Richard Holbrooke

[Richard] Holbrooke set certain aspects of the policy with brute force. Holbrooke had never visited Afghanistan. He thought that we should give money directly to Afghans and not the beltway bandits. He also had a lot of big ideas. Some of them made sense and some did not.

NSC Organization and Personalities

At the time there was a problem about who was in charge at the NSC because at the same time you had James Jones as National Security Advisor, but you also had the powerful figure Douglas Lute. Lute did a lot of the pol-mil stuff; Gail Smith and Samantha Powers also were in there to some extent. The backroom fighting was real and had an impact on the NSC. There was not even an org chart when I was there. Also had problems with NSA James Jones. In general,
there was a lot of focus on bureaucratic chairs and less on policy. James Jones came in with a strategic view of the world and wanted things aligned with military commands, a move which would have separated India [USPACOM] and Pakistan [USCENTCOM].

The Senior Director at the NSC for Russia, wanted Central Asia in their portfolio and so they got it. I was dead set against having Afghanistan and Pakistan combined and then separated from India. Also, Holbrooke really wanted India in his portfolio. There was a visceral response to this based on India's past. India thinks that it is bigger than Afghanistan and Pakistan. Jones sat us down and said that Dennis Ross would oversee the Middle East, the Gulf, and the South Asia – except Pakistan.