Yes. Mangosuthu Buthelezi. He presented himself as <u>the</u> Zulu leader in Natal province, even though the community was divided between Inkatha and the ANC.

Q: What about the white diehards? Did we have contact with them? Did we understand what they were doing?

STEINBERG: Not fully. Ambassadors Swing and Lyman had some contact with the non-violent elements, but not with the AWB, which was essentially a neo-Nazi terrorist organization. A small extreme white community was prepared to move to a white homeland, but Mandela helped reassure everyone that they had a place in the nation.

Q: What about other nations? Germany, Britain, Israel, what was coming from them?

STEINBERG: Basically the same as the United States. We were all excited about the opportunity for change in South Africa. We were all trying to encourage productive political dialogue among the parties, regions and races.

Q: Was your office a sort of the catalyst between getting blacks and whites in the same room? Had they reached the point where they were doing it themselves?

STEINBERG: We were helping, but catalyst is too strong a word. We were encouraging the process. We were providing what Bill Swing used to call "foyers of dialogue" for the parties. The beauty of the process was that it was "Made in South Africa" based on a firm commitment from Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk to see a new South Africa develop. Yes, we played a role. Princeton Lyman wrote an outstanding book on all the ways that the international community, in particular the United States, assisted the process. [Ed: Princeton Lyman, Partner to History: The U.S. Role in South Africa's Transition to Democracy. U.S. Institute for Peace, 2002.] But we all recognized that the inspiration and impetus came from the South Africans themselves.

Q: In the case of Russia and former Soviet states, lots of do-gooders, academics offered all sorts of ideas about how to do things. Did you have that problem in South Africa?

STEINBERG: This occurred, but I wouldn't describe it as a problem because the South Africans knew they needed help with just about everything. They were going through their revolutionary war, their civil war, their depression, and their civil rights movement all at that same time. Also, the ANC was firmly in control of the transition and that meant they had the power to resist the more unwelcome advice they were getting. We helped channel some of the contact. For example, much of the advice with respect to economics went through the ANC's Macro-Economic Research Group, which we helped establish among its economists and the progressive white business and academic community. It eventually became the economic think tank for the ANC.

Q: How did you view the economy? You say they had real problems of unemployment and it was a fragile economy.

STEINBERG: Again, it was one of the most distorted economies you could ever imagine. They had limited the contributions of 85 percent of the population to providing unskilled labor. The economy was distorted by sanctions, which led them to try to turn their stores natural gas into petroleum, which makes no sense. It was distorted by over-dependence on gold and other minerals, which also imposed a boom-or-bust pattern to the economy. Military and security spending was astronomical, but was justified by the fact that the government felt besieged. We all knew a huge transformation was required.

Q: How about the military, was there a concern that this might turn on the situation and takeover? Was in the cards?

STEINBERG: I don't think we suspected a military coup of right-wing Afrikaners, but there was understandable nervousness. I would say the South African Police and the South African Defense Force had the biggest transitions of all, having to move from being repressive organizations designed to keep blacks down to a new democratic force designed to protect all the citizens of South Africa. Again, a huge transformation.

Q: The South Africans have had a pretty effective security service. One doesn't think quite of East Germany, but I mean it was of that ilk. Did you feel they were all over you or did it make any difference?

STEINBERG: They were active but pretty professional. Occasionally, you'd be talking on the phone and hear voices in the background of the people tapping your pone but forgetting to put themselves on mute. You would occasionally see people following you, but it wasn't oppressive, and it didn't matter that much because you had to be on your best behavior anyway in South Africa. And even the security forces understood that the writing was on the wall and they better adjust to the new South Africa.

Q: Did you have problems with junior officers? There is often more zeal in the junior officer corps and they want change a lot faster. As the situation evolved did you have to keep them in line?

STEINBERG: No, because we were the most hands-on, activist and zealous embassy that you can possibly imagine. Bill Swing and Princeton Lyman set the tone from the top and that was there is a new South Africa coming and the United States needs to a force for change. Also, DCM Marshall McCallie was one of the best mentors for junior officer the Foreign Service has ever seen. He went on to be our Ambassador to Namibia [Ed: serving from July 7, 1993 to July 12, 1996] and Deputy Commandant at the Army War College in Carlisle before retiring. He has remained to this day one of my best friends.

So beginning with Ed Perkins, who was Ambassador before I got there, and continuing with Bill Swing and Princeton Lyman, we had superb, committed, embassy leadership.

Q: What about the demise of the Soviet Union, which is happening while you were there? Did that make any difference, or had the Soviets pretty well cut their losses?

STEINBERG: The Soviets had not been a relevant player in South African for quite some time, which had two principal effects. One was to reinforce the notion that the United States and the West were the partners that really mattered. And second, it discredited communist and socialist ideology. A number of ANC leaders had gotten their degrees at University of Moscow because the Soviets made a particular effort to cultivate them. This was a period when the United States wouldn't even talk to the ANC. Much of their financial support came from the eastern Bloc. It was essential to break that connection, which occurred with fall of the Soviet Union.

Q: How about Libya? I take it they and Cuba were supporters?

STEINBERG: All of the above. Nelson Mandela understood, however, that these were not the friends he needed as his mission became to rebuild South Africa as president. He had to tone down the relationships with Cuba, Libya, and other states. Again, this was a difficult act of statesmanship, because these were the sources providing political, financial and moral support for the ANC while the United States was still calling the ANC a group of terrorists. It was a difficult transformation for him, but he made it.

Q: Speaking of transformations, were there those in the ANC who couldn't make the transformation from essentially being a terrorist type organization to coming into a transitional democracy and how were they being treat?

STEINBERG: Of course, there were certainly people who couldn't adjust, but it was a smallish group. The new leaders came from those trying to transition to a new South Africa. The other factor that helped was decision by Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu to create the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This helped South Africa deal with its past and come together in a way that didn't represent a full amnesty or undercut rule of law but did establish a new paradigm of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Q: Can you explain what that was?

STEINBERG: It was a kind of court where people came if they had committed crimes during the apartheid period, either with the government or resistance, that were politically motivated. They were called before the commission and given the opportunity to say what they did, explain the motivations, confront their victims and accusers, and ask for forgiveness. There was a sophisticated process for determining what fate they would incur. It was very successful in terms of coming to grips with the past in ways that didn't create new divisions for the future.

There have been similar phenomena throughout history. A study by the U.S. Institute of Peace analyzes 50 or so related systems since World War II that sought to come to grips with the past, but this was uniquely South Africa. Archbishop Tutu, who headed the commission for quite some time, and Justice Richard Goldstone, who ran the constitutional court, deserve tremendous credit.

Q: How about our American visitor or exchange program, was this in full flower?

STEINBERG: Full flower. We were crisscrossing the Atlantic with South Africans going to the United States to study everything under the sun, and Americans coming to South Africa to share their experience with affirmative action, voter registration, women's rights, and the like. Our two countries and societies have long been engaged with each other, including ties between the ANC and NAACP for nearly a century. The U.S. anti-apartheid movement made a fairly smooth pivot to supporting democracy and economic change in the post-apartheid movement. The same people who were protesting outside of the South African Embassy in Washington when it represented a whites-only government were now going there to get visas to come contribute to the new South Africa.

Q: When you were there Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and we delivered him a rather sound defeat. There was big news at the time, how did that play or was that something people were looking at?

STEINBERG: The more radical or leftist groups in South Africa were upset by U.S. action, but Nelson Mandela kept things quiet. He made his team understand that this was occurring far away and couldn't be allowed to disturb the delicate transition in South Africa. I guess the most personal effect on me was that I had asked my favorite South African musician to play at my 40th birthday party, and he sent me a note protesting our response in Iraq and saying that he could no longer perform at my house. He was apologetic, but firm, and I respected him.

Q: What was life like there for you all?

STEINBERG: Perhaps embarrassingly, it was very comfortable. You could travel throughout a truly gorgeous country. You could visit beautiful game parks, stay at great lodges, wander in fields of wildflowers, climb mountain peaks, and raft down rolling rivers. The country had a first-world infrastructure in terms of highways, reliable water and electricity. They had the latest films and books. And the inter-racial arts were flourishing, as they do in most societies in transition. There was a great drama and music scene in Johannesburg in particular. Crime was getting worse and there were no-go areas, but Pretoria was still stable and secure. We also started to see a flow of South Africans out of the country, mostly whites concerned about their future.

Q: So we are now in 1993. Wither from here?

STEINBERG: While I was in South Africa, the 1992 presidential campaign played out. I watched as my old friends from Gephardt's staff – including George Stephanopoulos and Paul Begala – helped guide Bill Clinton's campaign. In South Africa, I had gotten to know several Senate staffers who ended up working for Clinton, including Kennedy staffer Nancy Soderberg. I sent out some feelers, but didn't think anything would happen. Then one night early in 1993, I got a call from the White House transition team asking me to come back and be the Deputy White House Press Secretary and Senior Director at the National Security Council for public affairs. I thought it was an odd choice, but I had my journalism degree and background and so accepted the offer. I wrapped up my work in South Africa, and started at the White House in May 1993.

Q: Every administration when they take power have a problem, a bunch of seemingly kids taking over and it takes a while to learn the playground rules. Getting into this, the Clinton Administration had more trouble than many.

STEINBERG: People forget that when Clinton came to office, the Republicans had been in control of the White House for all but four years since 1969. Except for the Carter years, no Democrat under the age of fifty had any experience running the White House foreign policy establishment. So there was a steep learning curve at the NSC, the State

Department and the Pentagon. A lot of us knew each other and had worked together in the past, but we had not run anything. It was a difficult transition – and I include myself in that. I was learning how to be spokesperson for the National Security Council through on-the-job training. There was no shortage of challenges in the world as well.

The first two weeks of October 1993 were the worst. It began with American soldiers killed in Mogadishu and their bodies dragged through the streets in the Black Hawk Down tragedy. That same day, the Russia parliament was burning as there was an attempted coup. Soon after, there were mortars exploding in the marketplace of Sarajevo as the Bosnia civil war expanded. On October 11, the USS Harlan County was sent to Haiti to pave the way for an agreed-upon UN intervention, but was ordered back to sea in the face of local protests. And it culminated with North Korea announcing that they were pulling out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. All within two weeks for an administration that was still finding its footing.

Q: What was your role?

STEINBERG: It was three-fold. First, I was the deputy to Dee Dee Myers, who was the press secretary, and George Stephanopoulos, who was communications director. Part of my responsibility was to make sure that Dee Dee knew what was going on in the foreign affairs arena and keep her briefed on our policies. She was a remarkable woman, very bright, very gifted. She didn't need much support, but my work was to ferret out information from the State Department, our mission to the United Nations, the Pentagon, and elsewhere to make certain she was up-to-speed on developments, so she could interact with the White House press corps effectively. A second role was as the press officer for National Security Adviser Tony Lake, his deputy Sandy Berger, NSC counselor Nancy Soderberg, and the senior directors. Finally, I was responsible for explaining in informal and background setting to the White House press corps – which included Tom Friedman, Andrea Mitchell, and Wolf Blitzer – the facts and strategies behind our foreign policy.

Q: Did you find a reluctance or lack of interest in international affairs in the early Clinton Administration? Previously George Bush was well-versed in foreign affairs, but the election revolved around economic issues and he lost. Did you have to drag the Clinton staff kicking and screaming into foreign affairs, at that time?

STEINBERG: Not at all. We went through a learning curve, but there was a firm commitment to global engagement by people like Tony Lake, Madeleine Albright, Warren Christopher, and Les Aspin, as well as the President's senior staff. They knew that the presidency requires a heavy attention to foreign affairs, and that we couldn't just focus on the economy, notwithstanding the "It's the economy, stupid" mindset.

Q. Was the Black Hawk Down a matter of over commitment that they shouldn't have gotten into, or something like that? Was this just a matter of poor coordination with the military or how were we seeing this?

STEINBERG: Incidents like Black Hawk Down tragically occur in the context of most military engagements. I think we failed by allowing mission creep to set it, and overextended ourselves, changing the mission in Somalia from a simple humanitarian relief exercise into a security and nation-building mission. But the real problem was that we hadn't explained to the American people and Congress what was at stake there. When Black Hawk Down occurred, there was a knee-jerk, isolationist reaction in Congress in particular that was difficult to counter. Once our troops were out of Somalia in early 1994, I remember traveling with President Clinton to the 10th Mountain Division in Fort Drum, New York, where the soldiers came from. The President portrayed the mission as a success, saving hundreds of thousands of Somali lives, but he also apologized for failures of leadership and committed not to repeat this exercise elsewhere.

In the case of the Harlan County, this was supposed to be a peaceful intervention with lightly armed police force to implement an agreement, Instead, we found a non-permissive environment. We knew that if someone got hurt or killed, either an American or a Haitian, it would be impossible to implement the agreement. I could explain it, but the bottom line is that the press developed a narrative that the new administration's foreign policy team was being tested and overwhelmed by these five challenges.

Q: Was there a feeling of great aversion to getting involved in Bosnia?

STEINBERG: To getting involved with American boots on the ground, yes. We were changing our policy at the time from non-engagement to what we call "lift and strike," which was to lift the arms embargo to allow the Bosnians to defend themselves, and then conduct military strikes if necessary to reinforce the efforts of the United Nations and the Europeans. Our policy was shifting toward greater engagement, but clearly at this point we were not prepared to see U.S. military deployment on the ground.

Q: Were you watching how the press was handled and what was the attitude of the press?

STEINBERG: The press was hypercritical during this period. I think they saw "red meat" with a new administration still getting its feet on the ground. The big stories were Whitewater, the firings in the White House travel office, which wasn't a scandal, and the president getting a haircut on a plane while other planes were idling on the runway. It was a fairly childish period, in terms of the press relationship. Dee Dee was regrettably caught up in this general attack on the administration that eventually led to her departure and that of Les Aspin within the year.

Q: What about George Stephanopoulos? How did he operate at that time?

STEINBERG: At the start, he was Director of Communications and then the president rightfully decided that he was just too valuable to be spending most of his time doing what Dee Dee Myers could do. So George was moved to be the president top policy adviser, and he was remarkable. I have rarely met a man who can get to the essence of a situation as quickly as he can, see all the different angles of it, know exactly who to engage to work out an issue. He served the president extremely well in that role, but that

was not surprising because he served Dick Gephardt in that exact same way when I was there on Majority Leader's staff.

Q: Did you get any feel for President Clinton and his way of operating?

STEINBERG: Absolutely, and I had great respect for the president. I got to travel with him on about half of his domestic trips, because he always needed an NSC person there and Tony Lake generally thought it made a lot more sense for him to stay at the White House when the president would do his day trips. I traveled with the president not as the press person, but as the NSC person, so I had a lot of contact with him. I found him to be a humane, decent man. I know the scandals that emerged later, but I had no insight into that part of his behavior. What I saw was a president who understood the impact he could have on other lives and dealt with people frankly and openly.

Little snippets come back to me. I remember when he was leaving the podium at a graduation ceremony in New Hampshire, and walking through a deserted hallway. In front of him was a woman and her son in a wheelchair. The boy child clearly had Down's Syndrome, and it was clear right away that the mother had sacrificed much of her life for him. The president spoke briefly to the mother, and then got down on one knee, stroked the child's head and talked with him for a bit. He then said goodbye to the mother, and walked away. It was just a 45-second exchange, but he had validated that woman's life. He had an intuitive feel. I saw dozens of cases like that, and I'll always respect him for it.

Q: What about Hillary Clinton? Did you get any feel for her role at that time?

STEINBERG: Not much at the time. I worked with her on a few press activities, mostly related to women's right and empowerment. Again, I had great respect for her and her staff for the substantive role they were playing. Totally professional. There was a lot of talk about whether it was appropriate for her to have a West Wing office and all of this. It didn't matter where she was. She was involved in all aspects of the administration. That said, I didn't deal with her on healthcare, which was her big issue at that point.

Q: What about the NSC at the time? There were times when Henry Kissinger was there, where the NSC seemed to be running the government practically. Was there a deliberate attempt to keep the NSC from being too prominent?

STEINBERG: The NSC played the lead role on policy formulation, but there was a division of responsibilities with State, USUN and the Pentagon. It was clear that Warren Christopher should be the chief diplomat for the country, and that UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright has great and unique talents, especially in articulating the rationale and national security stake in our policies. Tony Lake had a key role both in terms of coordinating policy, but he also understood his role as the President' top foreign policy advisor. It a strong personal relationship. Tony was usually the first official he saw in the morning and the last official the President saw at night. He understood the power of that role, but was careful not to abuse it.

Q: What was your impression of the State Department's ability to produce whatever was needed for the White House and the NSC? You are a Foreign Service officer, but here you are over in the center of power of a new administration. What was your impression?

STEINBERG: Extremely high quality when we eventually got the material, but it was not always suited for the fast pace of the White House press operation. There were so many clearances they had to get on anything we'd ask for. That said, in the press and policy area, State Department had two superstar talents in Tom Donilon and Mike McCurry, who was the State spokesperson at that point. I had a great relationship with Tom and Mike. They had direct access to Secretary Christopher and other top officials at State and whatever I needed would be forthcoming quickly and professionally.

Q: You were on a learning curve, and then you were gone.

STEINBERG: The press position at the NSC is a prescription for quick burn-out. I was in the office at 6:30 am every morning and I would never leave before 10 pm. I would start by reading the reports from our diplomatic missions and the newspapers to be ready to brief the senior staff at the 8 am meeting. Then I would work with the various government agencies to prepare the press guidance for Dee Dee Myers to use at the daily White House press briefing at noon. The afternoon would be spent trying to answer the questions left over from the press briefing, and working with the NSC senior directors, our UN officials, State and the Pentagon on activities to articulate our foreign policy effectively. I also met with three or four White House reporters each day, including brilliant journalists like superstars like Tom Friedman from the New York Times, Carla Ann Robbins from the Wall Street Journal, Ruth Marcus and Ann Devroy from the Washington Post, and Wolf Blitzer, who was then covering the White House for CNN. Then I'd finish up from 8 to 10 pm reading all of the intelligence from around the world that had come in during the day so that I could be prepared the next morning to start it over again. It was a seven-day a week job and probably the most physically and mentally demanding job I've ever done. After a year, I was burned out.

Q: What was your personal circumstances? Do you have a family?

STEINBERG: No, I was single and that's the only way I could have done it. I was involved in a relationship that died under the pressure. I remember one Sunday morning, going out to breakfast with the women I was seeing at the time and spending the whole time on the phone, including with a Delaware local reporter who wanted to know if Al Gore was going to the beach in Rehoboth that day. My friend said, "If I can't even have Sunday breakfast with you, this isn't going to work." She was right, of course.

Q: That was 1994. Where did you go?

STEINBERG: From the frying pan into the fire. Tony Lake asked me to stay at the NSC as senior director for African affairs. I took that role over in April 1994. I say, "fire," because on April 6 – days after my arrival in the new role – a plane was shot down in Rwanda killing the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. The crash began the genocide

there. Along with the difficult elections in South Africa and our decision to host the first-ever White House Conference on Africa, this dominated my life for the next year.

Q. First of all, who had had the job before you?

STEINBERG: Before me, Jennifer Ward had been in the job, but she had only been there briefly. Apparently, it wasn't the right fit for her. Dennis Jett had also filled-in before going out as Ambassador to Mozambique. MacArthur DeShazer, a talented military officer, was the other staff member.

Q: So, you came in when two presidents died in the plane crash. This turned into one of the most horrific situations that we had seen. How was this viewed at the beginning? How did the news go because the president apologized for it, but a lot of people didn't focus on it? Little was done.

STEINBERG: For the first few weeks, we didn't truly understand the scope and depth of what was going on. We spent much of the initial period getting our Embassy staff out of Rwanda, so that evacuation process was the focus in the very early period. But soon, it became clearer and clearer that this was not just random warfare going on, but a genocide that had been well planned and was sweeping through the country. Within three months some 800,000 people were killed. We made serious and shameful mistakes in this process. I think we made our first mistake in drawing down the UN peacekeeping force from some 2500 to about 500.

Q: Why was that done?

STEINBERG: That was at the behest of the Belgians. Ten of their peacekeepers were brutally murdered and their government decided to pull out their complete force. Given their pivotal role, the mission could work without them. Given our role on the UN Security Council, the Belgians asked us to sponsor a resolution drawing down the larger force, and we regrettably agreed.

This was right after Somalia, and as I said before, the Administration was averse to intervening militarily in a similar situation for humanitarian purposes. It was set against that backdrop, and that of several other failed or failing peacekeeping missions.

Some officials, notably Richard Clarke who ran the NSC peacekeeping portfolio, were so concerned that they put roadblocks in the way of even our non-military engagement. They worked behind the scenes to prevent our involvement in virtually any way that could have saved lives during the first month. When I asked him later about this, he just said that the United States could not afford another peacekeeping debacle. That said, we all bear the blame for what was the greater professional failing of our careers.

Q. While you were there, how was this played out with respect to the NSC? Was the Department of Defense saying we can't do this? Was the State Department taking a non-committal stance?

STEINBERG: The impression that United States just sat on its hands during this period wasn't accurate. We didn't consider sending U.S. military forces, something that I deeply regret, since it left Force Commander Canadian Brigadier-General Roméo Dallaire with a force that was not adequate to the challenge of saving lives. But we tried many other steps, but were continually frustrated. We shipped 50 armored personnel carriers to his forces from our stocks in Germany. But when we sent them to Uganda for transfer to Rwanda, they were returned because they were painted military green, not peacekeeping white. We tried to jam the radio station Mille Collines that was broadcasting hate messages around the country, but we ran afoul of international communications law. We tried to get African countries to provide peacekeepers, but they were ill-equipped to do the job. We tried to get humanitarian assistance into the country, but lacked the logistical and security capability. It was incredibly frustrating.

Yes, the Pentagon was quite concerned about over-extending itself. They frequently told us, "The President has not declared that this is a national security mission, and until he does, we're not going to sacrifice American readiness elsewhere for a mission in the center of Africa." Again, we failed to articulate America's national security stake in stopping genocide in Rwanda. Within the State Department, there were strong advocates for more forceful action, including deputy assistant secretary Prudence Bushnell, but they too faced the question of articulating America's national security interest. This was before 9/11 [Ed: the September 11, 2001 attack on the Twin Towers in New York], where we learned that chaos anywhere in the world can set in motion actions that can directly impact us in the most frightening ways. That was not the mindset in 1994.

Q: Did we see this as genocide, or were we seeing this as oh God the Hutus and Tutsis have been doing this all the time and it's just another one?

STEINBERG: I think it changed after about the first three weeks, when we understood the scale of the killing. By that point it became most difficult to mobilize forces to intervene. We had already pulled down the peacekeeping mission. We tried hard to organize African forces to intervene, including at a summit in South Africa in the margins of Nelson Mandela's inauguration, but that was ultimately unsuccessful. At a meeting with UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and OAU Secretary General Salim Salim, Vice President Al Gore proposed an intervention force led by Africans, but by that point, it was too little, too late.

Q: Did we see the Tutsi force coming out of Uganda as a benefit to the situation?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. We viewed their role as the solution and frankly it was. Ultimately the Rwandan Patriotic Front victory in what became a civil war is what ended the genocide.

Q: By the time this was over had the enormity of what had happened and our lack of a positive response, had this sunk in or did this take longer?

STEINBERG: It sunk in with me immediately. I debated whether to resign in response to my own culpability. No one could say we didn't know what was happening once CNN started showing pictures of butchered bodies going down the river into Lake Victoria. But by late June and early July, a million people had streamed across the border going to Goma in Eastern Congo seeking safety. USAID administrator Brian Atwood traveled there on July 4, and helped sound the alarm.

Suddenly, we shifted gears entirely from inaction to mobilizing to meet the humanitarian needs of these refugees. We had a million lives to save from starvation and disease. The U.S. military in particular shifted and now it was full speed ahead. I spent most of my time over the next six months helping coordinate the humanitarian response, trying to get food, water, and medical supplies into Eastern Congo.

Q: Did we worry that we were just helping the Hutu forces to regroup across the border?

STEINBERG: We did, and over time we demilitarized the camps and challenged the authority of the genocidaires interspersed with the others. But we had a million people without food, medicine and water. It was impossible to grow crops there because of volcanic rocks. The only water supply was Lake Kivu, filled with methane gas. Cholera in particular was spreading. So in the first instance, we had to build airstrips so we could fly in food, water, medical supplies and water purification equipment. Yes, we considered the unintended consequences, but our top priority now was to save lives.

Q: Were we acting more or less alone? Was there international response?

STEINBERG: There was a broad international response. We took the lead, in part because our military had the airlift capacity, but other played important roles, including the UN and many NGOs. The French and their African allies sent a military force into southwest Rwanda to set up what they call Operation Turquoise, a no-fire zone to end the violence and to separate the parties.

Q: Were you able to establish contact with authorities from Rwanda or was it just a matter of getting out there and feeding a dispersed populace?

STEINBERG: This was occurring across the border in Congo. We developed a relationship quickly with the leader of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, Paul Kagame, who became president. We kept him informed on our efforts.

Q: How was Clinton responding? Did you get a feel for his response as it happened?

STEINBERG: He was briefed regularly on the developments and provided over-all guidance. He issued press statements and did radio broadcasts urging the Rwandans to come to their senses and warning the genocidaires that we knew who they were and would demand justice and accountability.

Q: Turning to your second challenge, did the joy of seeing Mandela come into power impact development elsewhere in Africa?

STEINBERG: When you say, "joy," remember that peaceful change was still not a foregone conclusion in South Africa. There was an uptick in violence as elections approached. I was with Madeleine Albright at a hotel in Johannesburg on the eve of the elections when the Inkatha Freedom Party marched on the ANC headquarters at Shell House and shot up the building. It was difficult to get Inkatha into the electoral process. Far right whites were still instigating violence in hopes of derailing the transition. And the actual running of the elections in a country where there had never been a multi-racial election was problematic. We all recall the pictures of people waiting in line for hours and hours to vote and we remember their patience from a positive standpoint, but it was just one manifestation of how hard things were. That said, the final result did enhearten us and helped dispel the Afro-pessimism prevalent in the wake of Somalia and Rwanda.

Q: What other issues were dealing with, Ethiopia or anything like that?

STEINBERG: There were many country-specific challenges, but more broadly, I established three broader thematic goals: demobilization, demining, and raising U.S. awareness of the challenges and opportunities of a vibrant, peaceful and growing Africa. First, a number of armies in Africa were far larger than they needed to be, a legacy of civil wars and the fight against colonialism. We initiated retraining and reintegration programs to help reduce their numbers and provide a future for ex-combatants.

Q: Where were these armies?

STEINBERG: You mentioned one: Ethiopia. This was also a period when Angola and Mozambique were moving to peace processes. A number of West African countries were transitioning from military rule to civilian government, and we helped them as well. In general, we were concerned that oversized armies are both expensive and pose a threat to democratic civilian rule.

Q: With demining, what were we doing for it?

STEINBERG: Again, the presence of millions of landmines in Africa represented a threat to the recovery and reconciliation of war-torn countries. We were putting money into development of new demining technologies, and building demining capabilities for local governments and civil society. Countries were putting together their own mine action centers and we were helping train and equip them. We were assisting the victims of landmine accidents and helping them with prosthetic devices and occupational training. We also ran mine awareness programs to teach children in particular and also adults how to identify landmines and stay away from them. We focused on a half dozen countries in Africa that were most highly affected.

Q. And the effort to raise Americans' consciousness on Africa?

STEINBERG: A key step was to hold the first White House conference on Africa. We gathered together 200 American and international leaders from government, international organizations, civil society, academia, the media, and the business community to discuss the future of Africa, and America's role in the continent. Everyone from NAACP president Kweisi Mfume to Jesse Jackson to Kenyan Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai, who led the Green Belt movement to address environmental degradation and women's empowerment. President Clinton and Vice President Gore played a big role in driving the discussion, as did Tony Lake and Assistant Secretary of State George Moose.

Q: What was the result of this?

STEINBERG: More attention to a variety of African issues. More investment in Africa. New public-private partnerships. Some very influential policy papers that helped shape how we were dealing with certain issues on the continent and a sense of community, a sense that Africa did matter to America's national security, economics, and moral values.

Q: Was this mainly an African-American type thing?

STEINBERG: Many of the participants were African-American participants, but one of the points we were making is that the constituency has to be broader. It has to include all races. It has to include the business community. It has to include the faith-based community. It has to include people concerned with American national security. We were communicating that Africa mattered to the United States for a variety of reasons

Q: What was your impression of the African-American political establishment?

STEINBERG: Many members of the African-American community were very savvy and very knowledgeable of African issues. For example, military rule and corruption in Nigeria was a key issue at the time and there was a dedicated African-American constituency on that issue. There was excitement over South Africa and the possibility of creating a new paradigm for the continent. People like Congressman Don Payne, Vivian Derryck Lowery, C. Payne Lucas, Randall Robinson, and others were right on top of the issues, and put in the time and travel needed to make a difference. I will say that I was surprised at times that there wasn't more interest from the African-American community in Africa. There were occasions where we tried to stimulate support for new initiatives, but this wasn't always as successful as we had hoped.

Q: This is what we see from the African-American community in recruitment from the Foreign Service. There isn't as much interest in international affairs. It's a community on its way up and has a variety of options.

STEINBERG: Perhaps, but the State Department must do more to each out to this community, as well as other marginalized groups to increase the applicant pool. We need, for example, to do more recruiting and HBCU and Hispanic-serving institutions.

Q. Did world problems compete at the NSC for the president's attention?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. The time and attention of senior policy makers was finite, and you had to compete for the finite quantity. On Africa, it was tougher to make the case that our national security was threatened by development there in comparison, say, to the Balkans or Russia or Central America or North Korea. We often had to struggle to get Africa on the radar screen at all, much less at the top of the agenda.

Q: How were your relations with the African bureau at the time?

STEINBERG: Pretty good. George Moose was the assistant secretary [Ed: April 1993 to August 1997], and we had a strong partnership. He was a truly talented and dedicated professional. I'd attend some bureau staff meetings, and he opened up his staff so that I could call on desk officers for information and support that I needed. The relationship between NSC senior directors and State regional assistant secretaries can be contentious, but being a Foreign Service officer, I understood that George was Mr. Africa within our government and I tried to ensure that my people understood that.

Q: You left the NSC in 1995. Where did you go?

STEINBERG: To Angola as ambassador. I was there from mid-1995 to the end of 1998.

Q: How did this assignment come about?

STEINBERG: In late 1994, I organized a trip for Tony Lake to Africa. We crisis-crossed the continent and went to Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Zambia, Angola, Benin, and Ghana, and Senegal. For me, the most meaningful place was Angola. I had helped Ambassador Ed DeJarnette and special envoy Paul Hare facilitate a peace agreement that had the prospect of ending decades of civil war that had cost a half a million lives and left 3 million people homeless. During our visit, we went to sites around the country and saw the devastation the war had brought. At the same time, we saw the firm commitment and great hope of people who finally had to prospect of lasting peace. The Lusaka protocol, the peace agreement, was a very complex document involving the demobilization and reintegration of combatants, the return of millions of displaced persons to their homes, power sharing arrangements, security sector reform, and new elections. [Ed: This protocol was signed October 31, 1994 and sought to end the Angolan civil war by integrating/disarming UNITA and starting national reconciliation. Both sides signed a separate ceasefire as part of the protocol on November 20.]

Even before the visit, I had been asked if I was interested in the chief of mission role, and I was so moved and inspired by what I saw that I decided in December 1994 to leave the NSC that spring and to go Angola.

Q: Did you have any problem with confirmation?

STEINBERG: None whatsoever. I actually enjoyed the process and it went through quickly to a unanimous vote. I viewed it as an opportunity to build support in the U.S.

Senate for what we trying to achieve in Angola, especially approval for the UN peacekeeping mission. With the peace agreement in place, most of the partisan animosity that had dogged American policy toward Angola during the Cold War dissipated. I had interest from Senator John Kerry on one side, Nancy Kassebaum in the middle, and Jesse Helms on the other side.

One funny story. Despite our differing views, I was friends with one of Senator Helms's key staffers. At that point I had a beard and when I do, I look a lot like Vladimir Lenin. The staffer came up to me right before my confirmation hearing and handed me a note that said, "I've told Senator Helms to ask the following question: did you purposely grow a beard to look like Lenin, so you can curry favor with the Marxists in power in Luanda?" Fortunately, it turned out to be a joke, Senator Helms never appeared at the hearing, and I ended up working with the staffer later in the State Department Policy Planning office.

Q: What was the situation in Luanda and on the ground when you got there?

STEINBERG: It was one of total devastation. Again, there had been a civil war from the time the Portuguese left in the mid-1970s, and cities around the country had been destroyed by tanks, mortar fire, landmines, and disease. Three million people who had been driven from their homes in a country with a 10 million population. There were a million landmines planted in the country that prevented people from returning to their homes. The capital, Luanda, was a disaster. The government had spent so much money on the war effort that the city's infrastructure had broken down. It had moved from a city of several hundred thousand a couple decades previously to about 2 million when I arrived. There was little public water and certainly none that was potable. Public electricity was so sketchy that only the elites who could afford generators had regular power. The public health facilities were virtually nil; if you took ill, you had to go to exclusive private clinics or be evacuated to South Africa. I had malaria, dysentery and hepatitis during my stay there.

Psychologically, it was just as difficult. There was gunfire outside of our houses all through the night. The Embassy was a compound filled with trailers, with no fixed buildings. Police were constantly extorting money from the population and even foreign diplomats. There was, however, excitement over the prospects for consolidating peace. Just as I arrived, the United Nations passed a resolution to deploy a peacekeeping force, which was the largest in the world, and eventually reached more than 10,000 troops.

Q: Can you briefly say who was fighting whom and how things turn out at the end?

STEINBERG: It was a legacy of the Portuguese departure suddenly in the 1970s and of the Cold War. The Portuguese had not prepared the country for decolonization, politically or economically. There were three forces fighting for independence, and the war between these forces accelerated once the Portuguese left. One was the MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola), which was in the early going a Marxist movement, made up largely of coastal people and the Kimbundu people. A second was the UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), which was largely

made up of people from the central part of the country and the Ovimbundu people. They professed capitalism and received western support. A much smaller peaceful group, the FNLA, was from the far north. Angola got caught up in the Cold War and ended up as a proxy war. The MPLA, which got the upper hand and took over the government in Luanda, was supported by the Russians and the Cubans, while the United States and South Africa supported UNITA. The conflict continued unabated throughout the 1980s.

Finally, when the Cold War ended, the United States, Russia and Portugal got together and agreed that they would stop supporting their proxies and insist on a peace process. That peace process got going in the early 1990s and produced an agreement – the Bicesse Accords – that led to an election in 1992. The MPLA's José Eduardo dos Santos won over UNITA's Jonas Savimbi and the FNLA's Holden Roberto. But Savimbi decided that he wasn't happy with the result and plunged the country back into civil war from 1992 to 1994. That brutal part of the war itself killed hundreds of thousands of people.

Q: What happened to the two leaders, Dos Santos and Savimbi?

STEINBERG: In 1994, the MPLA Government gained the upper hand in the fighting, and rather than seeking to obliterate UNITA, they agreed to re-enter a peace process. This time, the agreement was called the Lusaka Protocol and was concluded in late 1994. The basic agreement was that the MPLA Government would remain in power and Dos Santos would remain president; that Savimbi and his supporters would get some key government positions, including governorships of some important states; and UNITA would demobilize its troops, who would be incorporated into the existing army or given support to reintegrate into local society.

Q: When you got there, what did you see as your priority jobs?

STEINBERG: The key was maintaining the momentum for the peace process by rapidly deploying the peace keepers from the United Nations, demobilizing UNITA soldiers, putting together assistance packages for the 3 million displaced people to return to their homes, and encouraging socio-economic recovery and growth. I saw demining as an important aspect since a million landmines had been planted and kept people from returning to their normal lives. In addition, Angola is a major supplier of oil. We had a number of American companies active there, including Chevron and Exxon. In the 1980s, at the height of the Cold War, there was a bizarre situation: an American oil company was producing revenue for a Marxist government that was fighting rebels financed by the United States, and the Cubans were guarding the American oil company from attacks by American proxy forces.

One of my goals was to encourage as much U.S. investment in the oil sector as possible and at the same time to encourage transparency so that oil revenues would go towards national development and not into senior government pockets. Too frequently, oil revenues would flow straight into Swiss bank accounts, especially under the fog of war. Corruption was rampant.

Q: What was the role of some of the neighboring countries, particularly South Africa and other neighboring countries at that time?

STEINBERG: Zambia and other countries from the Southern African Development Community were extremely helpful in facilitating the peace negotiations and pressing the parties to reconcile. A number of these countries also provided peacekeepers under the United Nations banner, including Zambia, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. Angolans looked to South Africa for advice and financial support for the reconstruction effort. Savimbi in particular would consult with Nelson Mandela or Vice President Thabo Mbeki for advice.

Q: Again, were we seen as the final supporters of the peace effort, helping with development? What was our role?

STEINBERG: Our role was paramount as the "only super-power left," the major supplier of humanitarian and development assistance, and the lead force supporting the UN peacekeeping operation called UNAVEM III. Our engagement was reinforced by constant visits from senior officials, including Secretary Christopher, UN Ambassador Albright, and a slew of military and security officials. This helped demonstrate the interest of the United States in the peace process. In my role as Ambassador, I met separately with President Dos Santos and UNITA leader Savimbi each more than 35 times to discuss peace and reconciliation and offer our assistance.

Q: The Cubans had left by then?

STEINBERG: Yes, the Cubans had left two or three years before under the grand bargain brokered by Assistant Secretary Chet Crocker for peace and independence in Namibia and elsewhere in Southern Africa.

Q: How did you evaluate President Dos Santos?

STEINBERG: President Dos Santos was more committed to the peace process than Savimbi. He saw lasting peace as his principal legacy. He was often most patient with Savimbi's machinations, and flexible in facilitating the deployment of UNAVEM peacekeepers, quartering his own armed forces, inviting UNITA to join the National Unity Government, providing humanitarian assistance to all Angolans without regard to ethnicity or political orientation, and destroying large stores of landmines.

Dos Santos and his family were knee-deep in the oil sector, and their hands weren't clean, to say the least. His political instincts didn't stress democratic governance, and his security forces committed frequent human rights violations. These were areas of frequent tension between us. But regarding the peace process itself, he was a good partner.

Q: What sort of things came up in the peace process while you were there?

STEINBERG: One key question was demobilization of UNITA forces. There had about 100,00 fighters, and we had to bring them to quartering sites, take away their weapons,

and get them training to start a new life in a country at peace. They were understandably suspicious and whole quartering process was slow, painstaking and expensive, involving lots of peacekeepers and logistical, humanitarian and medical assistance. I constantly visited demobilization camps around the country, often accompanying the talented and courageous UN special envoy, Alioune Blondin Beye from Mali. In fact, I ended up traveling to all 17 Angolan provinces within a year of arriving in the country.

Another major effort was investigating reported ceasefire violations that cropped up on a daily basis somewhere in the country. This work was related to our attempt to expand the government's control throughout the national territory, including to areas that had been in rebel hands for decades. Again, this involved careful use of peacekeepers to provide confidence to local populations in what had been UNITA controlled territory prior to that.

In addition, we were combatting landmines. We would train and fund NGOs to demine areas. We had contracts with South African firms to demine the major roads. We supported the government demining center called INAROE, which was helping demine road and fields and schools. We also had mine awareness programs so that children in particular could identify and avoid landmines, and survivors assistance and rehabilitation for the 70,000 victims of landmine accidents in Angola.

Q: Where did these mines come from?

STEINBERG: Some of them came from the United States, which we supplied to UNITA, but most of them came from Eastern Europe. They were planted by a dozen separate armies over the course of years, whether that was the Government, the Portuguese, UNITA, the Cubans, the South Africans and other. Reportedly, the ANC planted landmines when they were exiled in camps in Angola, and even some oil companies planted landmines to protect their facilities.

One of my proudest moments in Angola came during a visit of Secretary Christopher, when I had persuaded the Angolan government and military to use his presence as an occasion to destroy all the landmines they still had in stock. Near the end of the visit, we went to an open field outside of Luanda, and Secretary Christopher pushed a plunger that safely blew up literally thousands of these hidden killers.

Q: Was the Angolan military a factor? Was there a residue that would serve as a professional military?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. The government had about 120,000 troops and needed to demobilize many of these forces to create a modern, efficient military. They needed to reorient their forces toward national defense and nation building rather than fighting a civil war. We trained the military and the Angolan national police to encourage respect for human rights and human dignity. This was a major task in a country where government and UNITA forces had been abusers of human rights and participated in mass killings. Unfortunately, the peace agreement had a flaw in it: the Government and UNITA provided 13 separate amnesties that forgave the parties for past crimes and

abuses, without requiring the truth and reconciliation actions as in South Africa. There was even one amnesty that forgave crimes that might occur six months in the future, which is just like a "get-out-of-jail-free: card. This undercut our efforts to restore rule of law and accountability in Angola, and eroded some of the public support for the process. In particular, women began to ask if amnesty really just meant that men with guns forgave other men with guns for crimes committed against women and children.

Another key failure was the nearly complete exclusion of civil society groups, notably women, from the peace table and reconstruction effort. The Joint Commission had 40 men and no women as members, and too often this meant that issues like accountability for violence against women, girls education, and mother-child health care were given short shrift. I've written extensively on this failing in the 2010 U.S. Institute of Peace book, Women and War. The conclusion: our failure to engage and empower women as leaders, implementers, planner, and beneficiaries helped doom the process.

Q: What was your impression of the UN peacekeeping force?

STEINBERG: I was in awe of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General, Alioune Blondin Beye, [Ed: who took this position on June 28, 1993] who became one of my deepest friends. A former Foreign Minister of Mali, he was known as "Maitre," or honored teacher. He was active, energetic, smart, and imaginative. He was the most beloved figure in the country because he was an unabashed cheerleader for peace and national reconciliation. He organized "Peace Caravans" around the country to bring the tidings of peace to new areas. He was open to dialogue with both sides and had a backbone of steel behind his calm demeanor. We were lucky to have him. As for the peacekeepers themselves, we were fortunate that there wasn't an armed opposition to them because there quality was uneven. The force commander, Major-General Phillip Valerio Sibanda, from Zimbabwe, was a very talented officer as well. [Ed: In 2018, Sibanda became Minister of Defense in Zimbabwe in the first post-Mugabe government.] The key to peace was the voluntary engagement of the warring parties to meet their Lusaka obligations. The UN mission itself was not going to force them to do so.

Q: Was there a breakdown into warlordism?

STEINBERG: No, not really. Jonas Savimbi ran UNITA with an iron fist. He was a homicidal maniac, responsible personally for some brutal deaths. At one point, he was concerned that his representative in Washington, Tito Chingunji, and his representative in London, Wilson dos Santos, were becoming too independent and enamored of their own power. He had them brought back to Angola, and the story is that he personally strangled each man to death. He was ruthless and you challenged him at your peril.

Q: What about transparency of revenues, particularly oil revenues?

STEINBERG: Not good at all. The government got revenues from the oil companies, put them into special funds outside the regular budget, and used them as it pleased. If other ministers needed money for schools or hospitals or even salaries, they'd go the oil

minister and ask for access to the special accounts. A lot of the revenues went into military spending, which was a complete black box, and resulted in some very rich generals and senior officials. This was before the emergence of the "publish-what-you-pay" movement. We carefully monitored the behavior of U.S. companies, and they were complying the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

In addition, there were major diamond production facilities in the northeast, especially in Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul provinces. Most revenue from those facilities disappeared as well, including to fund UNITA. It was estimated that in the early 1990's, UNITA earned $1 billion worth from diamond sales, used in part for military weaponry.

Q: Where were they getting their weaponry?

STEINBERG: In the black or grey markets, mostly from Eastern Europe. Plus the weapon of choice were AK-47s, easily purchased on the local or regional markets.

Q: It sounds like it was a losing situation.

STEINBERG: It was very difficult. Dos Santos was willing to make some sacrifices for peace and stability, but not too many. Savimbi was convinced that the Government and the international community was trying to kill him, and thus refused to come to Luanda to participate in a government of national unity. So we did as much as possible with demobilizing UNITA troops, bringing some of their leaders to Luanda to take government and parliamentary positions, returning displaced people to their homes, and so on. But ultimately, Savimbi decided he wasn't satisfied with anything short of complete power, and he slowly but surely pulled out of the peace process. By early 1998, it was clear that the process was unraveling.

Q: How was this manifesting itself?

STEINBERG: Savimbi would make excuses for refusing to surrender territories to government control. There were more frequent attacks either on UN peace keepers or government forces. The movement of UNITA forces to demobilization camps would trickle to a stop. UNITA negotiators would become intransigent in negotiations. And quietly, we would hear of new arms imports.

Q: I imagine you were running a very busy embassy with economic officers worried about oil revenues, the military attaché is wondering what the hell is happening military wise, your station chief trying to figure out who's doing what to whom, and so on.

STEINBERG: It was a nonstop embassy, small but very active. We only had about 30 Americans and about 50 Angolans for all the different sections, including a $100 million humanitarian and development assistance program. It was a young embassy filled with talented people like political officer Alex Laskaris, who later became an ambassador, and aid officer Doug Mercado, who has spent his career in the world's toughest crises. They saw this not just as a job, but as a mission to bring peace and national security to Angola

and to build new ties between our two countries. It was important for people to get R&R frequently in South Africa, Europe or the States.

We didn't have an embassy building: all our work was done in trailers. The embassy compound was so insecure that Diplomatic Security refused to grant us waivers to be there, and while they provided technical support, we felt like we were on our own. Our setback from a major street was 10 feet. We lived with the fear that some terrorist group, maybe having nothing to do with Angola, would realize we were a "soft" and vulnerable embassy and make us a target of opportunity. Additionally, there were constant car-jackings and other crimes that affected even diplomats. I had a number of death threats against me personally, and at least two assassination plots were uncovered. As I said the conditions of health and water and education were awful, and we didn't allow children at the post. This was a dedicated group of people who wanted to be there.

Q: When you spoke to Savimbi, how did he respond? Was it a dialogue?

STEINBERG: There was a dialogue. He was brilliant in knowing exactly what you wanted to hear from him. He'd say, "I'm committed to the peace process. I'm prepared to join the national unity government. I'm demobilizing my troops." Always in the back of my mind I knew he was lying. Indeed, he was a pathological liar and a homicidal maniac. Even as he invited me to his headquarters in Andulo or Bailundo, he would command his forces to shoot warning shots at our airplane.

He was often extremely bizarre. One time I met with him by myself at his home in Andulo, he regaled me with a graphic story of a dream he had the night before. He said that he was being roasted on a spit over an open fire, and was then eaten alive by his own supporters in martyrdom for peace. The dream culminated with his own mother eating his testicles. He went into great detail about this experience. I'm sitting there thinking to myself, "Why is he saying this to me? Is he trying to psych me out or is he insane?" At one point I went back to Washington, sat down with some CIA psychiatrists, and I recounted these conversations with Savimbi. I was expecting this sophisticated analysis of who he was and what his motivations were and all. Instead, after about 10 minutes they said, "The guy is frigging crazy."

Q: Dos Santos how did you find dealing with him?

STEINBERG: A whole different story. He was savvy and personally modest and soft-spoken. More flexible. He had a sense of what he wanted his role in history to be, including the Angolan leader who finally built a strong economic and political relationship with the United States. Early in my tour, he went to meet with President Clinton at the White House, which was important to Dos Santos. It was a symbol of acceptance. You have to remember that for 15 years, the United States refused to recognize his government, labelling them Marxists from 1975 until the early 1990s. He bristled under that. To be invited to the White House and meet Clinton was meaningful.

Q: How did Clinton handle this?

STEINBERG: Very well. He sent all the right messages that the United States was committed to peace and national reconciliation in Angola, and that our bilateral relationship with his government would be based on how well the process moves ahead. There would benefits from new investment in the petroleum sector and beyond, debt relief, assistance programs, and more if the peace process reached a successful conclusion and the government made room for democratic governance, transparency, anti-corruption, and human rights. There was a real understanding there.

Q: Was the government carrying on a weapons acquisitions program?

STEINBERG: Yes. They were importing weapons from eastern Europe and probably from Russia as well. But this didn't violate the Lusaka Protocol as long as the weapons weren't used in ceasefire violations. It was an asymmetrical provision, in the sense that UNITA as the rebels could not import weapons, but the government could. That said, the amount of weaponry the government brought in was clearly excessive and the type of equipment was way too sophisticated for the security challenges Angola was facing. We suspected a lot of it was imported under sweetheart deals where the importing generals or defense ministry officials were getting kickbacks.

Q: Did you have the problem of children soldiers.

STEINBERG: Absolutely. There were child soldiers in both the government and UNITA forces. Just as tragic, an entire generation of Angolan children had been raised in the presence of non-ending violence and bloodshed. We launched psycho-social support programs for young people. Part of the program involved using painting to allow the kids to come to grips with their emotions, but we kept running out of red paint because they were depicting so much blood in their paintings.

Q: Were there still no-go areas? In particular, UNITA strongholds?

STEINBERG: Yes. Probably a quarter of the country was still UNITA-controlled territory, and the health and food situation in those areas was atrocious. Death rates, child stunting, and infant and maternal mortality rates were astronomical. It was all an incredible humanitarian disaster that we never could fully address for security reasons.

Q: How did it all end up as you were leaving?

STEINBERG: The peace process was starting to unravel in 1998, and the pivotal moment was the death of Maitre Beye in a suspicious plane crash while he was traveling in west Africa to mobilize support for the process. He and eight of his UN colleagues were killed near Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. [Ed: June 26, 1998]. I was actually supposed to be on that flight as well, along with the Ambassadors from Russia and Portugal, but Maitre Beye decided at the last moment that he should make the trip alone. Maybe he knew something. His death was not only a personal tragedy for all of us, but the peace process lost a great leader and moral compass.

By that time, however, it was clear that Savimbi was pulling out. Fortunately, we had already demobilized most of the UNITA forces, the government had re-established authority in three-fourths of the country, and many of Savimbi's deputies had broken with him and come to Luanda to join the Parliament or Government. This included two courageous UNITA leaders, Isaias Samakuva and Abel Chivukuvuku, who essentially said, "Enough is enough."

So by the time I left Angola in November 1998, the country was moving into a new period of conflict, but it wasn't an all-out civil war as before. It was more of a guerrilla resistance, where Savimbi would return to the bush with his loyalists and seize opportunities to disrupt life in the country. And in fact that's what happened.

Q: When you left, what were you recommending?

STEINBERG: In soccer terminology, I said that we needed to give Savimbi a red card because he had disqualified himself from the peace process. We needed to support the government in its efforts to stabilize the political and military situation, as long as they allowed the UNITA moderates to continue in the political process in line with the Lusaka process, as long as they moved to respect human rights and rebuild the country, and as long as they started to address corruption and socio-economic challenges seriously. Essentially, I said that our even-handed approach needed to change. It was time to acknowledge that the government had earned its legitimacy and they were our interlocutor. And in the end, by the time Savimbi was killed in an ambush in southern Angola in early 2002, stability and peace had come to the country.

Q: Well then in 1998 where were you off to?

STEINBERG: I had been offered a chance to serve as ambassador in a couple of other countries, but I was exhausted and, to be frank, pretty shell-shocked. I don't know if it was full-fledged post-traumatic stress disorder, but I was in tough shape. So I decided to go back to Washington. As it turned out, I literally left Angola to go into a minefield.

I mentioned before my interest in humanitarian demining and Madeleine Albright and President Clinton had put together a demining initiative around the world, which was using about $50 million a year to help countries get rid of landmines and assist the accident survivors. Rick Inderfurth, who was also the assistant secretary for south Asia, was the head of the program, but was overwhelmed having both jobs. So Secretary Albright asked me to become the Special Representative of the President and the Secretary of State for Global Humanitarian Demining, which I did.

Q: Can you talk about the demining issue and the evolution of U.S. policy?

STEINBERG: In 1994, President Clinton used his UN General Assembly speech to call for the world to eliminate the threat of landmines to civilians and to launch an initiative to do so. A lot of private citizens, civil society groups, governments and international

institutions was coming together at the time, and later this group took it a major step further in pushing for an international treaty to ban landmines. Jody Williams eventually won the Nobel Prize for the movement along with Bobby Mueller of Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation and a variety of other groups. The Canadians were in the forefront, with Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy bringing together the global community in Ottawa. They had support from several American legislators, notably Senator Pat Leahy of Vermont. Eventually, in 1997, when the treaty was being cobbled together, the United States decided that we needed to keep our landmines on the Korean borders, as well as the anti-personnel landmines in our anti-tank weapons. We opted out. Most of the world proceeded to negotiate a treaty and the United States was on the outside looking in, along with some other key countries.

Q: So, China and Russia are out?.

STEINBERG: China, Russia, Egypt, Israel: a variety of countries. As of today, about 140 countries have signed onto this treaty.

Q: I've heard some colleagues say we could have signed it with adjustments, but it had been structured to specifically sticking it to the United States. Is that a fair observation?

STEINBERG: Not really. Our government thought that by opposing a comprehensive treaty, we could discourage the rest of the world from moving forward. We stayed on the sideline until the eleventh hour and then said we needed major changes to sign on. Other actors essentially told us it was too late. It's a shame because the U.S. is a leader in the demining effort. Today, we don't produce landmines. We've signed onto treaties through the Convention on Conventional Weapons that limit the use of landmines, and we're moving away from conventional landmines that stay in the ground to self-destructing landmines that blow themselves up or deactivate after a certain time, so they're not left in ground after the conflict ends. We're also the leading funder of mine action. We have much to be proud of, but our opposition to the Ottawa Treaty gives us a black eye.

Q: Did domestic politics enter into this?

STEINBERG: I don't think domestic politics were that important. The key question was the U.S. military insistence that these weapons were still needed for the Korean Peninsula and to protect the anti-tank weapons.

Q: You were doing this demining effort from when to when?

STEINBERG: Along with to concurrent assignments, I filled this role from 1998 to 2001. We've talked a lot of about the treaty, but we also sought to get the American people through public-private partnerships involved in demining efforts, survivor assistance, and mine awareness programs. We put together programs like, "Adopt-a-Minefield," where we identified the worst mine fields around the world and then went to high schools, colleges, corporations, and foundations. We said, "For $20,000 you can clear this area of landmines, allowing 10,000 local citizens to return to their homes and begin their lives

again." People sponsored mine-detecting dogs to go around the world. We had peer support, where American amputees worked with counterparts abroad on counseling, prosthetic devices and vocational and technical training. There were dozens of these partnerships that got the American people involved in the global demining effort. And we backed these up with a doubling of our public assistance to about $100 million a year.

Q: How did you find operating this public/private sector nexus?

STEINBERG: It was exciting. It was sort of new age activities. I was one of the few people within the U.S. government whose mandate allowed me to raise private funds for partnership. That fundraising capability is not common in the U.S. government. I was out talking to American corporations and foundations and private individuals, getting them to contribute millions of dollars. We went to DC Comics and they produced a foreign language comic book where Superman and Wonder Woman taught the children of Bosnia how to identify and avoid landmines. We did the same thing for Central America in Spanish. Warner Brothers produced a Bugs Bunny video for Cambodia where Bugs, speaking in Khmer, taught children about landmines. Paul McCartney was deeply involved in this area. We hosted a fundraiser in Hollywood, where McCartney, Paul Simon, Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys and other performed.

Q: Did you find yourself going at cross purposes because of opposition by demining groups to our position on the Treaty, maybe sulking because of your activities?

STEINBERG: There was indeed a bit of schizophrenia. But generally, the activists supported us because we were raising funds for them. We worked with a Canadian group to do what we called The Night of a Thousand Dinners around Thanksgiving, with a thousand private dinners held around the country to contribute to fighting landmines. Those resources went to NGO's doing demining, mine awareness, survivors assistance, and research into new demining technologies. So we were allies as much as adversaries.

Personally, most activists knew I was a strong advocate within our government for the U.S. to sign the Ottawa Treaty. I had sent in the equivalent of a dissent channel message to the White House and State Department as Ambassador in Angola urging us to sign, saying, "We're on the wrong side of history." Advocates got a copy and circulated it.

Q: One hears about the Russians selling off their stock pile, and the Chinese too. Was there another wave of mines coming out or were we talking about mines in a war that had sort of run its course and we are just trying to sweep up the residue?

STEINBERG: Unfortunately, there are new conflicts where mines are being used. In Sudan, Angola, Afghanistan, elsewhere. So it's still a problem. And there are currently upwards of 200 million landmines around the world sitting in stockpiles, so one of our efforts was to encourage stock piles destruction. As I mentioned, before I took this job we arranged for Warren Christopher to come to Angola and push a plunger to destroy 10,000 landmines in Angola. We had similar efforts around the country or around the world.

Q: How did you feel by 2001 when you left the job?

STEINBERG: I felt like we had accomplished a lot and the program has blossomed even more. Lincoln Bloomfield, the Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs [Ed: May 2001-January 2005], took over my role and expanded the office and operations. More resources, more partnerships, more staff. But at the same time, the Bush 43 Administration began to shift official policy in a direction that I couldn't abide. The Clinton Administration had committed seek alternatives to landmines and to invest heavily in that alternative search. We committed to sign the global treaty by 2006 if we could find those alternatives. By the time I left, it was clear that the new Administration was backtracking, and that the prospects were dim for the United States ever adhering to the Treaty. I pushed internally against this change but lost. So it was time to move on.

Q: My one brush with mine safety, as a retiree, I was an election observer in Bosnia and we were told by a deminer, if you got to take a pee do it in the middle of the road.

STEINBERG: My first trip up-country in Angola, we had a Romanian driver in a convoy I was part of who whenever he would see a pothole in the road would pull to the side of the road to avoid it. I remember holding my breath each time he did that, because a frequent technique is to dig a hole in the middle of the road and plant a landmine on the side of the road. I remember trying to communicate desperately in Romanian – not my strongest language – but not succeeding in keeping us in the middle of the road.

Q: You said that you did other jobs at the same time you were working on landmines.

STEINBERG: Yes. In mid-1999, Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott asked me if I would also become Special Haiti Coordinator and help direct Haiti policy in Washington. In September 1999, I took that position, staying until early 2001.

Q: In 1999 what was our status with Haiti?

STEINBERG: At this point, Haiti was under President René Préval, who was more or less a caretaker president with Jean Bertrand Aristide, the charismatic leader of the poor people in Haiti, waiting in the wings to come back. A United Nations peacekeeping mission was still on the ground, although it had been drawn down dramatically. We had also had about a thousand U.S. forces on the ground. Our concerns were building the infrastructure, police, justice, and education system in Haiti. We had major problems with drug trafficking going through Haiti, cocaine mostly, coming up from Colombia en route to the United States. We still had Haitian boat people who would take to the Caribbean and find their way up to Florida, and we had deep concerns about human rights violations, which were continuing in the country. We were also trying to encourage U.S. investors to engage in Haiti as a means of creating jobs and economic growth. Finally, we had a large humanitarian assistance program. So there were multiple interests.

Q: What would you say were the main things you were dealing with?

STEINBERG: A key development in May 2000 was a major Senate election in Haiti. We hoped to create a government that was credible, a government that had support of the people. These elections were key to restoring credible government. Regrettably, although the elections themselves worked well, the government party cheated in how they calculated who won the seats, and of course, they won everything. The opposition pulled out of the process, and this paralyzed the country. This was tied into American politics with a number of the Democrats still committed to helping Haiti and a number of the Republicans urging that we wash our hands of the situation. It got highly polarized.

Q: Was it involved around race politics? Was the Black Caucus the prime supporter?

STEINBERG: The Black Caucus, or at least most of its members, were very supportive of Aristide in particular. Again, he was the power behind the throne at this point. Elections were supposed to take place at the end of 2000 that would almost certainly restore him to the presidency. Again, these political machinations were diverting us from addressing the backdrop of a terribly poor, divided, abusive country with lots of crime, few social services, and not a lot of political compromise.

Q: Did you make any progress?

STEINBERG: Very little. We helped lower the tension in the political dialogue a bit, provided a venue for negotiations among the more moderate elements, and did much to directly address socio-economic and humanitarian crises. Americans can be proud of improving lives, and promoting education, health, food and housing programs. But in the broader political context, we could achieve little.

Q: Well, then in 2001 wither?

STEINBERG: Again, more complicated than that. Briefly, I held three jobs. The Haiti coordinator, the landmine job, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Populations, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). I took over that position in 2000 and stayed for a year. In that role, I addressed refugee issues in Africa, and spent much of my time in the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and other sites overseeing our humanitarian assistance programs for refugees and displaced persons. The assistant secretary, the great Julia Taft, had just launched a program to ensure that all displaced people globally received a basic package of assistance, including food, clothing, health, counseling, and physical protection, and my job was to apply these standards to our work in Africa.

Also, Julia Taft was a great supporter of women's engagement and rights, and this meshed well with my inclinations. So we supported girls' education and reproductive health care in refugee settings, combatted sexual violence, and expanded the number of women who were leaders in the sector. She also encouraged me to work with the United Nations in this area, including doing the grunt work to get the United States on board with what would become UN Security Council resolution 1325, the first resolution to insist on women's protection and participation in issues of peace and security at the end of 2000. This became a key part of my later work.

Q: Was the political calendar ticking away at this time to move you along?

STEINBERG: There was a bit of that, but it was more of a question of being offered a new position. Richard Haass had been named director of the Secretary's Policy Planning staff and felt he needed a career person who knew how the building operates to be his principal deputy. Richard had a well-earned reputation for intellect and creativity, and he was a mainstream moderate Republican who had served with distinction in the Bush 41 White House. He made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

Q: So, you were doing policy planning from when to when?

STEINBERG: From spring 2001 until mid-2003. I gave up the other three positions.

Q: Policy planning covers a multitude of issues. It is whatever the Secretary wants it to be. When you arrived, Colin Powell had become Secretary of State. What was S/P doing?

STEINBERG: It had four or five major roles. It had the traditional role of being the in-house think tank. We were producing thoughts on where American foreign policy should be going in the Bush Administration, addressing key regions of the world and functional issues. One key question was whether we would continue to act largely through multilateral institutions or whether to go it alone. The United States was still adapting to its sole super-power role, and the new Secretary of State Colin Powell had strong views. Richard Haass had a strong personal working relationship with the Secretary, and this gave us the opportunity to get our views directly to him. In addition, Policy Planning housed the speech-writing operation for the Secretary, and that gave us an important policy role – especially since Secretary Powell was such a talented and prolific orator.

A third role was to be a constant kibitzer in all bureau policy formulation. We had one officer assigned to each bureau, and if we played our cards right, we were perceived as value-added and a way to get bureau views straight to the Secretary. Finally, we took on special projects of direct interest to the Secretary, whether that was expanding our efforts in human rights, redefining our relationship with the Pentagon, defining what President Bush meant when he said the U.S. would not be engaged in nation building, and others.

We were still settling into these roles, when it all changed with September 11, 2001.

Q: Well, then what happened? Where did your S/P role focus?

STEINBERG: The impact on us was immediate. On September 11, Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage asked me and several other senior officials to stay at the State Department Operations Center and spent the night putting together a game plan but, more importantly, to begin thinking about the long-term impact of the attacks on the global community and U.S. national security policy. Regrettably, Richard Haass was in London at the time and couldn't fly back, but he drove our thinking through phone calls and cables. Our first product was a plan to build an international coalition to fight terrorism

and to restructure our relationships with NATO, the United Nations, the OAS and other parties. We turned our attention immediately to Afghanistan, the Al Qaida network, the Taliban, and what roles the various U.S. government agencies should play in the new era.

We made suggestions for how to engage the American people, including what the most effective language would be. For one thing, we argued that we should not portray our actions as a "war on Islamic terrorism," since this would alienate some partners and imply that there was a possibility of "winning" the war. We obviously lost that debate to the White House public affairs folks. We also outlined changes that the State Department would need to make internally. Secretary Powell and Deputy Armitage asked us to draft the documents that Secretary Powell used in inter-agency meetings on these issues.

Q: The afternoon and evening of September 11th, where did you all see, where does one go after terrorism? I mean this is a pretty amorphous thing.

STEINBERG: Richard Haass was instrumental. In his previous government and academic work, he had thought long and hard about the changing global security architecture, and had strong views on what mechanisms we should be using, what international treaties would authorize our actions, what authorities we needed from the international organizations and Congress, what countries could provide which assets in a coalition, and how we should be dealing with the Islamic world. Even that first day, there was a pretty clear understanding Osama Bin Laden was responsible. I think his name was on everybody's lips immediately. And additionally, we spent a lot of time in that early going, talking about Afghanistan and what we needed from the Taliban regime in terms of giving him up or accepting the consequences.

Q: In many ways when you look at fighting terrorism one thing is obviously Afghanistan and getting the Taliban and a base for the Osama Bin Laden and trying to eliminate them, but after that it turns into intelligence and police work.

STEINBERG: Policy Planning became operational and hands-on quickly. Secretary Powell asked Haass to coordinate the Department's response for Afghanistan, and I drew together each day the 30 or so senior officers in State and other agencies who were involved in security, political, military, economic and reconstruction issues related to Afghanistan and work on strategies and coordination mechanisms. Ambassador Jim Dobbins was named our special representative for the Afghanistan peace and political processes taking place in Bonn, Germany, and we supported his efforts by drawing together the full weight of the State Department and other agencies.

Q: During that time as your working on this did you get a feeling that sights were beginning to fix on Iraq? Did that come across your desk?

STEINBERG: No, it didn't. At this early stage, we were totally focused on Afghanistan and got full engagement by the Pentagon. Of course, we knew that there were elements in the government that were already seeking to make the connection with Iraq and pushing

neo-con views of a wave of democracy sweeping through the Middle East,, but I wasn't engaged in those conversations.

Q: Did you get that much contact with Richard Clarke, who was still at the NSC?

STEINBERG: Not at this time in this role. As I mentioned, I had deep disagreements with him over his support for a hands-off approach toward the genocide.

Q: How long did your focus remain on Afghanistan?

STEINBERG: For just eight months or so. After the fall of the Taliban and progress in consolidating the new Afghan government, we gave up the coordinator role in spring 2002 to the South Asia Bureau and its counterpart at the National Security Council.

Q: Was there concern during the time you were dealing with this about we might be destabilizing Pakistan?

STEINBERG: There was deep concern about Pakistan, but it wasn't so much a question of destabilizing that country. It was trying to draw them in as a constructive partner in the coalition against terrorism in line with the well-known warning that Rich Armitage had given their government right after 9/11. We spend a lot of time talking not only with Pakistan, but with other regional nations, including Iran, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, to cease their meddling and become a part of the solution to regional peace and stability.

Q: What about the Islamic world? Were we concerned we may be stirring up Islamicists?

STEINBERG: We understood that the United States needed to rethink our relationship with the Islamic world, but our operational role in policy planning was fairly limited. We hosted an initiative to bring together the best U.S. and international scholars to think about new initiatives, but most of the work took place elsewhere.

Q: Did we see at this time a window of opportunity of making an approach to Iran?

STEINBERG: Yes. It was clear that we had a number of similar interests in stabilizing Afghanistan, especially since Iran was facing a crisis of refuges and trafficking in drugs from western Afghanistan. I wasn't personally involved in it, but there was some dialogue with Iran during this period.

Q: Well, then what happened after this first six months? We are moving into 2002.

STEINBERG: Richard Haass remained personally involved with Secretary Powell on these larger issues, but the rest of the planning staff essentially reverted to its more traditional roles: an internal think tank, the Secretary's speech writer, reviewing policy documents going to the Secretary from the bureaus, and so on.

Personally, I spent much of my time working to ensure that the Department was a leader in the promotion of women's rights and specifically women's participation in the international peace and security arena. I worked on the UN Human Rights Commission. We had just decided we were going to try to get back on the human rights commission after being off for a year. I spent a lot of time preparing for a productive role for the United States when we returned.

I also helped prepare for the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), which was a huge conference that took place in Johannesburg. We had just had a bad experience with the UN World Conference Against Racism, which stirred up more racial divides than it bridged, and I was asked by Secretary Powell to help ensure that the conference on sustainable development didn't end up with a similar fate.

Q: What drove this conference on racism into this extreme position?

STEINBERG: Two things. The "Zionism-is-Racism" debate and the insistence by some African countries for reparations for slavery. In both cases, vitriol just flowed. Secretary Powell, who wanted to go to this conference in Durban, South Africa, was told by the White House to take a pass, since it was clear we might have to walk out of the conference. We didn't want a repeat of this at the Sustainable Development Summit.

Q: How did that come out?

STEINBERG: Fairly well. I had a good relationship with the delegation heads, Paula Dobriansky as the Under Secretary for Global Affairs [Ed: Ms. Dobriansky served from May 2001 to January 2009. The title of this office was changed from "Global Affairs" to "Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights" on Jan. 17, 2012.] and James Connaughton, Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. One of my roles was to direct what we called "the red team." We would analyze the weaknesses in the U.S. positions. We would pretend to be developing countries. We would pretend to be human rights and development activists. We would pretend to be environmental groups. We would pretend to be the European Union and poke holes in our positions. Frankly, I thought our criticisms were often better than these groups themselves.

I took part in a preparatory conference in Bali, a pre-meeting in New York, and then the actual conference in Johannesburg, South Africa [26 August-4 September 2002]. By all accounts, what could have been a disaster for the U.S. turned out to be a relative success.

Q: Did you get involved at all in the move to attack Iraq? Did S/P have a role?

STEINBERG: Not personally, and given that the Pentagon was driving the process, few people at State had any real role. My contribution was limited to working with Drew Erdmann on our staff, who was writing a paper on the post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq. The paper analyzed a dozen cases of reconstruction since World War II, identified the major challenges, and suggested how our early military engagement could prepare us to address those challenges. What would we need to have on the ground? Where should we

focus our attention in the immediate post-conflict period? How could we ensure public safety and security? How could we keep the economy going to provide immediate and visible improvements in people's lives? What infrastructure should our forces secure? What kinds of political dispensations would be necessary? Our analysis turned out to be prescient, but the Pentagon ignored it and went a different way.

Q: At the time the predominate Pentagon narrative about Iraq was quick in, knock off Saddam Hussein, turn it over to Chalabi and other Iraqi refugees who had done well in the UK and U.S.. A minority narrative from my colleagues who had served in the Middle East was, "You don't know what you are getting into." What were you all seeing?

STEINBERG: We knew this was going to be a real challenge, but we were sidelined by the White House and the Pentagon. For example, we said it would be a mistake to demobilize and eliminate the full Iraqi security forces, since it would alienate a lot of people with guns who could otherwise be brought into the new system De-Bathy at the top levels, but why disband the whole security force? We were ignored. Similarly, we warned that arming ethnic and regional warlords was a dangerous strategy that could exacerbate ethnic disputes between Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites, and open the door for Iran's meddling. Ignored again.

Q: Did you feel reverberations of a major difference of opinion between the White House, the Pentagon, and State over Iraq?

STEINBERG: I didn't feel it as much as others did. I know many people are still resentful over the feeling that Secretary Powell had been fed false information by the White House and intelligence community about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq when he went to speak at the United Nations.

Q: Colin Powell is extremely popular with the Foreign Service, the first secretary of state since George Marshall who had a military background and took care of his troops, rather than turning the care and feeding over to someone else. I'm a great fan of James Baker, only because I think he was very effective at a critical time, but not a warm and cozy person. Most secretaries of state couldn't care less about administrative details. All of a sudden we had Colin Powell who did and that made him very popular.

STEINBERG: First, let me say that each Secretary brings his or her own personality and skill set to the job, and I was a big fan of Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright.

Moving to Colin Powell, your impression of the building's reaction to him is completely accurate. Powell has paid deep attention to the care, morale and well-being of the career Foreign Service and Civil Service officers and staff. He knew how take care of his "troops." For example, the symbolism of him participating in the 8:30 am staff meeting every day he was in Washington can't be overstated. Each day, about 40 senior officers met him in a quick, well-run session where everyone had a chance to speak. This said to the building that that no matter where you were in the hierarchy, if you could convince your assistant secretary it was important, you could get an idea before the Secretary

within 24 hours. That sent reverberations throughout the department. His efforts in the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative to get more funding for personnel training and longer leaves for individuals showed he cared about his people. I remember him coming to the retirement ceremony for an administrative assistant who had served in the Department for 40 years, and not only showing up but staying to chat with her family members for a half hour. It sent a powerful message.

As time went on and the stars of Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz moved into ascendancy, we were all discouraged that we were losing the policy battles. That said, I was proud to serve for someone I considered to be intelligent, moral, ethical, and rational in addressing our foreign policy issues.

Q: You left S/P in 2003. What happened then?

STEINBERG: I had a misstep. I was asked to go to Nigeria as our ambassador. I went through the full confirmation process, was confirmed by the Senate in a unanimous vote, got attested to by the White House, and then a medical problem kicked in. Unfortunately, although that medical problem was eventually resolved, the system had identified another candidate, John Campbell, who did a fine job. [Ed: There was a gap between the departure of Ambassador Howard Jeter in July 2003 and the arrival of Ambassador John Campbell in June 2004.]

As an alternative, I spoke with Undersecretary for Political Affairs Marc Grossman, who was putting together the Joint State-AID Policy Council. He asked me to become its first director. Deputy Secretary Armitage and USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios were concerned at the disconnect between the work of State and USAID in a number of settings. We had State Department policy in regions and functional issues, and we had USAID projects in those regions and issues, and rarely the twain would meet. At times, they would work at cross purposes. I saw this clearly in my work at Policy Planning, PRM, the Africa bureau, and elsewhere. So the policy council drew together senior State and USAID people to coordinate our policies. Over the course of the next year we put together the Council itself, which was co-chaired by Armitage and Natsios. [Ed: State cable 03 State 335585 dated December 5, 2003, announced the formation of the State-USAID Joint Policy Council and provided background on its genesis and organization.]

We set up a dozen working groups. All six major regions of the world were covered. Six functions were identified, including democracy promotion and human rights, economic development, science and environment, humanitarian relief, post-conflict reconstruction, and so on. The groups are chaired by the deputy assistant secretaries from State and deputy assistant administrators from AID. They would articulate for each other their principal goals and perspectives, discuss areas for coordination, resolve areas of overlap, and essentially just get to know each other better.

Q: At the top level, everyone would agree that the points were great, but the devil's in the details. What did you find were the prime disconnects between AID and State?

STEINBERG: There were "honest" disagreements, but they were frustrating, time-consuming and counterproductive. A key disconnect was the question of time horizon. Often, USAID looked for long-term change and decades-long efforts, while State was more focused on the present. This difference was the root of many challenges. Of course, State was also more interested in geostrategic issues and often saw aid as a tool in its arsenal, to be offered or withdrawn in response to country behavior. USAID didn't like being considered a "force multiplier" in the strategic arsenal. In some cases, State and USAID seem to speak different languages, and we were the interpreters.

Other issues boiled down to simple turf battles, where State and USAID would cite Congressional mandates or historical precedents to claim control over the issue and wouldn't want to cooperate because of that. A lot of it was just people being too busy and not having the time to consult with each other.

Q: Obviously, you were only able to get it started, but was the process getting people together in the same room, and were they singing from the same hymn book?

STEINBERG: In general, yes, but it's been very personalized. It often boils down to style and personality. If a particular assistant secretary and assistant administrator are personally committed to cooperate, they and their staffs make it work. If not, no levers and coercive measures can make them do so. It's gaining roots, but they're still shallow.

Q: You left that job in 2004.

STEINBERG: I left that job when I retired in late 2004 and went to the U.S. Institute of Peace, where I am now a Jennings-Randolph Fellow addressing issues of population displacement and the global systems in place to address the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Ed: After this interview was completed Ambassador Steinberg continued an active role in international affairs, serving as Deputy Administrator of USAID, Deputy President of International Crisis Group, a Randolph-Jennings Fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace, president and CEO of World Learning, and a professor at Dartmouth College. See: http://www.worldlearning.org/about-us/senior-staff/donald-steinberg/ and http://csis.org/event/exit-interview-donald-steinberg

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Q: Today is December 1, 2017, and we're resuming our interview with Ambassador Donald Steinberg. Now, you retired from the Foreign Service in 2005?

STEINBERG: The end of 2004. We need a new term for that process because leaving the Foreign Service when you're 50 years-old is not really a retirement; it's more a transition. My last assignment with the State Department was running the Joint Policy Council, which was an effort by Deputy Secretary Rich Armitage and USAID Administrator

Andrew Natsios to bring diplomacy and development together. It brought together assistant secretaries at State and assistant administrators at USAID who work on common issues – like Africa, the environment, and human rights – to coordinate policy and actions between them. I held this role in Marc Grossman's office, the undersecretary of political affairs. It presaged work I did later as USAID Deputy Administrator.

Fortunately, in mid-2004, I applied for a Randolph Jennings Fellowship at the U.S. Institute of Peace. I didn't have clear plan for my post-diplomatic career and this gave me a year to sort things out. My topic at USIP was the international community's treatment of internally displaced people (IDPs). There is a global network of support systems for refugees: when they cross borders, they register with UN High Commissioner and get refugee status and support from World Health Organization, World Food Program and all the rest. It's not ideal, and life is tough, but for IDPs, it's a whole different story. They have fled their homes, but they're still in their country. They are usually from a dissident group that the government sees as being the enemy or at least "the other" and they are ill-treated. The role of the international community is unclear in that situation. Frequently, when you talk to the host government about IDPs needs, you're told to stop meddling in their internal affairs.

During my year at the USIP, I studied these questions and traveled to camps around the world. I went out to Sri Lanka and spent time in the camp in Vavuniya. I went to Sudan and was in a camp outside of Khartoum. I later went to Kosovo and Colombia as well.

Q: Let me interrupt you. In Sri Lanka the displaced people were Tamil ethnics?

STEINBERG: Mostly. This was three years before the government launched the all-out attacks on the dissident Tamil community. the so-called Tamil Tigers. But at this point they were still trying to figure out how to deal with this population, and there were perhaps hundreds of thousands of displaced people. I'd go into camps the government had established and there was rampant tuberculosis, drug use, and sexual abuse. There were young kids who had been in those camps their whole lives. Sometimes they were allowed into local schools, but mostly not. Even when they went to the local school, they faced discrimination. I saw this pattern in country after country.

Q: In Sudan, it interests me you were permitted in. Who were the displaced people?

STEINBERG: They were mostly southern Sudanese who had come to Khartoum to work in the service and construction industries. Then the Sudanese government expelled them and said, "Either go back to the South or go to these camps." This was long before South Sudan became independent. Again, it was the same treatment of second class citizenship. The government allowed international NGOs and agencies to work on health and education, but not too aggressively. Because their goal was to have these people go back to the south. It was the same pattern in Kosovo and in Colombia.

So I was encouraged by officials within the UN system and the U.S. government to draft a paper on how the international community could better deal with these communities. I

wrote a monograph called, Caring for the Orphans of Conflict, in which I proposed a structure that came to be called the "cluster approach." Until then, if the international community was allowed to come in, one UN agency would take control. Often it was UNHCR; sometimes it was UNICEF (UN International Children's Emergency Fund), the World Health Organization, the World Food Program, or the ICRC (International Committee of Red Cross). That agency would try and do everything.

This made no sense because no matter how competent any institution might be, it cannot handle it all. The idea was that in each new situation the UN system would get together to designate one organization as head of the cluster, but it would require the contributions of all the other agencies. So, if ICRC was in charge, WHO still provides health services, WFP food programs, and UNICEF education programs. The cluster head made the final calls, but was not the sole operator. Fortunately, the UN ended up moving toward the cluster approach. It's worked in a number of settings, but it's not perfect and sometimes gets ignored on the ground. I've heard, for example, that when International Organization for Migration was asked to head the cluster for the Rohingya in Myanmar and Bangladesh, they took this an opportunity to say, "We're in charge here," and did not effectively bring in other agencies.

Q: If I recall the cluster system had been applied also in Haiti after the earthquake?

STEINBERG: Yes, that's exactly it. We applied the same system within the U.S. government response. USAID was the coordinator of a "whole of government" approach in collaboration with State, Defense, Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, Agriculture, and the rest. It helped immensely, although overlaps, duplication, competition, and institutional jealousies are still a challenge.

Q. During this time, were you looking for a permanent position?

Yes, during my year at USIP, I was also job-hunting. A number of possibilities came up, and the most attractive was with International Crisis Group (ICG). Crisis Group was set up in the 1990s as a combination of a world-class think-tank on international conflict and crises and an advocacy group to advise senior policy-makers on behalf its policy recommendations. It was the brainchild of former State Department senior official Mort Abramowitz, former congressman Steve Solarz, philanthropist George Soros, and former Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans.

They assembled an advocacy board of world-class figures like Kofi Annan, Wes Clark, Tom Pickering, and Martti Ahtisaari from all around the world who had special access to defense, diplomacy and development policymakers. Then they hired really smart researchers. At the beginning, they received substantial support from Soros in particular and were able to hire the best. People like Sidney Jones, the world's leading expert on Indonesian radicalism; Samina Ahmed, who knows Afghanistan better than anyone else; and Rob Malley for the Middle East. They then started issuing reports – which became the gold standard. They are about 40 page reports, readable, and filled with tangible, practical, implementable suggestions to government, civil society, and the international

community. I read these reports regularly as a State Department official, and they often had a strong influence on my thinking.

I was asked to run their New York office and I accepted. For three years, it was like being Crisis Group's UN ambassador. Because of my background I had relationships with and access to people like Undersecretary for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe, peacekeeping head Jean-Marie Guéhenno, child protection ambassador Radhika Coomaraswamy, and others. It was a chance to feed solid policy analysis and thinking into the system, essentially as an in-house think tank for the United Nations. And it worked. I would speak at Security Council Arria sessions and I was invited into the Security Council itself on occasion. We had a special relationship with the U.S. mission because of my background, but the Australian mission was available because we had Gareth Evans; the Nordics because we had Marti Ahtisaari; Ghana because we had Kofi Annan, and so on. It was a chance to influence the broader set of issues, especially related to peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and post-conflict reconstruction.

I got involved mostly in country-specific challenges, like addressing the Russian invasion of Georgia. I spent a lot of time in Zimbabwe, working to support creation of a government of national unity with Morgan Tsvangirai. Along with others, we supported Kofi Annan, Graça Michel, and Ben Mkapa in their work to resolve the inter-ethnic violence in Kenya following the failed elections there in 2008.

Crisis Group also provided basic policy recommendations and research for "The Elders," the group with Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter, Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson, Aung San Suu Kyi and others that Richard Branson had brought together. They were providing a global public service by quietly consulting with world leaders to help them address the toughest issues of conflict, human rights, and reconciliation, and they reached out to ask us to be their research group. I led the effort and had the incredible opportunity to work with and support Mandela, Tutu, Robinson, Annan, and Carter.

Within the UN system I also started to get involved much more with two issues: the impact of conflict on children, and the question of women, peace, and security. These topics have dominated my career ever since. Ban Ki-Moon invited me to join the Civil Society Advisory Group for Women, Peace and Security. Headed by Mary Robinson and Swanee Hunt, the group advised him on how to ensure that women are empowered as leaders, planners, implementers, and beneficiaries in peace negotiations, peacekeeping mission, and post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. I remain personally convinced – in large part from my experience in Angola and elsewhere – the systematic inclusion of women in these processes is the surest way to ensure that they work.

Q: Was the International Crisis Group motivated to adopt a particular approach to crisis prevention, to crisis management? Or was it more situational?

STEINBERG: Great question. There <u>is</u> a philosophy behind it. If dialogue replaces conflict and parties to a crisis understand the true motivations of the other side and stop demonizing them, peace can be lasting. The theory also identifies key roles that

government, civil society and international actors play, including through track two and track one-and-a-half negotiations. In general, we didn't like blanket amnesties, because they undercut the rule of law and serve the interests of the warring parties at the expense of those who have suffered in the conflict. We had a sophisticated vision of transitional justice and the interplay between accounting for past abuses and ensuring reconciliation. Finally, I also expanded our focus on marginalized populations because I strongly believe that if you can get ethnic groups, indigenous populations, displaced persons, women, religious minorities, people with disabilities, and the LGBT community into the process, it makes for a much more solid and stable peace and reconstruction.

We worked at the country level. For example, European diplomat Alain Delon directed our Colombia program. He knew most leaders of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), and those of the ELN (National Liberation Army), the right-wing groups, and the government. He took our basic framework and applied but apply it to local realities. He was smart and savvy enough to adapt our principles on the ground.

I also entered the world of "responsibility to protect", or R2P. Building on the work of Francis Deng and others, Gareth Evans was the godfather of that concept. It says that if a government is unable or unwilling to protect its own citizens, the responsibility shifts to the global community. If a government is abusing its own populations, we have the responsibility to step in – although not necessarily militarily. This principle was adopted unanimously at the UN in the World Summit Outcome document in 2005. At Crisis Group, we urged nations to engage through humanitarian relief, sanctions, naming and shaming, peacekeeping, and – as a last resort – military engagement.

We also got funding and set up the "Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect," which still exists as a watchdog. The Centre considers situations in which citizens are being ignored or abused by their own governments, and builds ownership for the international community. There are many potential pitfalls, of course. For example, the Russians claimed that they were acting under responsibility to protect when they invaded Georgia and the Crimea to protect people of Russian origins. That's not what it was meant to be. But it can be used effectively. For example, we applied the concept to the citizens in Benghazi when Qadhafi's military was marching up and was going to decimate the population. What happened later in Libya is a different story, of course.

I served in New York for three years and then Gareth Evans decided to retire, so they asked me to come to the headquarters in Brussels and be deputy president for policy.

Q: And this is again International Crisis Group?

STEINBERG: Right. I continued to work on atrocity prevention. I served on task forces, including the one that Secretary Madeleine Albright and Senator Bill Cohen led for the U.S. Institute of Peace that designed a playbook for how governments, civil society actors and international organizations can address potential mass atrocities. I focused on early warning, then early prevention.

For example, how do you go into a situation like Kenya when a bad election in 2008 exploded into mass ethnic violence? We saw a possible Rwanda-like genocide between the Kikuyus, the Luos, the Kalenjins and other groups. A church in Eldoret in the Rift Valley was burned down with fifty Kikuyus inside, and things were getting out of hand. In that case we supported of Kofi Annan, Ben Mkapa and Graça Machel with policy advice. We said that you need to end the violence by creating a power-sharing arrangement at the top, but you also need to address the root causes. These included concentration of power in executive elites, marginalization of Parliament and courts, youth unemployment and alienation, security force abuses, and the like. We supported the USAID program, "Yes Youth Can," which brought together two million young Kenyans in community service and dialogue across ethnic lines. The negotiators insisted on accountability for past abuses, strengthening the legislature and the courts, training for security forces in community policing and non-lethal crowd control, and other steps. The result was to build a more stable society that resisted violence in the last two contested presidential elections.

Q: As a brief example most recently in the news, how would ICG or its sister organizations address the Rohingya/Muslim problem in Burma?

STEINBERG: I've been out of the organization for seven years now, but I know Crisis Group has written detailed reports based on interviews on the ground in Rakhine provinces and Cox's Bazaar, and is sharing recommendation with everyone from the President Trump to Pope Francis. In a similar case in Sri Lanka, the government launched a vicious attack to destroy the Tamil Tigers, and Crisis Group did in-depth forensic analysis using satellite imagery to show that mass atrocities were being committed. Crisis Group is probably doing the same with the abuses against the Rohingya. It may be that right now they are generating the information to go to the government and military in Myanmar to say, "Look, we've got the goods on you. Let's talk how you are going to welcome these people back." That would be the approach. It is a pragmatic organization. Its ideology is based on eliminating the root causes of conflict, which gives a wide range of activities that you can do.

Q. So then we move to 2009.

STEINBERG: Yes, Barack Obama gets elected and becomes president. I'm excited by the arrival of the new administration, especially after five years at Crisis Group. I was already looking to move on. I had applied to be the deputy high commissioner for UNHCR, and got down to the final two candidates, but lost out to the Dean of the Georgetown University Law School, Alexander Aleinikoff, who did a great job.

So I'm working in Brussels during the primary and general elections, not having played a role in Obama's campaign. I would have been delighted if either Secretary Clinton or Senator Obama had been elected. Not having been on the campaign, I assumed there was no role for me in the new Administration. Out of the blue, I got an e-mail from Obama's transition team. It said, literally: "Dear Ambassador Don: We have heard you may be interested in a job with the new Administration." They gave me a special e-mail address

and asked me to send my resume and five jobs that would interest me. At first, I thought it was a prank. What the heck is going on here? But I figured I'd play along. So I sent back a note and said "I'd love to be considered for ambassador to the European Union or NATO, Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, or a senior official at USAID."

Lo and behold, I get a note back saying that the job that sounded most appropriate was Deputy Administrator of USAID, and I should hope on for DC to meet with the White House personnel office and with Rajiv Shah, who had just been confirmed by the Senate as Administrator. This is in late 2009, so Obama has already been in office for much of a year. You will recall how slowly those appointments came though. I came back and sat down with Raj for about three hours. There was a mind-meld. It was clear that he was brilliant; he had a clear vision for re-empowering USAID that made sense to me; and he was an activist – an "Eveready bunny" that just keeps on going and going.

At that time, USAID was in a difficult and weakened position at that time. After 9/11, there was a huge expansion of foreign assistance as we finally understood that we needed to address the root causes of terrorism through development assistance. But USAID wasn't ready for it. There had been a large decline in the numbers of Foreign Service officers – a 40 percent drop in the officer and administrative corps at the same time that the budgets doubled. So individuals could no longer truly run their projects. They had to farm them out to NGOs, private contractors, international organizations, and the military. Officials became project managers rather than development experts, which was quite frustrating to them and morale was very low.

Also, other institutions had sidelined USAID, like the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Much development assistance also went through other U.S. government agencies, like CDC and Agriculture, and USAID was viewed as behind the times. There was also a lack of focus and concentration at USAID. They tried to do everything and couldn't effectively monitor and evaluate their work. The staff were talented professionals, but the conditions were simply untenable, an endless cycle of pumping out money and focusing on inputs rather than outputs or outcomes. When Raj Shah was going through his Senate confirmation hearings, Senator Pat Leahy said: "I'm a strong supporter of foreign assistance, but USAID is a broken agency. Unless you fix it, I can no longer support assistance."

Q: Was part of the difficulty that AID faced earmarks?

STEINBERG: It was one difficulty. We had limited discretion. For example, USAID emphasized education, in line with Congressional instructions, and our greatest expertise was in second and tertiary education. Most of the money we were given for education was for basic education. We generally saw ample resources for basic education coming from local tax systems. In a country like Cote d'Ivoire, they have billions of dollars for their basic education system but they're not putting anything into secondary or tertiary education; so that was a problem. Also, earmarks were so pervasive that we ended up becoming experts in "attribution." So, we would a basic education project in Africa and focus it on environmental training for girls. Thus, we'd meet earmarks for basic

education, Africa, the environment, and gender -- but who knows if that was the best use of scarce resources. So yes, that was a problem.

USAID career people knew all of this, and one coping mechanism was to transfer power with the Agency to field missions. In one sense, this is great because you want the people closest to the ground to be leading the programs. In another sense, however, it hampers the ability of the Agency to adopt rational global strategies and effect change. Raj Shah faced a natural resistance, for example, to developing systematic global health and food security initiatives. The Bush administration recognized these challenges toward the end. Administrators Andrew Natsios and Henrietta Fore started implementing reform programs, many of which the new Administration was able to build on.

So, this is what I talked about with Raj in that three-hour meeting. He said, "We have to fundamentally change the way we do business. We're going to celebrate our 50th anniversary in two years, and we should use that as the action-forcing event by which we needed evidence to should that this was not your grandfather's USAID." He came up with the idea of USAID Forward. This agenda had six core elements.

First, focus and concentrate in key sectors, especially education, global health, and food security. Second, encourage local ownership, working as much as possible through local systems including government, private sector, and civil society. There was a goal that 30 percent of the total resources would go through local systems. Third, re-staff with 1000 more officers. Fourth, improve our monitoring and evaluation programs, so we measure the real effectiveness of a project in terms of outcomes, incorporate goals right at the beginning, use feedback loops, identify ample resources at the start, and hold someone or some office accountable. Fifth, restore USAID's leadership in science, technology, and innovation. One sign of this need was the fact that in 2009, there wasn't a single science fellow at USAID from American Academy for the Advancement of Sciences, in contrast with more than 60 a few years back. Raj came from the Gates Foundation, where they are <u>not</u> behind the curve on science and technology innovation.

Finally, be a more diverse and inclusive organization. USAID had a weak record on bringing in, promoting, and empowering women, African-Americans, Hispanics, people with disabilities and the LGBT community, and our programs didn't adequately address the importance of marginalized populations in the countries in which we worked. I suggested appointing Agency-wide coordinators for gender, disabilities, LGBT groups, and indigenous populations. Raj was completely on-board.

After a series of e-mail exchanges, Raj said that I was his top candidate, and I was pleased to accept. But it took a long time because they had to do all the vetting, even though I'd been through all this several times before.

Q: Top secret clearance from the State Department?

STEINBERG: It was a little crazy. Obama's appointment people didn't really know me. I was close friends with Susan Rice, had a good working relationship over the years with

Secretary Clinton, and had a great interview with State Department counselor Cheryl Mills. But some folks in the White House understandably were hesitant. "He's a white straight man in his late fifties, a 30-year State Department veteran who served under Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. How is he change we can believe in?"

So I had to campaign. I asked Madeleine Albright, Tony Lake and others to vouch for me and say, "This guy has been promoting for three decades the very changes in policies and values that Obama is trying to bring into government." It still took a while, but the nomination finally came through in July 2010. Then for what it's worth, having been confirmed twice before by the Senate, the nomination sailed right through. Senator Leahy, my friend from the landmine struggle, introduced me at the hearings and I was confirmed quickly and unanimously.

Interestingly enough, one concern from Tony Lake and others was where my loyalties lay. At the time, there was talk about whether USAID would be folded into the State Department. The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) had been going on for 18 months. Tony literally said to me, "Don, are you being brought in to help eliminate USAID and move foreign assistance into the State Department?" I said "Absolutely not. USAID must be an independent agency, with the Administrator reporting to the Secretary. USAID has capacities in that role that would be lost if we change that. We would destroy the morale of USAID worker if they perceived themselves as "just" diplomats. Plus that's not their role. Tony said, "I agree."

Ironically, I was sworn in and my first assignment was to help finish the QDDR in a way that preserve USAID's autonomy. Raj Shah called me "Mariano Rivera," because I was the fresh reliever who picked up the process when everyone had been burned out from working their tails off. But there were some fundamental questions left at the end. Fortunately, Secretary Clinton and Bill Burns knew me, and Cheryl Mills came to know me. They took me seriously. At Raj's directions and in close consultation with him, I took into the room about five or six non-negotiables. For example, the coordination of our global food security programs was a mess, with Agriculture, State, and other agencies doing their own things and nobody bringing it all together. It was crazy. Raj said, "We need to get USAID designated as the head of the food security initiative." That we did.

We also got an endorsement for 1000 more Foreign Service officers for USAID. Also, at that point, USAID didn't have a budget or planning office, because the State Department's budget office prepared the State and AID budget. Raj said "This is ridiculous. We have a $17 billion organization that doesn't even control the development of its own budget?" This was changed in the QDDR and we brought in the super-talented Mike Casella, who re-established our credibility on issues related to budget and spending. There was an agreement that AID would prepare its own budget and then submit it to the deputy secretary for resources Tom Nides for incorporation in the broader foreign affairs budget. Yes, the Secretary has the final say, and that's the way it should be.

There was one particular issue that I staked my career on, the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). There was a proposal to move this fantastic operation out of USAID

and into State, which I believed would destroy its effectiveness. OTI has tremendous freedom and fast-moving authorities to provide countries emerging from civil war, natural disasters, and other instability with immediate help at the key pressure points. "What do we need? Political training for parties? Civil society groups? Women's empowerment? Education for political processes? Non-lethal crowd control training for the police forces?" They'd go in, talk to the ambassador, do field surveys, and then get it started in weeks. Rick Barton and Steve Morrison did this with me in Angola, and it made a fundamental difference. To move this office into a bureaucratic State structure would have hamstrung it.

I walked into a small meeting in the Secretary's office where I said all this. I added that having the office at USAID gives the Ambassador a little bit of deniability, because he or she can say "Oh, that's the AID mission going off again and doing its thing." The Secretary didn't like that answer. She said, "Look I want my ambassadors to be fully accountable and not have deniability." But after several weeks of imagining that I would be the shortest tenured deputy administrator in the history of the agency, she and the other came to share my view and OTI remains one of the most effective in the U.S. government's tool kit.

Q: A quick question here about the QDDR. It was a new process that took a long time. It developed as it went along in some ways, including its length and its detail. At the end of the process was it a worthwhile investment of time?

STEINBERG: That's a great question for me in particular because I came in at the end, a year after it had been launched and I worked for about three months on it to wrap it up, working primarily with State Policy Planning Director, Anne-Marie Slaughter. So for me it was great. A lot of other people complained about the endless meetings. But in many of these situations the process is as important as the product. State Department and USAID people sit down together to talk about who does humanitarian assistance in South Sudan when there is a politically motivated food crisis. State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration Bureau would say we are. The USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance would say we are. And so they have to talk it through, and get to know each other's capabilities and priorities. Frankly, this particular issue was one that wasn't resolved, along with the question of who has leadership in human rights and democracy promotion. But in general, the process was useful.

The QDDR was also important by signaling the Secretary's endorsement of an empowered USAID not just in development, but vis-à-vis the political side and the national security side. She was the strongest advocate for USAID to be at the table in the NSC meetings – the Principals Committee, the Deputies Committee and all the Inter-Agency Working Groups – at the White House. Until then, USAID would occasionally be invited to these meetings, but it was the exception. She helped establish the notion that we were at the table all the time, and if there were issues that they didn't want us there for, they would tell us. It changed the whole nature of how USAID was perceived, because once officials walk into that deputies committee or principals committee meeting they're supposed to take off agency hats. This will sound immodest, but I had 30 years of

experience in these issues. Yes, I represented USAID at the table, but I also had insights into the wide variety of other issues.

Raj Shah did well in these settings, so they came to appreciate his participation at the Principals Committee. Later, when the NSC and the White House formalized the procedure, they said USAID is essentially a permanent member of these committees. So we were at the table. At the Deputies, Gayle Smith, the NSC lead for development and later USAID Administrator; Samantha Power, who was a force unto herself; and I would often come together to support a position. This helped ensure that issues of development, humanitarian assistance, development, human rights and R2P were on the agenda.

We then proceeded to implement the USAID Forward plan. It was the single most focused set of activities that one could ever imagine, and credit Raj Shah and his team with that. They had a clear vision and a purposeful approach. And there was a coming together between the political types – Raj, Nancy Lindborg, Paige Alexander, Eric Postel, Alex Thier, Lisa Gomer and other officials – and the senior career people at USAID. They too saw that USAID had been somewhat eviscerated and sidelined. And even though they knew that the political types would be moving on at some point, they saw common cause. So we implemented the programs I described before. My role was mostly as the stay-at-home dad who helped run the agency while Raj did great things.

He instituted a world-class monitoring and evaluation system. He brought in Ruth Levine who is now at Hewlett Foundation, to create what a "platinum-standard" system now being adopted by other agencies. Our officers loved it because all of a sudden they were developing goals and targets at the beginning of projects and could measure progress and fine-tune efforts as they moved along.

We instituted a program for local ownership – give our general counsel Lisa Gomer a lot of credit here – and we doubled the amount of assistance we were giving through local systems, which empowered local stakeholders, governments, NGOs and businesses. We moved back to be a global leader in science, technology and innovation, bringing in a world-class scientist – Alex Dehgan -- as our science advisor and sprinkling science fellows throughout the agency. We instituted a program for "Grand Challenges," where you put out a development challenge, invite the private sector, NGOs and academics to come in, and help fund their innovations. Raj and Alex identified eight universities around the country that served as centers of excellence for particular issues such as agriculture, human rights, and conflict resolution, and provided about $20 million per center. Everyone wanted to partner with us because we had resources and vision.

We recognized that official development assistance is no longer the player that it had been in the past. USAID is the largest development agency in the world; we have $17 billion worth of resources. But private Americans through NGOs, churches, academic institutions give twice that amount of money for development. Remittances going to those countries are 10 times that amount. Then add a trillion dollars of private-sector investment in there, and it redefined the role of official development assistance. It was no longer filling resource gaps in developing countries. We were 85 percent of all

development flows to these countries in 1960; we were 15 percent om 2010. So our programs had to shift to empowering, developing capacity, training, and ensuring that the other investments were effective. We helped change that mindset.

Q: Just one quick thing here. Changing the mindset about the expectations of what USAID was able to do is no small thing.

STEINBERG: No, it wasn't. I was pleased to speak recently with some Foreign Service officers at USAID, and they said a lot of this stuck, especially on monitoring and evaluation. In the past, they tended to focus on inputs. So if they ran an education program, they asked how many dollars were spent, and what programs were started. Under this new approach, they got to outputs: how many teachers have been trained, how many students are studying under these teachers, how many quality schools have been built – with the ultimate goal of moving to outcomes, which asks, "Are kids better able to join the workforce and be productive public citizens?" It's like this old story of the two people working at a construction site. The first person is idly working and when asked what he's doing, he says "I'm laying bricks." Ask the second person, who is working full-speed, and he says, "I'm building a school to educate my kids."

Motivation does matter, because 95 percent of the senior officers at AID have already put in their 20 years and could retire right now with their full pension. Thus, they are in essence working for half of their salary. So what is their motivation? If the motivation is to build schools to educate children, that's one thing. If the motivation is to fulfill a particular earmark or work through red tape, you're going to lose them. Frankly, that is happening at State right now. By contrast, we didn't not lose senior officers during that time; they were excited about the changes they were seeing.

My other personal focus was diversity and inclusion. I developed a four-pillar approach to bringing disadvantaged, marginalized people into a system that can better serve their needs and, equally important, use their talents.

First, we ran specific programs in support of marginalized programs, such as a $250 million program for Afghan women. The first program I announced was a $14 million fund to support women's participation globally in peace processes, developed by our gender coordinator, Carla Koppell. We ran programs focused on people with disabilities and we insisted that the Leahy War Victims Fund was fully implemented. We supported LGBT activists around the world with actual resources and became the single funder of those groups around the world. And so on.

Second, we insisted that inclusion and diversity considerations apply in every program we do. I'm often asked, "Do you think it makes sense to have ministers of women's affairs in a country?" Yes, but the foreign and finance ministers and the president and prime minister need to be mainstream and integrate gender into all programs. We required every USAID project proposal to generate a gender-impact statement. Unfortunately, the first such statement we received was for a project in South Asia to build a bridge, and it was one sentence: "Fifty percent of the people using this bridge will

be women." When the next project came in about building a dam and said the essentially same thing, we went ballistic.

Melanne Verveer, the powerhouse gender ambassador from the State Department, joined me and a slew of assistant administrators in a Skype with the field. We said, "OK – when you build the dam, you'll employ mostly men. What is that doing to gender balance in the labor market? You will displace a huge population. How does that impact male/female power relationships? Will there be more domestic violence as a result? Half of the electricity will go to women. Is that really true? Are you getting electricity into people's houses?" I reminded them that four million women and children die each year from respiratory illnesses because they don't have electricity in the house and they have to cook with firewood inside. They breathe the smoke every day. After this Skype, the mission went back and prepared a thorough analysis.

Third, we became a thought- and action-leader, a policy spokesperson, and a learning center for these issues. In the gender area, we brought together groups to prepare new policies and implementation plans on women's economic empowerment, on trafficking in persons, on girls' education, and a new policy on child marriage. We also prepared an overall gender equality and women's empowerment plan, and a strategy on women, peace, and security in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Finally, we insisted that USAID walk the talk by empowering our own diverse staff through training programs, expanding the pool of applicants for employment, carefully monitoring promotion and assignment processes, and making attention to diversity and inclusion a part of the performance evaluation system. We were filled with people with good will but not a lot of knowledge about how to do it. We brought in Barry Wells and others from the State Department who had long histories in EEO issues, who served as our early coordinators and advisors. They helped a lot. We had not gone through the equivalent to the response to the Alison Palmer suit, which in 1990 required the State Department to take fundamental steps. The judgment of a district court in Washington in that case said that failure to take full advantage of society's diversity is a failure in constitutional terms. The court said that State has a responsibility under the constitution to provide the best possible foreign policy for this country, and if State isn't reaching out to women and people of color and gay people, it isn't doing that. So it wasn't just a question of a few promotions for women or more women Ambassadors and DCMs State had to show that its foreign policy was better because it draw on contributions from all the staff."

So we took a fundamental look at all aspects of USAID. We have a weak record on employing Hispanics in particular, considering they are now 15 percent of the general population. And we're not much better on African-Americans; Native Americans: people with disabilities, and other groups.

We expanded our recruitment from historically black colleges and universities and historically Hispanic-serving institutions. Send people out there to run training and mentoring programs. We examined unintended outcomes of our practices and policies.

For example, we generally required a master's degree (or equivalent) for anyone applying for a Foreign Service position. The real reason is to limit the applicant pool. If we only need 1,000 people this year, should we really go through 120,000 applications or can we find a way to limit that pool to 20,000? But the truth is, a smaller percentage of people of color get master's degrees. They have a lot of practical experience in the field; they will be equally great Foreign Service officers, but that was a hidden bias against them.

We had those factors all throughout the system. Stretch assignments where you can't find someone at the level that the job is, and you go to someone who is less experience. It was pointed out to us by one of the affinity groups that white men were overwhelmingly chosen. When we asked why, we heard assignment officers say, "Well, I don't want to set these women or people of color up for failure. If they screw up, I've got a problem." We said, "That's crazy; you're keeping women and African-Americans and others from demonstrating their skills and preventing them from being fast risers. No, don't set them up for failure – run training programs and mentorship programs to help them succeed."

Also, at the higher levels in the system, it becomes, as they say, "Yale, pale, and male." We needed to see what was blocking the rise of our diverse workforce. I was listening to Carly Fiorina yesterday. She started as a personal assistant and secretary. Someone saw the talent there and allowed it to come forward and developed it. At USAID, there was a group of African-American women who work primarily in clerical jobs who were talented as hell, who never were given a chance to move up in the system. So you could say that 60 percent of the people at AID are women and 15 percent are African-American – but they are locked in that group. We had listening sessions with them. They said to us, "I'm so much more than my supervisor recognizes. I can do great things. My supervisor isn't developing my talents in part because he" – and it was almost always "he" – "needs me to stay in this position because I make him look good."

This is a waste of talent. It's probably against the law. And it creates cynicism and tension within the agency. So we instituted listening sessions. Raj Shah is a relatively formal guy – I'll always remember a session where a clerical worker came up and hugged him and said this was the first time she had a chance to air her feelings. He was smiling but you could tell he was thinking, "Shake my hand, please, just shake my hand."

This is all vital, because there's nothing worse than not living up to your own principles. The single idea we applied across all four pillars in summed up in the phrase, "Nothing about us without us." I got to the point where people would kid me mercilessly because every speech I gave used that phrase. It could be about food security in West Africa or water policy in Southeast Asia, and I would use the phrase. When I left the agency, I got a plaque from the career officers that just said: "Don Steinberg – Nothing About Us Without Us." Repetition matters. Just plugging it into people's minds. And we backed it up by delaying a couple of promotions to mission directors known to be insensitive managers until they went through training. That's where the rubber meets the road.

Q. In addition to everything USAID was doing, I can see that there were overlaps with State on human rights and perhaps with the Pentagon on PRTs (provincial reconstruction

teams). How did you resolve that overlap?

STEINBERG: By being transparent, inclusive and supportive. For example, we recognized that Melanne Verveer and her office had strong political clout, including access to the Secretary, boundless energy and a wealth of great ideas – but very little money. We made inter-agency transfers to her. Melanne at one point referred to me as her banker. An entry-level AID person controls more resources than most senior officers at State. When you're part of a team with a common goal, you can do great things, and we did. In other areas like human rights and refugee assistance, there were conflicts. Again, those were the topics we had hoped the QDDR was going to resolve.

In the LGBT area as well, we made great progress. Remember that even today, about 75 countries around the world make it illegal to even advocate for gay rights. For me, the importance of gay rights stems from my parents. My father was a high school principal in Los Angeles and he launched one of the first LGBT school-based support groups in the country in the early 1990s. He was criticized by Senator Helms, who said: "There's a high school principal in California teaching 14-year-old boys how to have sex with other 14-year-old boys." But my father held firm. For him, this wasn't so much a legal or human rights issue, but that a question of practical education. His said, "How can we teach these kids Latin, ancient history and trigonometry, and not help them address one of the key issues affecting their lives?" He knew that unless they were at ease with their sexual orientation and gender identity, they were more likely to be bullied, miss school, use drugs, drop out, and even commit suicide.

That's my motivation as well; the utilitarian argument. We can't afford to tell 10 percent of our fellow citizens, "We don't want your skills and our contributions for development work." USAID was the first agency to have a full-time coordinator for LGBT issues. We were ahead of the White House a couple of issues. We had a provision in our contracts that said we will look at whether bidders discriminated on this basis, and that will be factored into our decision. We couldn't make it more formal than that. Even with that, the White House was concerned. Later on, the White House got way ahead of us, but I do remember being called over to the West Wing twice and told, "You're part of the government here. We have administration-wide policies, and you're ahead of us."

We were proud to be thought-, action- and learning-leaders. We created safe spaces for people to come forward and say "Yes, I have a disability, and I need reasonable accommodation." Until then, they were often afraid to do so. Same with LGBT people and racial and religious minorities. We urged people to talk about their concerns, and to recognize that society was changing and we should be changing along with it.

Question: Did you have other priorities?

I worked on atrocity prevention. As you know, I was deeply involved in the tragedies in Rwanda, Angola, and elsewhere, and felt that we needed to empower the system to do better than we had in those situations. Now we had a number of senior people in the Obama administration with similar interests. Samantha Power literally wrote the book on

this, A Problem from Hell. Susan Rice, at that point the UN ambassador, had been the number two in NSC peacekeeping during the Rwandan genocide. Tony Lake, then head of UNICEF but still playing a mentor role with several of us, was engaged, as were President Obama and Secretary Clinton.

Early on, Samantha Power led a process to institute policies and programs throughout the entire U.S. foreign policy establishment to look for the early warning signs, to consider early action, and to establish doctrine. Then we set up the Atrocities Prevention Board (APB). This board was based in the White House and had deputy or assistant secretaries from all the major agencies. Power led it, and it served about five or six different roles.

First, it allowed the White House to coordinate actions that would normally have been the isolated prerogatives of the State Department or Justice or Treasury or USAID or the Pentagon. Second, it got the intelligence community to focus on these issues, to look for the root causes and develop watch lists. Third, it served as a conduit for information to the NSC deputies committee, because there were three or four of us would walk from an APB meeting into the deputies committee meeting and push forward these issues. It served as a liaison with smart observers in the field who followed these issues. And it kept these concerns on the front burner.

In Myanmar, for example, the president raised our concerns about the Rohingya during his visit with Aung San Suu Kyi and other political leaders. It had an impact on our decision to create a safe zone for Libyans in Benghazi as they were being attacked or subjected to violence from the Qadhafi regime towards the middle of the process. The same holds true in the CAR, the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda, Central America's Northern Triangle, and elsewhere. It also gave advocates within their own agencies added firepower. At USAID, for example, we set up channel through which anybody who saw something concerning or scary could send a message directly to the deputy administrator – me – and get a response within 48 hours. We sponsored competitions for new technologies to monitor what was happening on the ground. We got crowd-sourcing programs going; we held datapaloozas and hackathons asking field staff to give us their best ideas. We implemented training programs at the Foreign Service Institute, and I discussed my experience in Rwanda at the first session.

There is now a growing recognition that these issues are as important as nuclear non-proliferation, climate change, or any other national security interest. Countries that are unstable and vulnerable are more likely to traffic in drugs and people and weapons. They're more likely to have refugee crises; to harbor pirates and terrorists; to transmit pandemic diseases; and to need American troops on the ground. So this role is equally important from a national security standpoint as anything else.

There were limits, of course. We had a major problem in that Syria was spiraling out of control at the same time. We knew that a group of deputy and assistant secretaries could not create political pressure on our government to intervene in situations where the president and the cabinet decided not to. So there was a tension and a recognition of the limits of the power of it, but I do believe the APB has had an impact and it still exists.

Q. You mentioned your work on women, peace and security? Was that a key priority?

Absolutely. I had been involved with passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which put the issue of women's engagement in peace processes into the purview of the Security Council. It had been adopted in 2000 and it was landmark in the sense of a having a dedicated resolution focused on why women matter, and why we have to protect and empower them as leaders in peace processes. It wasn't the strongest resolution in the world, however, since it did not allow sanctions on countries if they violated it. It didn't set up an implementing office or mandate a list of violators that could be named and shamed. It didn't designate a special ambassador who could speak to the Security Council when necessary.

When we came back into office, under the leadership of the President and the Secretary, a group came together, including Melanne Verveer, Cheryl Mills, and Carla Koppell, with support from Valerie Jarrett, Tina Tchen, and Samantha Power at the White House.

We proposed new Security Council resolutions that strengthened 1325 and gave it the same enforcing instruments as other resolutions. On the tenth anniversary of the passage of 1325, the UN held a review conference. Secretary Clinton led our delegation. She saw this a logical extension of her groundbreaking speech at the Women's Conference in Beijing fifteen year earlier, where she declared, "Women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights, now and forever." We were sitting with her just before the conference reviewing her speech, which said the United States plans to do this and that in support of the Resolution. We all looked at each other and said, "Why not commit to a government-wide National Action Plan in this area? We'll get Defense, AID, State, and the other agencies to review how we all can expand our efforts through time-bound measurable goals." Three hours later, that's what Secretary Clinton told the conference, For me, it was a reminder of the power of being at that level. To change policy, you can draft a proposal, submit it to your front office, go through the inter-agency process, move it up to the Deputies Committee, and so on. Or you can slip a line in a speech that the secretary wants to give.

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Within a year we had a National Action Plan, and it has made a fundamental difference. And that's when I changed the PIN on my ATM card to 1325.

Q: That kind of policy making is not missed even at the working level. We hear about this kind of speech and we read about a new U.S. government initiative. We all look at each other and ask, "Did you know about this?" We send cables to Washington to ask, "Is this a real initiative?" It'll take a while for it to percolate through.

STEINBERG: I agree. But it wasn't entirely ad lib. We had already done the spadework on each of the elements in the speech. We had just never consider bringing it all together into a national plan. And Secretary Clinton did call the White House before she spoke; fortunately, they said, "Go for it!"

Q. Six months into Obama's second term, you decided to move on.

STEINBERG: Yes. There were a number of reasons. Part of it was that I had two sons, nine- and seven-years old, who were growing up without me. Officials always say, "I'm quitting because I want to spend more time with my family," but in my case, it was true. Also, I had just turned 60 years old, and felt that if I was going to do something else, this was the time. In our ageist society, it's much harder to get a new job at 65 than it is at 60.

Also, with a few exceptions, I've been a deputy all my life. Deputy Administrator at AID, Deputy President at Crisis Group, Deputy Assistant Secretary in PRM, Deputy Policy Planning Director, White House Deputy Spokesperson, and so on. I wanted to run my own operation, to feel the responsibility of preparing a budget, defining a mission statement and vision, and creating a senior leadership team. I had a great relationship with Raj Shah, but the buck truly stopped at his desk.

Finally, I was disturbed by the increasing nastiness and politicization I was feeling, particularly against the backdrop of the 2012 presidential elections. A growing number of folks on Capitol Hill decided that attacking USAID would be good politics. As stewards of the taxpayers' dollars, we should indeed be held accountable, especially when things go wrong, but that wasn't the motivation. When it turned into attacks of a personal nature, I decided that this wasn't what I signed up for. I remember when a conservative friend from the Hill called me up and said "Don, I've been told I can't have any more phone conversations or e-mails with you." I said, "How are we going to communicate in the future?" He said "By subpoena."

Putting all of this together and feeling satisfied with all we achieved in the first term, I decided to move on. I looked at a number of onward positions. One was the president of the USIP, but they went a different way. Another was head of the International Rescue Committee but they went with David Miliband. Then I was offered the chance to interview for the president and CEO of World Learning, which at that time was a $100 million global NGO working in development, education and exchange programs. I've respected World Learning for a long time. Its mission is fully consistent with my background and beliefs. I interviewed and was offered the position.

Q: As a public diplomacy officer in the field, we regularly worked with World Learning representatives, chiefs of party. Always solid, very good reputation.

STEINBERG: I started in July 2013 and remained CEO until about six weeks ago. This period has been an exciting adventure. World Learning has five activities. For 75 years we've run a high school exchange program called the Experiment in International Living, which sends students to do home-stays, community services, and language studies in a foreign country – often in the developing world. Their lives are changed. I just met a 16-year-old girl who came back from Mongolia. She had never been in a developing country before. She's from the Upper East Side of New York; her parents are successful lawyers. She went to Mongolia, we took her around the country, had her stay in yurts and drink yak milk. and see how reality of life there. At the end we put her in a room and gave her a

pad of paper and said, “Answer the following question: What responsibility comes with the privilege you’ve been given in life?” Her remarkable essay finished by saying “I left New York a young teenage girl and I’ve come back a citizen of the world.” A little presumptuous, perhaps, but clearly a transformation. Her parents told me, “We don’t recognize the young woman you sent back to us, but thank you.”

Between 600 and 1,000 people do this each year. We also offer scholarships to ensure a diverse mix of students. More than half the participants are people of color. Some participants also receive special training where they get a week in Washington at the start and a week at our campus in Brattleboro, Vermont, at the end. They learn to apply their overseas experiences in their community, and then we give them social innovation grants. They are starting projects in their communities to address opioid abuse, anti-bullying, LGBT rights, and other concerns.

We also run semester abroad programs for college juniors and sophomores. It’s all experiential learning, so students aren’t part of a big classroom but are on the ground learning from local citizens. They learn the local language, do community service, stay with local families, and run research projects. We have 2000 students each year divided into 70 programs. Our biggest providers include Ivy League schools, big state institutions and small liberal arts colleges -- a good mix. We are accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges so they get school credit for the program.

The topics are exciting. We now have a research program in Iceland and Greenland on climate change. We have a program in Jordan where you work with Syrian refugees, focusing on health issues. We have a program in Geneva that focuses on the European Union system. We even have 20 programs where you study an issue in four different locations. For example, you investigate the challenges of urbanization in San Francisco, Buenos Aires, Cairo, and Hanoi, with a month in each place.

The third part of our program is graduate education. We have our own graduate school in Vermont, the School for International Training. It’s been around for 50 years. It has an interesting start. One of the earliest Experimenters was Sargent Shriver. He took part three times in the 1930s, once as a group leader. A lot of the Kennedys have done this. When he became Peace Corps director in the early 1960s, he said “I know the perfect place to train the first volunteers.” Many of the first volunteers trained at our campus in southern Vermont. This training facility was soon transformed into a degree-providing graduate school. We currently have about 150 students there and a cohort here in Washington. They study peace-building and conflict transformation, cultural communications and management, sustainable development, international education, and teaching English to speakers of other languages. Remarkable students.

It is experiential learning in the sense you bring yourself into the classroom. We generally don’t recruit students coming straight from college. You have to show that you’ve learned something in the field, that you’ve been a Peace Corps volunteer or worked for an NGO or an international organization. About 40 percent of our students are international, mostly from Africa. It is a remarkable center of learning and excellence.

Everyone is required to do a field practicum, so for four months you go off to a developing country and work for Médecins Sans Frontières, the UN, a donor agency, a foundation, or the like. You then get your degree and go off to change the world.

It's just a quality education. I am impressed in particular with our work in conflict transformation. What is taught in the classroom is the reality that took me 30 years to learn in the field. Question like who to bring to the table in a peace negotiation, how to engage both perpetrators of crimes and their victims, how to sequence the various issues to be addressed. Stuff like this. In sustainable development, the focus is on eliminating of extreme poverty by 2030 in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It's tied to the paragraph in Barack Obama's 2013 State of the Union Address in 2013, where pledge that the United States will join with our allies to eradicate extreme poverty in the next two decades – and explains how we will do it. Having helped draft that paragraph, it's exciting to train students who are going to make that pledge into a reality.

Q: Quick question. To eliminate extreme poverty in the next 20 years, where are the key areas in the world we should keep an eye on for success?

STEINBERG. Great question, with many answers. In his 2013 pledge, President Obama said we would achieve the result by empowering women, giving our brightest minds new opportunities to serve, helping communities feed, power and educate themselves, connecting more people to the global economy, saving children from preventable deaths, and realizing the promise of an AIDS-free generation. That's a good checklist.

Extreme poverty is defined as earning less $1.90 a day per capita. Our collective work over the last quarter century has brought a billion people across the poverty line, mostly in China and India. We're at the point where we need to address pockets of extreme poverty in those two countries, but equally in conflict affected countries and in Africa. Using the SDGs as our guide, we need a consolidated approach that highlights education, health care, food security, environmental sustainability, and more. We need a whole of society approach that draws drawing on the contribution of governments, the private sector, civil society, international institutions, and the like.

Building resiliency in areas of conflict and regions prone to natural disasters is essential. Look at Haiti – we were making reasonable progress, then an earthquake hit and now we're back to square one. South Sudan had a shot at breaking out of poverty upon independence, then ethnic divisions kicked in and the poverty soared. The northern triangle in Central America; the Mano River states of West Africa; the Middle East and Central Asia: they all show the relationship between stability, respect for human rights, good governance, transparency, resiliency, and poverty elimination. Not every bad election should lead to civil war; not every drought should lead to a famine.

Q: Okay, back to World Learning.

STEINBERG: Yes. Our fourth area is exchange programs. We manage a number of the International Visitor's Leadership programs at the State Department, bringing about 150

delegations a year of young people, senior government officials, scientists, and the like for observation missions and interaction with Americans in their same field. A few years ago we brought 100 Cuban high school kids to the United States for six weeks. They went around the United States, and saw the good, the bad and the ugly. We brought them to Washington, and they went to Monticello and studied Jeffersonian democracy with scholars there. They went to the Newseum and studied press freedom. We took them to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center and they studied race relations, warts and all. Then they went back to Cuba and hopefully they'll contribute to positive change there. We do that with Mexicans, Iraqis, Central Asians, and so on. We also run part of the Global UGRAD where foreign university students do a semester or year abroad in the United States. The American embassies identify candidates for undergrad and graduate degrees who they think can make a difference.

We also run professional exchanges. A couple of years ago I was made an honorary Environmental Scientist in Iran by a group of forty Iranian climate change experts to the United States. Not bad for someone who got a C- in college biology. We bring Palestinians and Israelis together and they go around the country and learn about the United States, but also about each other. Pakistanis and Indians, and Koreans and Japanese. Again, the goal is not only to show them the United States but to draw on their expertise to share lessons that can be adopted here. It is truly an exchange program.

Finally, World Learning is a capacity-building NGO that works in about three dozen countries around the world. To describe a few projects, we are currently working with IRC and Creative Associates in Pakistan to train 90,000 teachers to build an education system for 3 million kids that is open to girls, liberal, secular, provides a quality education, and serves as a counterpart to the indoctrination in the madrassas. We have 150 people on the ground in every province of the country. Our prime motivation is enhancing the quality of education, building the society, and countering violent extremism by keeping people in the system and preventing alienation.

My Board of Trustees was concerned over safety and security issues in Pakistan and questioned our plans to do this program. I bought 25 copies of I Am Malala and sent each one a copy. I said: "Read this book, and then tell me that education in Pakistan isn't part of our mission." None of them told me that, and we went ahead. I'm not sure any of them read the book, but the point was made.

Similarly, World Learning is in Lebanon, working in 320 communities impacted by Syrian refugees. We are building the capacity of those communities to welcome the 1.5 million refugees that have flooded into their country. There are no refugee camps in Lebanon as a result of a government decision, and communities are straining under this population flow. So we're building capacity in education, housing, and electricity, and creating dispute-resolution mechanisms in each of the communities. If there is a dispute over stealing electricity from the public line, or squatting on public land, it doesn't turn violent or xenophobic; they resolve it peacefully through negotiation. The communities we're working in are mostly peaceful, successful. And by offering these services for all the community it eliminates the resentment against refugees getting all the help.

Kosovo asked to reform their higher education system. So we linked with Dartmouth, Arizona State, Indiana University, and the University of Minnesota. We've all taken a part of their system to bring it from the Soviet-style Eastern European model – outdated and not relevant to the labor market – to a system that's appropriate for today. We are crisscrossing the Atlantic, 2000 people coming this way, 2000 people going that way. World Learning focusses on human rights and gender faculties; Dartmouth on law and medicine; Arizona State on agriculture. It's moving the system in the right direction.

The last program I wanted to describe is my favorite. We are in Egypt with a variety of programs, but the one I love most is our STEM education program. The governments of Egypt and the U.S. asked us to create STEM high schools around the country. We agreed to do it, but we didn't want them to be traditional STEM high schools; we wanted them to be experiential learning sites – and open to girls. We now have eleven of these schools, and I've "adopted" one of them, the Maadi School for Girls, right outside of Cairo.

The girls are selected from around the country for intellect, leadership and maturity. They come in the first semester, walk in and say, "Where are our classrooms?" We say, "There are no classrooms." "Where's our text?" "There are no texts." "Where's our curriculum?" "There is no curriculum."

They spend the first month talking about their own experiences and concerns, what they bring with them, what they've learned. It's an open, moderated session where they decide what issue they think is the most important for Egypt. The girls I worked with decided it was urbanization. The cities are getting too big; they're crowded, crime-ridden, polluted. Water and electrical facilities are inadequate; transportation systems are falling apart. Everything they then learn for the next four years is around urbanization. They study the mathematics of it, the economics, the literature, the history, the English language terms. We then give them 3-D printers, digital fabrication laboratories, and laser cutters, and the capacity to do hackathons and datapaloozas and crowd-sourcing. Then we give them a project. In this case, we said "Build a model for a house that is completely self-sustainable – it doesn't need any outside inputs and doesn't pollute -- that can house eight people and costs $15,000 or less. And these girls did it.

The mock-up of the house was gorgeous – traditional Egyptian architecture. I walked in and asked, "Where does the water come from?" "From the air." "In Egypt?" "Yes – we have condensers here that draw moisture from the air and these purifiers." "But that must use up a lot of energy, and you can't use outside sources." "We have these solar panels over here, biofuel, biogas." "What do you do with the CO2 that creates?" "We have carbon-fixing plants over here that are also edible. We use barometric pressure in wind tunnels that don't use any electricity but keep the house 10 degrees cooler in the day, 10 degrees warmer at night." "How much is this going to cost?" "$11,000."

Google gave them a prize in a global innovation challenge that included institutions like science centers at Berkeley and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. The Arab ministers of

education were invited in to look at this and they loved it; now they're asking for this program in their countries. The Egyptian government now wants 26 of these schools.

Some of these young people are now going to college, and they're changing everything. I talked with the provost at the University of the Nile, which has 100,000 students. He that our 25 students are walking into classrooms where professors are writing on the black boards and they're raising their hands and saying, "This isn't how I learned; you're not really teaching me, you're just writing formulas on the board. Teach me!" The professors are excited because they have students who are interested, and they're asking for this training. And if we can do it in Alexandria, Egypt, why not Alexandria, Virginia?

In Myanmar, we're working with dozens of civil society groups to build their capacity. In Malawi, we're training midwives. In Central America, we're working on gang violence. We're in about 35 countries through our development programs, more than 100 countries all together. The single mission that drives it all is to empower a new generation of global leaders and citizens to build peace, prosperity, social justice, and inclusion. And it's a model for growth: since 2013, we've doubled our staff and expanded our workload from by 60 percent to $160 million.

We are cutting edge in many areas. For example, in the area of exchanges, we have now moved into virtual exchanges under the Chris Stevens Initiative run by the Aspen Institute. It's actually simple. Iraqi kids who cannot travel to the States link through computers and Skype and all the rest with American youths. They get to know each other through regular exchanges. They take each other to their schools with their computers showing them what it's like. They show each other what they have for breakfast. And there are moderated discussions where they discuss extremism, the impact of social media, or just their hopes for the future. For regions which can't do actual exchanges, this gives young people an experience that every bit as real as travel.

Q: Speaking of technology experts and how to do it better, the few times as a public diplomacy officer I tried doing these virtual linkages between classrooms or between young people, one of the biggest problems I had was the time difference.

STEINBERG: Two points. First, find that perfect hour or two where it's the end of one person's day and the beginning of the other's. But you don't have to do it in real time. I put something on our website, and you respond to it three hours later. If you do it right, it enhances the exchange because you have time to think about your response. Any Foreign Service officer who's served overseas knows there is an advantage to being in a different time zone. In some cases, it gives you the whole morning to provide the information they asked for yesterday. In other cases, it allows you to ask Washington for answers that you'll get first thing the next morning.

Recently, World Learning sponsored a seminar for our field staff and that of four or five NGOs that do similar work, and we invited them in. We brought in Google, Facebook, Apple, New York Academy of Sciences, and more. We spent the morning describing what we do in the field. Then at lunch Alex Dehgan, the former chief scientist at USAID,

said “I hate to tell you this, folks, but I’ve seen the future and the way you’re constructed, you’re not in it.” We were all shaking in our boots. Then we spent the entire afternoon speed-dating. Our action officer in Algeria who’s doing a fabulous program for disability rights meets with somebody from the New York Academy of Sciences who’s worked in that space. The scientist says, “Here’s the technology you need for the future.” We then got a donor to give us $250,000 a year for four years to implement those changes. May not sound like a lot of money, but for a $160 million organization, $250,000 of resources of not tied to anything can change it.

Q: Can you give one example of this? Because this is cutting edge.

STEINBERG: Sure. One example is the classroom infrastructure. The usual approach is to put a stationary camera in place and have the professor talk. They told us about new technology where motion detectors follow the professor as she’s walking around, sound systems ensure she can be heard no matter where she is, lighting that is perfect. Plus the capacity to access data bases and videos even as she’s teaching, so that it’s a true digital exchange. Queues with questions from the field. The student are not just listening – they are providing full input. It takes a static one-way communications and turns it into experiential learning.

Q: One practical question about these kinds of changes – so it allows the teacher to quickly get onto the internet?

STEINBERG: Absolutely. The professor will say, “To answer your question, let me show you this speech that Barack Obama gave in 2013.” One more example. It now costs about $65,000 to build and send a mini-satellite into space that can provide distance-learning capabilities. You could surround the globe with 12 of these – there is a 30-degree vector – and have a world-wide learning system. We are on the cutting edge of using technology without losing the human contact: high-tech and high-touch. We don’t have the answers yet, but our professors love the challenge. They don’t want to be the dinosaur who teaches in the old way.

Q: And what’s in the future for you?

STEINBERG: I’ve worked at World Learning for coming on five years, and it’s been great. But about two years ago, I was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. It’s not pleasant. My hand shakes, my energy lapses at times. I made a decision about three months ago – a similar decision when I left AID – that if I have a limited amount of time with my full cognitive and physical abilities, I want to apply it to directly to the concerns and value I hold most dear. So I’ve entered a new stage.

Danny Kaye once said “Life is a big, white, empty canvas and our job is to throw as much brightly colored paint on it as possible.” That’s how I’m looking at my post-World Learning life.

I'm serving on non-profit boards and advisory councils for the Women's Refugee Commission, Trickle Up, USA for UN Women, Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Global Arts Corps, the Auschwitz Institute for Atrocity Prevention, and others.

I'm also working on three projects. First, I'm going to teach at Dartmouth under a fellowship program. Dan Benjamin, a former State Department official who's now the head of their international program, wants me to teach a senior seminar on poverty eradication in line with President Obama's pledge and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They also want me to give public lectures on this topic, as well as atrocity prevention and women, peace and security. So I'll do that next semester, starting in March. They've had Rand Beers and Johnnie Carson up there in the past. I'm excited about that. I'm basing this teaching on the work of Jeff Sachs, Paul Collier, and Steve Radelet – who was the former chief economist at USAID, teaches at Georgetown, and wrote an outstanding book called The Great Surge. I'm picking his brain now and he's agreed to speak to one of my classes. I've also lined up former USAID administrator Brian Atwood, International Youth Foundation head Susan Reichle, and others to speak. picked his brain.

Second, I'm going to serve as a Senior Fellow for Diversity and Inclusion at InterAction, the umbrella organization for 180 American NGOs working in international development and humanitarian relief. They've been around for decades and I'm currently on their board. It includes groups like Save the Children, Oxfam, Catholic Relief Services, CARE, World Learning, and World Vision. I've been increasingly concerned that the NGO sector as a whole is not as diverse and inclusive as we should be. We are not bringing in representative numbers of people of color, people with disabilities, LGBT persons and the like. This isn't just a question of numbers: our organizations are not adequately reflecting the views and taking advantages of the differing perspective of those populations. Secondly, we're not adequately incorporating these factors in our work. If we're focused on education or housing or healthcare, are we incorporating the needs of marginalized populations? For example, when you're building schools or hospitals, are you making them accessible? If you're building from scratch, it takes three percent of your budget to make them accessible. Retrofitting costs 25 percent.

As a first step, we're bringing together the heads of about 60 of these organizations next week in Denver, and we are going through a program on how to make an institution diverse and inclusive and explain the benefits. We're having speakers from Mobility International, American Jewish World Service, Plan International, Save the Children, the Solidarity Center, Trickle-Up, and World Learning – all of which run great programs in this space. Their CEOs are pledging to take tangible and significant actions over the next year to make their organizations more diverse and inclusive. They will report on their progress next year. They will indicate the amount of resources they put into it; who's personally accountable; the time-bound measurable goals they have achieved. The purpose is not only to get these actions, but to demonstrate that diverse institutions work better. Again, I go back to the Palmer suit – unless this becomes something people do as

second nature and unless they recognize this is the key to the success of their institution, not just social change as such, they're not going to buy into it.

Third, I have long worried that men are not adequately engaged in promoting the role of women in the international peace and security agenda. The vast majority of decision-makers in international defense, diplomacy and development are men, and studies have shown clearly that peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction are far more likely to succeed if women and other marginalized groups are at the table. Thus far, almost all the people who are advocating for women's engagement are women. That makes no sense to me.

I've arranged for funding from a Denver-based foundation, One Earth Future, for an institution called, "Mobilizing Male Allies for Women, Peace and Security," or MAWPS. Working with the leaders in the gender movement, people like Swanee Hunt at Harvard, Melanne Verveer at Georgetown, and Leymah Gbowee at Columbia, and 70 other institutions, we're assembling a group to help reverse this pattern.

We'll do three things. First, we're assembling a list of dozens of international male figures in defense, diplomacy, and development who understand the importance of this agenda. These are people like John Allen, James Stavridis, Kofi Annan, Desmond Tutu, Jimmy Carter, Jan Egeland, Tony Lake, and Jan Eliason, figures who have always been in the forefront of international peace and security issues who genuinely are supportive of this notion. We are bringing together virtually and drafting a charter that explains why it is essential to have women as leaders, planners, implementers and beneficiaries of these processes. They will then use their access at senior levels of governments and global institutions and business to make personal pitches in this area to their counterparts.

Second, we'll monitor the implementation of peace processes and the adoption of Security Council resolutions to ensure they are engendered. Right now, there is a discussion about whether the UN will have a peacekeeping operation in Ukraine. We're in those discussions saying, "That peacekeeping mission and peace operation better include women. Here's why and here's how to do it." In the United States, President Trump signed into law this October a bill we've been pushing for 15 years, the "Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017." The law requires the federal government -- Defense Department, State Department, AID, Homeland Security, and the intelligence community – to adopt a formal policy and action plan for American promotion of women, peace, and security within a year. We will monitor that process and provide input. And then finally, we going to sponsor scholarships and fellowships to encourage young men in particular to come into the field.

I may also get more engaged in virtual exchange programs. Raj Shah is now the head of the Rockefeller Foundation. He wants to explore how to start these programs in the toughest of the tough: Zimbabwe, Cuba, Venezuela, Afghanistan, and North Korea. His notion is, and I completely agree, that the interaction between people is being thwarted by governments but also by the perceptions that arise from social media, which as we know are usually inaccurate and prejudicial. And yet 10 years from now when the Castros are

completely gone and when Maduro has run his course in Venezuela and when North Korea changes, this residue will undercut the ability to re-establish linkages between people. We have to build bridges, not walls. We're still just talking about this.

Q: That's great. Finally, if you were advising somebody entering the U.S. Foreign Service, whether they were going to pursue political or development work or any of the other specializations, what would you recommend they do to prepare?

STEINBERG: To prepare, you have to recognize that we live in an interconnected world. There is no such thing as pure economics, pure politics, pure public affairs, pure diplomacy anymore – they are all so connected. The notion that an economic section at an embassy covers all economic issues and only economic issues is gone forever. We've always debated whether to encourage regional and substantive experts or create generalist able to work anywhere on anything. I believe that an incoming officer should use the early stages of a Foreign Service career to get as much broad experience as possible. That said, I do suggest developing a particular skill or talent in an area where you have world-class abilities. You could be a great writer, or a high-tech whiz, or a superb linguist, or an expert in gender dynamics – that expertise will prove invaluable. After four decades, I'd say that I'm an "expert" in just four areas -- atrocity prevention; women, peace and security; poverty eradication; and peace process. That's enough.

The second point is to ensure that your career is suited to your own priorities. I've spoken at the retirement seminars at FSI to help "retirees" consider what comes next. I say that job satisfaction depends on four factors. First, do you enjoy the actual work you do each day. If you like to write and research, are you doing that? If you love public speaking, does your job allow this? If you work better alone, can you get quiet time to do your work? If you like to travel, can you do so? Do you need constant contact with others? Consider what you actually enjoy doing and whether the position matches that.

Second, where do you want to be five-to-seven years from now, and is your position helping you grow professionally and personally to get there? In some cases, you'll need a technical skill or a language. In others, it's familiarity with budgets or technology or managing people. Maybe it's just building contacts with leaders in a field you want to enter. I went to USAID in part because my tech skills were behind the curve – as my teen-age sons are quick to point out – and this was a safe way to join the 21st century. It may just be that you need to see more of the world or have a bigger virtual rolodex.

The third is lifestyle. In the Foreign Service this is so important right now, because we have older parents, young kids, financial questions, student loans to repay, college requirements for our kids, health care needs, and the like. Don't minimize these requirements. What's the pay and fringe benefits like? Do I have to travel extensively? Do I have to stay close to Washington? Does my partner have to be in a certain region? If I don't have a spouse or partner and I'm looking, am I in a place where I can expect to meet someone. Are there health concerns? I've had malaria eight times, dysentery, and hepatitis, and I don't want them ever again. Equally important, how important is your work to your overall life? Do you need weekends off to be with your kids? Are you a

reader who needs the evenings free to read? You have to consider what the commute is like. For my job in New York with Crisis Group, I had an hour commute each way on a crowded subway. I was standing there saying, "Why the heck am I doing this?"

Q: I was going to ask about that but I thought in the back of mind if you're working for such a prestigious organization, surely they provided you with a parking place or a nice means of commuting?

STEINBERG: Um, no. Welcome to the real world…

Fourth is the question of values and respect. Do you respect what you're doing? Do you feel respected? Are you proud to tell people what you do for a living? It doesn't have to be saving the world. It can be, "I'm a great and honest auto mechanic and I'm proud that people know it."

So look at these four pillars. Do I enjoy my actual work? Am I growing, personally and professionally? What's my lifestyle like? Do I feel respected? And then decide which pillar is most important at this stage of your life and career. Early in our careers, we tend to prioritize career development – we take difficult jobs and pay dues if we feel we're building for the future. Later on, lifestyle and on-the-job enjoyment is more important.

This leads into my final piece of advice. Take control of your career. It's <u>your</u> career, not the State Department's or even your mentor's. In the first decade of my service, I wanted all overseas experience as I could get. I served in three regions – Central Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. I learned three languages – French, Portuguese and Malay. I lived in three religious settings – animist, Catholic, and Muslim. Literally everyone said to me, "Don, that makes no sense. Focus and concentrate so people in a regional or functional bureau know you and take care of you. Serve in the Department to learn how the system really works. Don't spend so much time out of the system in fellowships, details and language studies." And so on. But the conventional wisdom is often wrong, and it was my life anyway and that's what I wanted to do.

After my first ten years, I wasn't sure I wanted to stay in the Foreign Service. I went to journalism school at Columbia University, even though it didn't seem to make sense from a career standpoint. Coming out of Mauritius, my mentor said, "Now you're going to finally serve in the Department, right? You're a DCM but you've never served in Foggy Bottom." I came back to Washington but instead of going to the Department, I went to work on the Hill under a fellowship, then to USTR and to the Hill. Everyone is saying, "Don, your career has no direction or purpose." But I kept doing fascinating jobs that matched my interests. I keep getting positions of increased responsibility.

When I got the call from Ambassador Swing to come to South Africa and help the transition from apartheid to non-racial democracy, I knew it was the right move Then President Clinton gets elected and people I get the call to come to the White House. Then Angola, landmines, Haiti, refugees, policy planning, USIP, Crisis Group, USAID, and

World Learning. To paraphrase Jerry Garcia said, “What a long, strange and wonderful trip it’s been.”

John Lennon said, “Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans.” Let it happen to you. Take chances. Trust yourself enough to know that you can violate unwritten rules about how to make a fulfilled life and career. If you bear that personal responsibility, you’ll never go wrong.

End of interview