

Foundation for Iranian Studies

Program of Oral History

CHARLES NAAS

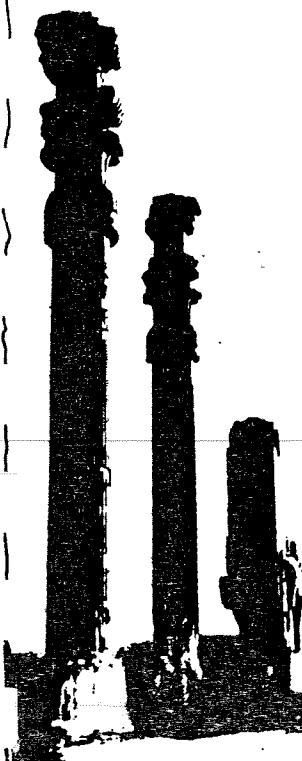
بنیاد مطالعات ایران

Foundation for Iranian Studies

INTERVIEWEE: CHARLES NAAS

INTERVIEWER: WILLIAM BURR

WASHINGTON, D.C.: MAY 13 and 31, and JULY 26, 1988



COPYRIGHT © 1989 FOUNDATION FOR IRANIAN STUDIES
All rights reserved. No part of this work may be
reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means,
electronic or mechanical, including photocopy and
recording or by any information storage or retrieval
system, without permission in writing from the Oral
History Office, Foundation for Iranian Studies

4801 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Suite 670
Washington, D.C. 20016, Telephone: (202) 686-1224

IRANIAN - AMERICAN RELATIONS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Charles Naas

Oral History Research Office

Columbia University

1989

PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a series of tape-recorded interviews conducted for the Oral History of Iran Program of Foundation for Iranian Studies by William Burr with Charles Naas in Washington, D.C. in May 13 and 31, and July 26, 1988.

Readers of this Oral History memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Foundation for Iranian Studies is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein.

The manuscript may be read, quoted from and cited only by serious research scholars accredited for purposes of research by Foundation for Iranian Studies; and further, this memoir must be read in such place as is made available for purposes of research by Foundation for Iranian Studies. No reproduction of the memoir either in whole or in part may be made by micro-photo, typewriter, photostat, or any other device.

Form H

Dear Dr. Grele:

This letter will confirm my understanding and agreement with the Foundation for Iranian Studies Oral History of Iran Archives and Columbia University with respect to my participation in a series of interviews conducted by the Columbia University Oral History Research Office.

1. The interviews will be taped and a transcript made of the tapes. The transcribed interviews will be maintained by the Oral History of Iran Archives and the Columbia Oral History Research Office, and the Hoover Institution.

2. I hereby grant, assign and transfer to the Oral History of Iran Archives all right, title and interest in the interviews, including the literary rights and the copyright, except that I shall retain the right to copy, use and publish the Work in part or in full until the earlier of my death or January 24, 2000 49.

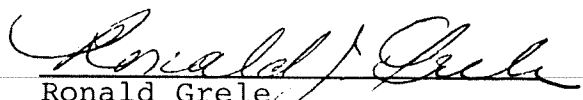
3. The interviews will be made available for use by researchers at both institutions in accordance with Foundation and University rules and general policies for research and other scholarly purposes with (no) (the following) restrictions.

4. The above is contingent upon my receiving a copy of the corrected V&V.

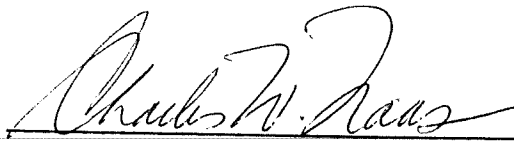


Dr. Mahnaz Afkhami
Foundation for Iranian Studies

Very truly yours,



Ronald Grele
Oral History Research Office



Date

December 7, 1988

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Charles Naas joined the State Department in 1952. After a long career in the diplomatic service he was assigned to the task of serving as the Country Director for Iran at the State Department, a position which he held from 1974-78. He was then stationed in Iran as the Deputy Chief of Mission from 1978 to 1980.

Mr. Naas's memoirs detail the relations between Iran and the U.S. in the 1970s, and examine the major pillars and determinents of that relationship. His memoirs moreover, elaborate the pattern of reactions of the Carter administration to the events of the Iranian Revolution.

CORRECTION LIST

P.7 Sobani should be Sobhani
PP.18-19 Feroughi should be Forughi
P.27 Ardelan should be Ardalan
Ansary should be Ansari
P.34 Bahrein should be Bahrain
PP.44 and 245 Mujahedin-e-Khalq should be Mojahedin-e Khalq
Fidayan-i Khalq should be Fada'iyān-e Khalq
P.47 Jamishid Tavalali should be Jamshid Tavallali
Yussef Akhbar should be Yusef Akbar
P.52 PM,L should be PML
PP.62 and 83-85 Toufanian should be Tufaniyan
P.65 Ansary should be Ansari
P.75 Sha should be Shah
P.83 Masoumi should be Ma^csumi
P.96 Khoranshahr should be Khorramshahr
P.105 Mossadegh should be Mossadeq
P.106 Ali should be ^cAli
PP.107-108 Qaddafi should be Qazzafi
P. 120 Garry should be Gary
P.128 Garry should be Gary
P.142 Weltanschauung should be Weltanschauung
P.144 Hussain should be Hosein
PP.166 and 170 Sharif-Imami should be Sharif-Emami
P.170 Rafsenjani should be Rafsanjani
P. 174 Darious Boyander should be Daryush Bayandor
P. 186 Shapour Bakhtiar should be Shapur Bakhtiyar
P.195 Khoramshah should be Khorramshahr
P.197 Mussadiq should be Mossadeq
PP.202 and 232 Ali should be ^cAli
PP.211-240 Bakhtiar should be Bakhtiyar
P.219 Majlis should be Majles
PP.220 and 223 Majlis should be Majles
P.225 Garabaghi should be Qarabaghi
P.230 Cottan should be Cottam
P.233 Vazdi should be Yazdi
Abbas should be ^cAbbas
P.250 Khomiteh should be komiteh
P.255 Khalatbary should be Khal^catbari
P.255 Khalatbari should be Khal^catbari
P.257 Ghotbzadeh should be Qotbzadeh
P.263 Toufanian should be Tufaniyan
P.263 Van Marbod should be Von Marbod
P.272 Mossadiq should be Mossadeq

VA

Interviewee: Charles Naas

Session #1

Interviewer: William Burr

Bethesda, Maryland

May 13, 1988

Q: The following interview with Charles Naas by William Burr took place in Bethesda, Maryland on May 13, 1988. The interview is part of a joint project by the Columbia University Oral History Research Office and the Foundation for Iranian Studies. Mr. Naas, can you tell me where you were born and raised?

Naas: I was born in Worcester, Massachusetts and went to public schools there until I was eighteen. At that time, I went into the Army Air Force. I served for three and a half years. When I left the service, I went to Clark University in Worcester, where I received my A.B. And from Clark I went to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy for two years, plus a few months. Received my M.A., and as with so many other people, did everything but the thesis for my Ph.D. When I left Fletcher in 1951, I came to the State Department.

Q: You served in World War II?

Naas: I was in the service during World War II. I never saw combat. Actually I went to the Philippines after the war was over. I'd been trained for the invasion of Japan and when that did not come off happily, all of us who had been trained for that particular

operation went out as replacements to the Philippines and Okinawa, so that people who had been serving out there for a long time could come home. I spent about nine months out in the Philippines.

Q: What was your first assignment at the State Department?

Naas: I came to the State Department and I actually came as a Civil Service employee and I worked on the Office of Intelligence & Research, where my first job was really on Indian affairs, but rapidly I moved into Pakistan-Afghan affairs. I probably spent as much time as the researcher, intelligence researcher on Afghanistan as anything during those three years.

When the Wriston program came along, I asked for immediate movement into the Foreign Service and was accepted. I immediately went to Pakistan as a political officer in 1955, and I was there until 1957, at which time I was direct transferred to Calcutta, India, where I spent another two and a half years before coming back to Washington.

Q: So you were a political officer in Karachi?

Naas: Yes, and in Calcutta too.

Q: What were your major responsibilities?

Naas: In Karachi, as the Junior Officer, the lowest ranking officer in the Political Section-- there were only three of us-- I spent most of my time on internal political reporting. Dealing with Parliament and Parliamentary affairs, the political developments in the country. Frankly, in many ways, looking back, it was one of the more joyful jobs I ever had, because my bosses were excellent and I had completely free rein to move around the political spectrum. I think I knew almost all the political leaders of all political parties. In these days, among us old retirees, we often look back to the mid-fifties in that part of the world, where even junior American diplomats sort of had-- everything was open to you. I mean, there were certain credentials as a young American officer that you had; people weren't as status conscious as they may have become since then. I knew the President of the country-- not the President, but the Governor-General. It was just a marvelous job.

Q: And you had similar duties at Calcutta? Internal political affairs?

Naas: Yes. In the consulates in India there's usually one or two at the most political officers. You depend very heavily on your local employees, who were absolutely super in Calcutta. And this was true in Madras and Bombay. They were just very superior individuals. They lived and breathed local politics. And so my job was to cover eastern Indian of the Consular District, which included Bihar, Orrissa, Bengal, and Assam, and for a very brief period Nepal was in our Consular District. The job was much the same, getting to know as many of the politicians in the various states as you could. Reporting what they said and, in general, getting to know the area and to make political assessments of how respective parties were doing. Again, it was a really great job.

Q: You said you went back to the Department in 1960?

Naas: Yes, actually in 1959, where I went through what we call mid-career training and moved into Personnel for two years. This was the first time that the Department decided that they wanted what we call substantive officers--political officers, economic officers--doing the personnel work rather than personnel specialists, the theory being at the time that we would have a better idea what kind of qualities were desirable for assignments as political officers in the area. So I covered the entire Middle East and Africa really. I covered the Middle East, but our Division had Africa as well.

And so I did that for a couple of years. I've often said the best part of that job was I really learned the bureaucratic ins and outs of the system, and most valuable of all, I was able to decide the ten or twelve people that I never wanted to work for, just from the files, that they were the kind of people that I wished to avoid during the rest of my career.

Q: Right. Good information to have.

Naas: After that I went on to the Afghan Desk. I was Afghanistan Desk Officer for about a year, and then I became Pakistan Desk Officer for three years or so.

Q: You were the principle officer?

Naas: No, we had an officer in charge, and so we had one officer for Pakistan and one officer for Afghanistan under an officer in charge. And then above him you had a Deputy Office Director and an Office Director. A long ladder.

Q: And how long were you at the Pakistan Desk?

Naas: About three years. Two and a half, three years. But the way the office operated, all three of us-- I mean, the Afghan Desk Officer kept in touch on Pakistan. Even after I became Pakistan Desk Officer, I kept in touch with what was going on in Afghanistan. We just sort of operated as a team, so that anybody could pinch-hit for either of the two countries at any particular time, whether it was political or economic or what have you.

It was a good job, because in those years the Afghan-Pakistan border dispute was going on. I had a chance to go to Afghanistan and go to all the border points and see the situation first-hand--talk to high Afghan officials. I went out there at the same time that Chester Bowles was making a visit, so I was included in all the dinners and receptions for him. So it gave me an opportunity to move rather widely within the Afghan set at the time. But, of course, all the problems with Pakistan were raging at the time, as they always had, in terms of how much arms aid to Pakistan. The question of-- the beginning really of that period-- of Pakistan's flirtation with China. So it was a very busy and a very interesting period.

[TAPE PAUSE]

Q: Now after the Pakistan Desk, your next assignment was-- ?

Naas: I went to Turkey, where I was in charge of-- let me step back. The basic job was to be the American in charge of all CENTO affairs, Central Treaty Organization affairs. It was my first experience in what you might call multi-lateral diplomacy, and from that point of view it was, I think, of particular value, of interest. And except for brief meetings with Iranians and other people in the area through the normal diplomatic set in Karachi, it was my first extended experience with representatives of the Iranian government. CENTO has many subsidiary organizations within it, if you will, which involved annual meetings or semi-annual meetings. I went to Iran very frequently--probably two or three, sometimes four times a year. Some of these visits might be three days, some were a week, some were ten days sort of thing.

But after a while, frankly, the CENTO job wasn't that occupying. One eventually learned how to do it with your left hand basically.

Q: What did your work involve?

Naas: I was sort of, if you want to say, special assistant to the Ambassador on CENTO affairs. The permanent representatives in the CENTO organization were the respective Ambassadors of the countries-- Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Great Britain and us. We were never a full member. We were an associate. Once a year you had the meeting of the Foreign Ministers, which involved Dean Rusk. In my time, he was the only one we had in that period. But in the meantime you had a monthly meeting of the Council of Deputies

and the Ambassadors served in that role. So I was the Ambassador's staff assistant on that. The agendas would cover a whole variety of subjects, most of which were never resolved, frankly, in our time. There were very important political differences between us and the U. K. and the regional members. But in addition to that sort of higher level political thing, we had an administrative committee, which looked at the budget, and I was the representative on that committee. We had a cultural exchange or cultural relations committee and I was the one on that. For a while, on the counter-subversion committee I was the U. S. representative on that.

The United States also had a small assistance program for CENTO matters. And we had a small office. Three people from AID ran that program, but they ran a whole tremendous variety of seminars, and they were always very kind, they always put me on the delegation for those too. You know, I might know damn all about sheep-raising and the problem with goats and ecology and all that sort of thing. But again, that gave me an opportunity for frequent visits to Pakistan or to Iran or some of the sessions that were held in Turkey. So that part of the job was really particularly rewarding, since I was able to get to see old Pakistani friends every four or six months and get to Iran frequently.

Q: Who were your Iranian contacts at this point? Some of the people you worked with, if you can recall any names?

Naas: The principal Iranian contact was Homayoun Ardalan, who was my equivalent in effect. He was the Iranian equivalent in their Embassy of what I was doing. And there was General Sobani, whom I dealt with frequently. He's here in the area, I'm told. I

haven't seen him in a long, long time. And then the Council, but I don't want to get into names on this one. The counter subversion committee was largely composed of representatives of the intelligence community, and the reason I took over that job at the special request of some people was because the person who held the job retired or resigned and there was nobody to fill the job. For maybe eight or nine months. I took it over and in that capacity I met a large number of officials from SAVAK. That was my first contact with them and with Turkish Intelligence and Pakistan Intelligence as well.

Q: So this committee looked at local communist movements and parties? Their internal activities?

Naas: Yes, that was the main point. It was not a terribly active, I think, or terribly useful organization, but we looked--and one of the more useful things that I was involved in was simply looking at Soviet disinformation activities, you know, the forgery of documents, which would then get in the local press around the world. And so I think we did some fairly useful work in terms of having specialists get together and learn to cope and recognize that kind of disinformation.

Q: My recollection is that around this time the Shah was becoming rather critical of CENTO as an organization. Was that-- ?

Naas: You know, I didn't see too much reflection of this day to day, but, yes, I think he always was critical of CENTO. He felt, of course, that when he joined CENTO that this was going to give him a much more privileged position in terms of United States assistance. He actually hoped, of course, that he would get a stronger U. S. commitment Iran actually obtained by the 1959 bilateral. But I think one has to look back on those days with the Shah as a-- he was a really masterful bargainer. He was never satisfied very long, and I think this was a-- I'm not a totally uncritical admirer of the Shah, but I think when it came to dealing with us and with other foreign countries, he really knew how to handle himself with great ease and with great success. I'm sure you've talked with others and go back in history, he'd be dissatisfied with the military aid levels. He'd get more or less what he wanted and he was immediately dissatisfied with that. So he tried to keep us always on the defensive.

But CENTO was a disappointment to the regional members, all of them, because they hoped-- or had hoped-- to use the organization and therefore the united U.S.-U.K. prestige, et cetera, and support, for their regional problems. We took a [very, I'd say] fairly rigid line, that the CENTO organization was intended to deal with a communist threat, and basically a Soviet Communist threat obviously. Whereas Iran would have liked us very much in public statements, the communiques, or actual activities to use the organization against Iraq. This is after Iraq left. The Pakistanis wanted us to use the organization against India in some fashion or other. The Turks would have been if we fully sided with them on the Cyprus question. They always made great efforts at the ministerial meetings to get some statement on Cyprus that would be to their benefit, they thought.

So that was the continuing bone of contention between the Brits and us and the regional members. I fully understood their position. If I were in their shoes, I would have tried to use the organization that way too. As an American diplomat and understanding our own point of view, I had to resist that even in the smallest of ways. And, of course, in the major ways it usually came down to the CENTO communique after the ministerial meeting, in which everybody would try to get in their particular language to show that we were on their side with respect to a regional dispute, which by and large we avoided. Not entirely, but we avoided that. But it made for a weaker organization from the regional point of view, from the Shah's point of view. And, of course, the assistance that he received after joining was substantial, but it was not huge. So he was continuously trying to put us on the defensive.

Q: That's interesting. Now you were in Turkey for-- ?

Naas: I was there for three years. And from there I went to Afghanistan as Political Counselor, and I stayed there from 1967 to 1971. During that period I was frequently Acting DCM and on a couple of occasions I was Charge, because other people were out of the country at the time. But it was my first job, as we say in the Department, in which I had supervisory responsibility. I had a small staff.

Q: So you supervised political officers?

Naas: Yes. I had two or three political officers working with me during those years. We had a very good program in those years, where junior officers coming out on their first or second tour would be rotated through at least three positions in an Embassy. Maybe a consular job, an economic job, a political job. So I would often have a young officer from six months to eight months doing political, and he'd move on and do something else. But I always had one or two people who were permanently assigned to me as young political officers.

For me it was a particularly interesting job. [As I go back in this,] I first started in Afghan affairs in the Intelligence Research in 1951-52. I was Afghan Desk Officer in the early sixties and had gone off to Afghanistan on a couple of occasions. So finally to be assigned there full-time seemed to me really a very logical career progression, if you will. I'm not sure it made all that much difference in how bright I was, but it seemed to me that's the way a career can be usefully developed, with somebody at various levels at various times, and dip in and then come back. I make that point because it may be a point that will be made later on in terms of Iran.

I spent four years there and traveled throughout most of the country. Either on vacation or just on the job. I was much influenced by my first boss in the Foreign Service in Pakistan, who believed very strongly in local travel. So he had me on the road frequently.

Q: Who was that?

Naas: A fellow named Garrett Soulen, who is now dead. He died a few months ago. But he believed very strongly that a young political officer should get out of the office, meet people, travel, see what the country was like. He used to say, you have to develop a gut feeling. If somebody talks about the northwest frontier problems, you've been there. When they talk about the problems in what was then East Pakistan, you've been there. So I felt very much the same way when I had in that position myself, and I tried to have my young political officers travel as much as possible. So I think in the four years that I was there, as a Political Section, there was probably no part of the country that one of us or a couple of us or all of us hadn't been to in that period. So we had a pretty good understanding-- at least feeling-- for the country. I've never kidded myself in my entire career that I really fully understood the people I was dealing with, but we did a pretty good job.

After Afghanistan I went to New York as Middle East Officer, as part of our delegation at the UN, where I had the pleasure of working with George Bush for a year, and then John Scali after a year. But that was a particularly hectic period. We had the interminable Middle East resolutions coming up, the debates on one issue or the other. But we also had the-- call it the Bangladesh War of Independence, in which I was the principal action officer with Bush throughout that whole period of December 1971.

Again it was my second experience, this time on a much broader scale, of international and multilateral diplomacy. And again it permitted me to meet with the young diplomats as well as the chiefs of delegation, you know, from a wide variety of countries. In that period I think I worked with the Iranian delegation on a couple of issues quite closely. Ambassador Hoveyda was there, and I worked very closely with him and his colleagues. He basically ran the show among them, when they seized the islands of Abu Musa and

Tunbs in '71, there was a debate, and I was --under instructions, of course-- the principle go-between between the Iranians and the various Arab delegations, in which an informal agreement was worked out that the Security Council would meet on the issue. There would be debate, but no resolution would be put to vote.

Q: This was agreed by both sides?

Naas: I can't say it was my idea particularly, but I went back and forth trying to-- the Arabs had in effect said to me, "Charlie, please tell the Iranians to be restrained in the debate, so that we are not then forced to rebut and rebut and this thing gets out of hand. We don't intend to push a Resolution, and please make sure the Iranians understand this."

It was not an easy task at the time, because the Iranians are very suspicious of any Arab promise. As the debate went on, it started to get quite antsy, because the Arab speeches were pretty fiery, pretty insulting, and it was quite natural that Hoveyda-- and I think somebody came from Tehran and I forget who it was now-- wanted to stand up and reply in kind. So my job was basically to keep assuring them--"relax, I've got their word that this is going to go through a couple of days of debate and that's the end of it." And that was sort of fun, moving back and forth.

I think at the UN my most interesting job was when-- I must admit at the time I did not know at the time that Henry Kissinger had started to have secret contacts in New York with the Chinese delegation. But my principal role, in addition to advising Bush and helping write various statements and being his general briefer and all that for all the Security Council meetings, was the liaison between the American delegation to the

Pakistani delegation to the Chinese. At that stage we were not meeting the Chinese directly, and so we had to pass everything second-hand.

I can remember at one time that Bush made a statement on the Bangladesh matter and he had forgotten to warn the Pakistanis and the Chinese. He immediately turned to me and said, "Get over there and tell them why I made that particular statement." So I'd look across the room to my Pakistani counter-part, give him a little nod to meet me outside, and we'd sort of wander out, we thought in a very discreet fashion. God knows why, everybody was watching us, and knew something was going on. I would walk out and tell him-- and this happened many, many times during the debate on various things to clarify with each other. And then he would go back to the Council of Chambers-- the Chinese sat next to him, and he would talk to the Chinese.

The Chinese-- because of what I learned later, of course-- were having these conducts with-- and I don't know how extensive they were-- with Kissinger. Kissinger tended to look upon the Indian-Pakistan War, if you want to call it that, at that time, as essentially a step in a rather global pattern. So the Chinese were very insistent that we remain very strong backers of Pakistan in this dispute. Which of course in a sense went against the basic tradition that we would have in terms of the right of self-determination of a people.

It was a very awkward debate at times for us, and for some of us personally, who knew the Bengal situation. I served in Calcutta and I traveled very frequently, half a dozen times, to what was then East Pakistan and Bangladesh subsequently. I visited most of the country, and I had a lot of friends who were Bengalis.

But we adopted the approach, later called "the tilt," towards Pakistan. And it was a clear tilt, because the Soviet Union some time in that year had come up with one of these

friendship agreements with India, as well as friendship agreements with Iraq, and Kissinger tended to look at this, as the Chinese did, as a broad forward thrust of the Soviet Union. And frankly, the leadership-- neither he nor the President nor anybody else--ever looked at the issue as a struggle for self-determination, independence of the people, who had been-- had not got their fair share out of the Pakistan pie. But that was to me a very particularly interesting period, as liaison.

Q: Besides the Tunbs Island question, was there any other Iran issue that you worked on at the UN delegation?

Naas: Nothing that I recall specifically on Iran. Hoveyda was particularly helpful as part of Iran's foreign policy of working with us, and very frequently, if I had particular problems and felt that it was not useful for me to talk to somebody, that it might come better from the Iranians talking to the Afghans or the Pakistanis-- I never had much problems with the Pakistanis, since I knew them all personally. But often I would talk with him and I'd say, look, now to the extent that you can use your influence and persuasion, we'd appreciate it. And he always would. I can't think of a particular issue now. I know there was a big debate going on in one of the committees and he was extremely helpful to us. He was able, despite the Persian-Arab distrust of each other, he was able to persuade a lot of Arabs that what we were doing was not what they feared. Sort of calm things down.

Now the UN is sort of a little ivory tower, in a sense a sort of funny place, because nothing terribly significant occurs there year after year. But when you're working there, every issue-- you know, the last dot, period, word becomes terribly important. That's what

you're there for. So you know, you think you've just had a very successful day, and you look in the newspapers the next day and there's nothing there at all, you know. The issue was just not newsworthy. But if you're an officer there, dealing and bargaining, and you get your own paragraph at times, you're happy as hell. That's sort of amusing.

Q: So how long were you with the U. S. Mission in New York?

Naas: I was there only two years. Frankly, that's all I could afford. It was before the days of allowances at the UN and Foreign Service salaries were never particularly high. Two years was all my pocketbook could take. I came down to Washington and went to what we call the Senior Seminar. That's a year of training and studying.

Q: Was this at the Foreign Service Institute?

Naas: Yes. So I spent a year-- or nine months, an academic year-- at the Senior Seminar, which permitted me and the others--I think there were twenty of us or twenty-five of us in the class-- to travel extensively around the United States. We had lectures on American philosophy and art and music, and a great deal of time in the second part of the term was dealing with national security issues. People talking, coming from the Pentagon and various parts of the security. We met with CIA people, DIA, et cetera, talking to us.

And so it was just a year in which one was reintroduced a little bit to the United States and to get a broader view than one would have normally just sitting here and developing Potomac fever. You know, we went to the West Coast, where we met Ed Meese for the

first time. Went to the Northwest, you know. Found out about all their problems. It was very domestic oriented. When you went to these places, you never discussed foreign affairs. You found out what's bothering the mayor, what's bothering the governor, how is a particular federal program working in Detroit? What did the Mayor of Detroit think were his main problems.

And in this visit, in that year, we went to Georgia and had about an hour with Governor Carter [at the time,] who, I must say, made a great impression on all of us. He is very dynamic in a small group of people like that. From the Iran situation later on, I did not continue to feel the same way about him, but I found him quite impressive. In fact, if there was one thing that came out-- and this is not only my view, it's the view of all the class members; it was a much better feeling about the operations of state governments. You know, you tend here in Washington obviously to pick up little snippets of some problem and you don't know much about individuals. But at the end we were talking, as a class, that the most impressive thing, was that the United States is alive and well. There are a lot of very able people out there running state governments and city governments.

It came as a surprise to all of us, the Washington view, and it was probably intellectually the most rewarding year I'd had in a long time.

Q; Now when did you start working on Iran as such?

Naas: Right after the Senior Seminar I became Director of Iranian Affairs in 1974. I guess it was June of '74, when Jack Miklos went out to Iran as DCM.

Q: How was it that you became Officer in Charge or Director of the Office?

Naas: Well, by this time I was, what we called in the old days, a Class Two officer, and the Desk Directorship called for a Class Two or Class One officer. At that particular time there were two jobs open in the Bureau at the Director level, and one was Iran, a Country Director, and the other was Regional Affairs Country Director. And I was asked, in effect, which one did I prefer, and I said I preferred the Iran Country Director. I said I was no Iranian expert, but had been there many times, knew some individuals.

The way the State Department works, when telegrams of general interest are written by one post, they tend to be distributed to the nearby posts. So most telegrams of general interest from Tehran would go to Ankara, would go to Kabul, would go to Karachi in those days. So that over the years I'd had a broad familiarity. No expertise, but familiarity with issues that bothered Iranians.

I think, going back to the Afghan situation briefly, I worked particularly closely with Ambassador Feroughi, the Iranian Ambassador at the time. There were a couple issues that we tried to work in concert on, to the extent that we could have much of an influence. One was the Helmand waters dispute with Afghanistan. There were other little trade issues and things that came along that he and I would try to work together on. Again, even though I was Political Counselor, he felt that because of the large number of Afghans that I knew, and at my level, I might at times be a more useful interlocutor than our Ambassador. Now our Ambassador would be used-- or would be helpful maybe, you know, with the Foreign Minister or with the King, and I'd be sort of working on a different level,

trying to find out what was going on and express various points of view. I was very impressed with him. I think he-- Mahmud Feroughi--is probably the epitome of the first-class Iranian diplomats. Very, very savvy, very smooth, very intelligent. Came from a very distinguished family. His father had been, I believe, Foreign Minister or Prime Minister. I forget this very second.

So, as I said, I had this broad familiarity. So I didn't go into the Directorship with no knowledge, but I did go into the Directorship with not having the first-hand experience of having a tour there or a couple tours there. I think, looking back, it's too bad. I probably in real terms would have been more useful and better as a Country Director to India or Pakistan or Turkey, something like that. Those jobs weren't open. And I was the only one around at the required rank at the time, [since assignments are two years, three years, and so people just got yanked out.] Also, I was the only one who had had as much experience, and I was, if you want to call it, a northern tier person, having a broad sweep from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Turkey, et cetera.

So I took over the job in '74 and, as you know, I left it in May of '78 and went to Iran as Deputy Chief of Mission.

Q: I was going to ask, how would you describe your responsibilities, or your role, at the Iran Desk?

Naas: The Country Director job was originally conceived as being the counterpart to the Ambassador abroad. That was the original concept. That, in effect, he would clear the country team, the Department of States country team person in Washington. That concept

probably never really worked. Bureaucratically you always had your Deputy Assistant Secretaries, your Assistant Secretary, then on up the chain. And, of course, nobody who is a good Deputy Assistant Secretary wants to be cut out of the action. And I'm not saying this critically.

But when I took over the job, to the extent that I could, I insisted that that be my role as originally conceived, and by and large I was able to act in that manner. I've often thought of the Country Director job as being the chief administrator of policy, the day-to-day guy who carries out the policies that the people on top have determined. And you're also at the bottom of the policy-making process, at that level things can be initiated and fight their way up the bureaucratic chain. But by and large our policy with respect to Iran was so firmly set in concrete that my role at the beginning of the policy chain was not executed very frequently. I often viewed the job as sort of a traffic cop, one who is in the position to push things through the bureaucratic process or able to hold up things in the political process.

But the Country Director-- he is, if he handles himself properly-- he is the chief person at the State Department to make sure that other parts of the State Department and other parts of government are doing what they're supposed to be doing. Because of my view of that position, I became-- as I would have had to anyway-- heavily engaged obviously in the arms sales to Iran. I insisted that I not be left out of any DoD discussions and decisions. It didn't always work, but I pushed myself in so that I knew all the representatives of the principal arms manufacturers here in Washington.

So I don't think Jack Miklos did that much. As a matter of fact, when I took over the job, I was only on the job for a couple of weeks when we had the normal State

Department inspection. And the inspectors-- it was one of those nice situations where everything was working very well, so even after three weeks, I looked fairly good, although I had absolutely no responsibility whatsoever for what had gone well-- felt that one area where State was somewhat weak was keeping track of the arms merchants, if you will.

And so with the cooperation, absolute full cooperation with DSAA at the Pentagon, I came to meet all of the arms manufacturers. One of my roles that the inspectors picked up as a weakness, God help us, was to try to insist what the various big firms like Bell Helicopter and others, do some kind of an area training program. Already there were signs of problems developing because some people had not been appropriately attuned, sensitized to some of the cultural problems that they were meeting. And so that was a major job. [William] Miller, who eventually became Secretary of the Treasury, was the head of-- not Bell Helicopter, but Bell Helicopter's parent.

Q: Textron?

Naas: Yes. And he kept hearing all this stuff from his Washington people how dissatisfied I was with Bell Helicopter's performance. So he came down from, I guess, New York-- or where is it, Connecticut? Had a long--

[END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE; BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE]

Q: You were saying?

Naas: We had a long lunch together and I pointed out the problem. I don't think it ever did much good. It was too large a program almost really. They had so many people of disparate backgrounds. But that was one of the things that I thought was quite important. I can't say frankly that I was ever successful in getting any of the companies to do it. I think Grumman, you know, the F-14 program, eventually had a little program. I used to recommend various professors and various others who were in a position-- like Jim Bill, for example, and Marvin Zonis and others-- who were in a position to do the kind of thing that was necessary. I mean, that's sort of an aside really, because I will never try to give you or anybody else the idea that I was prescient whatsoever on the way things developed in Iran. That was clearly a problem area.

I'd say in those four years I probably spent more time on various aspects of the arms sales program than anything else. Certainly in the remaining years of the Republican administration at the time. There was very little emphasis particularly on human rights at that particular time. It was boiling within various human rights organizations in New York and elsewhere, Amnesty, et cetera. It took a fair amount of time to simply in talking with these people and the inevitable replying to letters that they had sent to the President or the Secretary of State. Most people, I don't think, realize that when the President or the Secretary of State or somebody gets such a letter, it winds its way down the bureaucratic ladder and ends up with the desk officer, and he then writes a letter which the Secretary may sign. Or you might just write it yourself, saying, the Secretary has asked me to reply to your interesting letter of such-and-such a date. There's a fair amount of

activity on that.

To the outsider arms sales look simple. They read the newspaper that the United States has agreed to sell X amount of airplanes or tanks to a particular country. Before that decision is made, the paper work is just simply enormous, as you try to get everybody lined up. Often the Department of Defense is viewed as pushing arms sales. In my own experience at least, this is not necessarily true at all; some of the more conservative people on arms sales frequently are those at DoD. But it was our policy after the 1972 visit of Nixon and Kissinger to Tehran-- you are familiar with the broad outlines of that particular decision memorandum that came from Kissinger at the time-- it was basically our policy to sell Iran pretty much what the Shah wanted. There is in the language of that memorandum-- the exact language is not in my head right this-- there are little loopholes that one could resort to. But the basic intent was clear. But still, even though the intention was clear, there's still the bureaucratic process of getting a specific decision memorandum to the Secretary. And the sale of various weaponry to Iran by no means was viewed as an unmixed blessing within the U. S. government, so there was a considerable struggle over many of these sales.

Next, the process of writing the Secretary's statement before various parts of Congress-- what we call Q&A work, where you sit down with a group of people and try to think of every conceivable question that's going to come up and you've got to have an answer for the Secretary. And frequently people on the Hill are very good about this. They will tell you in advance. If you happen to know who the staff assistants are, call them up and say, what is Lee Hamilton, for example, most interested in in the testimony that's coming up? And they would tell us. So, you know, they understood after a bit, you didn't have to

explain. So our purpose would be to meet the Representative's or Senator's concerns. What are they interested in? So we didn't spin our wheels. I mean, there were all sorts of things, we didn't know the answer to, but frequently you'd have a briefing book that was six to eight inches thick for that particular hearing, on every possible Q&A that you could think of. When it came to arms sales, of course all of these mothers had to be coordinated with the Defense Department, so the Defense representative had to do the same thing, or roughly the same thing. So that took an enormous amount of time.

I go into this in some detail, because it's a point I make in talks that I give at universities and sometimes at the Foreign Service Institute, that is, that in Washington-- and this is not an excuse at all for my lack of prescience-- you're so terribly busy doing the bureaucratic necessities of the job, and Iran was a particularly active post, that you often, quite honestly, do not look very frequently at the internal scene. Now if there was a major problem in the area that the Embassy sensed and reported, then of course you'd get heavily engaged, because everybody would start seeing the incoming telegrams, saying, you know, we've got problems or this or that. And the Country Director then would, of course, move around and become the chief coordinator, pulling things together in terms of what the U. S. response would be to a developing situation.

But in those four years one did not have a particular sense of a crisis in the making. So, as I say, I spent an enormous amount of my time on all arms sales. You may recall the problem we had with the sale of AWACS.

Q: I was going to ask you about that, yes.

Naas: And I used to come home and say, "is there life after AWACS." I've never been so occupied in my life as with that particular sale. As you know, it was bitterly opposed on the Hill. We had at one period to withdraw the sale proposal and then go back later on, when we worked out various assurances with the Iranian government on five or six assurances, specific assurances, on various security concerns needed on the Hill during the hearings.

Working on that was perhaps one of the more exhausting things I've ever been engaged in. It was just continuous. You know, you had to be dealing-- you were dealing with the Iranian government, with the Shah in particular. Dealing with the Shah in the sense of a long ways away, but through the telegrams that had to be drafted, assuring him that the withdrawal at the time didn't mean that we weren't going to push ahead, that the Administration remained convinced that he needed the AWACS. Sort of keeping him calm, or at least from not doing something foolishly. At one stage he said that Iran was withdrawing the

request. We talked him out of it. Maybe it would have been better if we'd said, okay.

But then later in the summer-- or in the fall, I guess it was-- the approval was granted, after he agreed personally to the various conditions that were part of the sale.

One of the other areas that was terribly time-consuming and which, frankly, I found totally unrewarding was the U. S.-Iran Joint Economic Commission. It had started before I took over the job. The initial action was directed by Kissinger. He directed and we started having a joint commission of God knows everybody. I thought that with some countries a joint commission made sense. There were those who did not. I did not feel it made any sense whatsoever with respect to Iran. This was one of the few things I guess I

was correct on, prescient on. When I took over, I took one look at all the paperwork that had been done and I said to my colleague, "Well, I'd better not say for the delicacy of the ears that somebody maybe will have to type this, but, you know, this is a pile of you know what." I said, I don't know that much about Iran, but I do know enough that the Minister of this or that is not going to be making particularly significant decisions. This is basically a show, and there's nothing that's going to go on that can't be as effectively done in strict bilateral meetings between us and the particular Iranian Ministry that was involved, and work out agreements, whether it would be technical assistance, which they would pay for, or what have you.

The Iranians-- I'm not sure they ever believed this frankly, but they somehow hoped that the Joint Commission would prove decisive in getting various advance technologies into Iran in terms of joint manufacturing, et cetera. And again, you know, our political leadership always sounded terribly optimistic about all of this stuff, but what it really boiled down to was would Bell Helicopter, out of its corporate interest, wished to establish a helicopter plant or what have you. And this went all the way down the line. GE and Howard Hughes's old company--what the hell is it? I can't remember the name of it. That's the trouble with getting old, you get-- .

But it was strictly their corporate interests that were in account. Obviously they would have to get permission from the U.S. government on certain things for technology transfer, but we could not tell them, as the Iranians did expect somehow, or at least said they couldn't understand that the United States government couldn't order a company to establish a particular electronics facility in Iran.

And I spent, as I say, an enormous amount of energy. Those company's representatives were perfectly competent on their own, if they wanted to go talk to General Toufanian or talk to the Shah or whomever, or Admiral Ardalén and others, and do the necessary. I'm going into this a little bit because we had an annual meeting of the Secretary with the Finance Minister Ansary, again an enormous amount of work goes into these things. And we had five or six sub-committees. One on nuclear energy. All that sort of thing. And again, as Country Director, if you want to be part of the game, you've got to be part of the game all the time. You can't just start ignoring bits and pieces of it.

That took me to Iran on a couple of occasions for these meetings, preparing for the meetings here in Washington. And out of all this, you know, came in 1976-- I think I could be off a year-- the famous communique of the billions of dollars that we were going to have in economic exchange. Well, this is a figure that was quite literally pulled out of the air and met with some amusement. We had a fellow named Rudd Poats, a very, very competent officer, who worked for the Under-Secretary for Economic Affairs. He called me up and he said, "How can we explain this figure? The press is bugging the Secretary and the Secretary turned to me." I said, "You can't. You made it up out of thin air, so you explain it. There's no way in God's earth that we are going to reach that level unless by some break we get an agreement on nuclear cooperation, so that we actually get a contract for a large reactor. Or you have to count military aid." And, of course, the whole idea of the Joint Commission was to have it restricted strictly to economic and trade matters.

Q: No arms exports?

Naas: No arms exports in those figures. The concept I suppose certainly in a broad intellectual sense, that the focus of the Hill and everybody else was so much on the arms side of our relationship with Iran that what we needed was a counterpoise to show them the civilian side of the great links between our country and the use that America, in terms of trade figures, is going to get from the relationship. But also it was directed at the liberal community, to show it was just not arms, I mean, we have a broad relationship, covering just about every aspect of human activity. And I suppose in that sense it was a useful facade, but it was a Potemkin village. There was nothing much to it. The few things that ever got done under the Joint Commission were very small. I did little tiny things directly with an American department, with the Bureau of Public Roads, and we got a contract. We were going to help out on some road planning, things like that. Little tiny stuff frankly that didn't matter very much, but it was kind of useful stuff. When the communique came along, we threw it in under one of the successes of the Joint Commission, but it had nothing to do with it.

But, as I say, here's another aspect of enormous time taken up for me personally and for my whole staff.

The Joint Commission also, in a sense, gave a cover to, if you will, in the early stages, for the negotiations with Iran on the Nuclear Energy Agreement. And again I was part of a working group that was established early on by the NSC, to go into all of the issues on that particular agreement, and I was present at almost all the negotiating sessions on the agreement. And, of course, the agreement was finally reached when I was in Iran at that time as charge when the agreement was actually reached. By the time, of course, that

agreement came back here and was typed up and all the forwarding memoranda [and all that] prepared and sent over to the White House, but by the time the White House had it, obviously the internal situation in Iran was causing great concern, so the agreement was held and never sent to the Hill. Again it was a period when you look back on hours and hours and hours of time taken up of many, many very competent individuals. This was the most difficult negotiations that I've ever been part of. Not being an expert on nuclear matters

I felt by the time that we got through that I knew an awful lot about nuclear energy agreements anyway. But I was present at all the think sessions between the negotiating sessions. An enormous amount of time and effort went into that negotiation, of course, and nothing resulted from it in particular.

So, I mean, those were the key things as Country Director. Arms sales, the Joint Commission, and in particular the nuclear energy agreement. And, of course, we had two visits during the time I was here of the Shah, and there's nothing like a state visit to churn out an enormous amount of paper: briefings for everybody who's going to be present, toasts, speeches, et cetera. That was the first time-- it was my first time briefly to meet him and the Empress. So I guess one of the rewards of a Country Director, from a State visit that he finally is invited to the White House, for the after dinner festivities. Sort of to sneak in through the cellar and join the happy throng after they've eaten and watch the entertainment. Have a few drinks and watch the entertainment.

And, of course, in those years I worked closely with Ambassador Zahedi, and his staff here. People have a lot of divided opinion about Ambassador Zahedi. I personally felt he was a very effective Ambassador. He did what he could to burnish Iran's image and

that of the Shah, and that was his job. He knew probably more people in the United States--as many as the Secretary of State did. I mean, he was everywhere. I don't know how effective he was in one-on-one conversation. I think reasonably so. Of course, the lavish Iranian Embassy dinners were always great fun to go to. Anyway, there were all sorts of people there that were interesting to know.

Those were some of the rewards that one got from the job.

Q: Can you tell me how your office was organized?

Naas: I had normally two officers working for me. One, the senior one, would be the Deputy Office Director today. Didn't have that title then, but that was his job. And he essentially was the political-military guy, who helped me in all political-military activities. And the second, who was a more junior officer, was in charge of following the economic affairs.

Q: Who were they, when you first joined the Directorate?

Naas: Bryan Morton was the senior man and at this particular moment the junior officer that I had, his name slips my mind.

Q: Was Michael Michaud there at some point?