# مشروع توثيق الاشتباك العراقي الأمريكي

The Iraq and America Entanglement Documentation Project (IAEDP)

Interview Transcript

# Richard Perle

**Date: October 26th, 2023**
**Place: New York City, New York**

Participants:

**Richard Perle**, guest
**Nibras Kazimi**, Executive Director, IAEDP

**KAZIMI**: What about my audio? You can hear it? Yeah. What about his? Yes. Everything is ready. Yeah. All right, today is October 26, 2023. It is a Thursday. We are sitting at the home of Richard Perle in Manhattan, New York City. Hi Mr. Perle.

**PERLE**: I'm happy you're here.

**KAZIMI**: Thank you. I would like to set the scene with some of the things that I learned about you that I hadn't known. Things that made me go, oh, that's very cool about your story. I was particularly struck by this scene in Geneva, 1985 with Gorbachev. Uh, apparently, uh, prior to that, I mean, he stops in front of you and just sort of stares at you. He knows who you are because he had previously, apparently, told Margaret Thatcher that you, uh, and Cap [Caspar] Weinberger were running U.S. policy. Uh, he just stares at you, and he wouldn't shake your hand. And through that moment of awkwardness, was part of you going in your mind: 'This is a big deal, this is the leader of the Soviet Union, and he's singling me out with this gesture,' a hostile gesture but at the same time, what was your measure of the man who was bit of an unknown at the time at that moment.

**PERLE**: This incident came after an all-night negotiation in which there was a struggle to find an agreed statement, that's the product of these events. And the world didn't realize because the emphasis was on arms control and the nuclear relationship and more broadly on this new leader, that the most difficult point in the negotiations was on human rights. And the single most insistent point of no compromise on the Soviet side was exchange programs that would have been freely administered and provided some opening into the Soviet Union. But more important, an opportunity for young Soviets to come to the United States. He knew that in that more open environment, things would not look good for the Soviets.

**KAZIMI**: But he was preaching Perestroika?

**PERLE**: He was preaching, he was preaching perestroika.

**KAZIMI**: But you were putting him on the spot... by introducing an actual mechanism?

**PERLE**: We had put things on the table that would have opened up the flow of Americans and Soviets and they didn't like it. And I know that he was deeply involved in every aspect of this discussion because the Soviet side kept interrupting the precedence to consult, consult with him.

**KAZIMI**: When did he make this quip to Margaret Thatcher about you?

**PERLE**: I didn't know he had. [laugher]. And she never told me.

**KAZIMI**: Uh, okay all right…

**PERLE**: And I wish it had been true.

**KAZIMI**: But he was singling you out, you believe, because of that negotiation?

**PERLE**: Yes, I was. I had been singled out as the hardliner who and this was partly the exaggeration from the American press, which of course were being summarized and sent back to Moscow.

**KAZIMI**: Now, two years later, there's a state dinner at the White House. Um, you're seated at the same table with the guest of honor, Gorbachev again. And there's only Nancy Reagan [sitting] between you and him. Again, this is quite a big deal…

**PERLE**: It certainly was.

**KAZIMI**: And you are the Assistant Secretary of Defense at the time. And you had a back and forth with him. Would you call it like banter?

**PERLE**: Yes. And it was it cordial. By the way, Nancy Reagan, who sat between us, whispered: I've asked them to seat here so that ...” sorry, let me get her remark correct? Yes. “I asked them to seat you next to me for protection.”

**KAZIMI**: Gorbachev says, he makes a reference to a docu-drama that the BBC had done, and they had hired an actor who was slim, a slim actor to portray you. And he was making a point about …

**PERLE**: Inaccuracy. [laughter]

**KAZIMI**: Inaccuracy, okay, in depiction. And you shot back that by suggesting that he doesn't know how much the USSR is spending on its military.

**PERLE**: I said that to him. I said, I don't think you know how much you're spending on the military. And by the way, they really didn't, because of the way the accounting was done and so forth. And he said, I am the head of the military council. I know everything. But he said it in a way that indicated he knew I knew, we both knew, that he had inherited a militarized economy, that he was just beginning to assess and analyze. He was fascinated at that dinner with the decentralization. I mean, we ended up having a conversation that ranged from General Motors to ..

**KAZIMI**: Across Nancy Regan?

**PERLE**: Yes, across Nancy Reagan. He couldn't figure out how we managed to put all the pieces together. And it was Soviet practice. If you were building cars to build a huge complex and they had in a joint venture with Ford and make all the parts there and assemble all the parts there, and the idea that General Motors could source the components of an Oldsmobile from hundreds of different suppliers. He just couldn't take that in. He was fascinated by it because he realized I think he realized that this must have something to do

with the success of American industrial performance. And so, he was trying, he was really trying to understand it.

**KAZIMI**: It was left to you to explain this to him?

**PERLE**: Well, I couldn't go very far in explaining it. But I, I did say to him that if you find a factory that produces a fuel pump and does it brilliantly, you don't have to, it doesn't have to be located where the rest of the plant is. You go out there and you get it. And by the way, I subsequently worked on.., after the Soviet Union collapsed and Americans were rushing to Moscow looking for investments, and particularly in the aerospace area. Americans would come back and say there's nothing there. What they were missing was that while these complexes producing weapons in the Soviet Union were inferior to what we could do within them, there were elements of real excellence. So I wound up getting involved in a in a business deal in which, together with a colleague, we helped an American company acquire the precision instruments, part of a missile factory which were used for surgical, which were then used for surgical instruments.

**KAZIMI**: Now, just to fast forward. So, you went to Russia after the collapse [of the Soviet Union]?

**PERLE**: Oh, yes, I did.

**KAZIMI**: And did you reach out or did these people reach out to you? For example, there was a general, uh, uh, wolf, uh, who was heading the negotiation. Nikolai Chervov, do you remember? He was lamenting that you weren't on a trip to one of these summits or whether these discussions and negotiations, he really wanted to see you in the, uh, he's quoted all over the place.

**PERLE**: I had not seen that.

**KAZIMI**: Okay.

**PERLE**: I'm not sure I do actually, I'd have to see him, but I got along remarkably well with..

**KAZIMI**: He was this big Siberian dude who had been in World War II. He was, I think, 20 years older than you, and he was across from you at the table at many instances. That didn't intimidate you? It doesn't seem that you were intimidated by Gorbachev. So I guess this guy didn't intimidate the the…

**PERLE**: No, I wasn't intimidated. And in fact, I got along rather well with the Soviet negotiators, not all of them, but the military guys in particular were straightforward. They realized that they were saying things that weren't true, and we knew they weren't true. And I, I think a kind of rapport developed. It was very, very amusing incident in one negotiating session in Moscow, where the delegation was headed by Paul Nitze, an extraordinary American public servant and really superb person. When the session came to an end, and we were about to leave to return to the U.S. a message came in, to the State Department people who were with the delegation, saying not to leave immediately because they were sending over a gift. So, we waited a little while and the gift arrived, and it was it was not for Nitze, it was for me. And it was, I mean, their intelligence was pretty good, it was a kilo of fresh caviar.

**KAZIMI**: Oh nice.

**PERLE**: So.., no you could really talk with...

**KAZIMI**: They knew you were a gourmand, and you appreciate good food.

**PERLE**: They knew I liked caviar. They probably heard it from listening devices, but…

**KAZIMI**: Well, this takes me back to a memory I had in Turkey about this question of somebody playing you, an actor. I remember I picked up a DVD of a movie, it's called Zincirbozan. And I thought, you know I was learning Turkish at the time, so it was 2007, 2008, I thought the topic was interesting. It's about the 1980 coup and I began to play it and behold in the first scene there is you or somebody playing you, smoking a cigar and you're sipping on cognac on the shore of the Bosphorus, and you're plotting the coup. Uh, and again, they hired a slim and handsome actor to play you, which is nice. And I was like hey I know this guy and

I was pointing to the screen, and I shot an email to a mutual friend, Harold Rhode, and said: Hey, you can't believe what happened to me. So, I mean, was that true? was the depiction, an accurate depiction of you, plotting the coup in 1980?

**PERLE**: No, of course not.

**KAZIMI**: Okay, all right.

**PERLE**: And if I recall, I haven't seen it in Turkish, and I doubt that it received any distribution beyond Turkey. But as I recall in that film I'm portrayed as a CIA officer who orders assassinations and...

**KAZIMI**: Well, you've been a Senate staffer. You've been an Assistant Secretary of Defense. These are these titles are not particularly impressive for Washington, but, uh, I mean, you can see where the imagination can go very far in thinking about it, because you've been the bane of national security advisors, in particular Henry Kissinger in the height of his career, you were thwarting his policies and his philosophy, detente, there were secretaries of state and CIA directors who tried to get you fired and failed. This is still when you were still a staffer. Uh, even a vice president of the United States. Nelson Rockefeller accused you of being a communist infiltrator at a campaign event, he had to apologize. This is what gets me: He had to apologize in front of a session of the full Senate. All of this and you're not even 40. Um, and by the time you go to government, you go to the administration, Reagan, I mean you had the chance to create your own position, you designed it, tailored it for yourself with the title that you wanted, so its fair to say, and we'll begin by saying that you've done a lot, uh, and there's vivid imaginings of things that you probably haven't done, which all means there's a lot to cover in this conversation, but I'd like to begin specifically with a letter from something called the Committee for Peace and Stability in the Gulf. Uh, one that was addressed to President Bill Clinton. Uh, uh, it was published in February 1998. It was cosigned at the top, here are lots of other signatories, cosigned by you and Steve Solarz, a former congressman. Uh, very respected, uh, very influential, uh, for foreign affairs. To me, this letter is a, is a, is a milestone both in Iraq's story and in yours. What do you remember about it?

**PERLE**: I remember that we thought a letter was necessary, that the administration was not paying the attention it should have been paid. As I recall, there were several prominent people on that letter. I think Don Rumsfeld was on that letter.

**KAZIMI**: You had, uh, Donald Rumsfeld, you had Robert McFarlane, and it said you had Richard Allen, former NSA, uh, Judge William Clarke, former NSA, Caspar Weinberger, you know, your old boss at the Pentagon, Bernard Lewis, Marty Peretz, editor in chief of The New Republic, Leon Wieseltier, the literary editor of The New Republic, Bill Kristol, editor of The Weekly Standard. Yeah, it's quite a, uh, you know, quite the gold standard of the people that you need on the letter that can draw a lot of attention to what you're saying. So, what were you saying?

**PERLE**: Well, we were saying that the administration was wrong on Iraq, that it did not recognize the danger that leaving Saddam in place unmolested, had for the future. And we should do something about it a..

**KAZIMI**: And also suggest what you should do?

**PERLE**: Well, we did not suggest invading Iraq, and that was not my view then. It.. it was not in a sense, it was not my preferred option when we did invade Iraq, because I always believed that the Iraqis properly assisted, would do the job themselves. I don't I don't remember; you've got to help me on timing. The Iraq Liberation Act had..

**KAZIMI**: [it] comes later, there's a crescendo, there's a, uh, almost, uh, you know, an operatic, uh, uh, scene here between the starting point in February and what happens in October of the same year in 1998 when the Iraq Liberation Act goes into law but so there a few points. Uh, you wanted the United States, so it was delivered to Sandy Berger, the National Security Adviser, in January. And I guess they didn't do nothing with it. So, you felt it was time to publicize it, but you also probably knew that that was going to be their reaction. There's going to be a publication of this to follow and you wanted INC [i.e., Iraqi National Congress] recognized as a provisional government of Iraq in the liberated areas in the

north, Kurdistan, you wanted sanctions lifted off of these liberated areas, release of the regime's frozen funds and frozen assets, war crimes indictments, an air campaign against the Republican Guard-if they, should they move against these positions. And you also wanted to position some U.S. troops to help defend and provide logistical support, maybe training for these.., this was the plan uh at the time.

**PERLE**: The focus was on helping Iraqis free themselves. There was the north where the Kurds were already a thriving government capable of taking action. And they hated Saddam and for good reason.

**KAZIMI**: They had just just barely stopped shooting at each other.

**PERLE**: Right. And in the south, the Shia in the marsh areas in particular, there was the makings of a of a liberation movement north and south. And my view and the view of the others was that we should be helping them in concrete ways. And I think the most important thought was that if the Kurds could move a little bit south, not a lot, but a little bit and then a little bit more if Saddam didn't didn't move to stop them. We called it an inkblot because gradually the territory not under Saddam's control could be enlarged and protected, if necessary, by American air power.

**KAZIMI**: You're also foreseeing that Saddam's troops would defect and join the other side..

**PERLE**: We we thought that if there were engagements on the edge of the inkblot and the forces sent in, Saddam's forces sent in, were dealt a pretty serious blow proving that Saddam was not invincible, that the deep underlying dissatisfaction of the Iraqi people with this brutal dictator would lead to defections. We hoped it would, and we thought it would.

**KAZIMI**: Now I'm going to quote something that you've written, but in your novel *Hard Line*, which was published in 1992, you have, what is called an alter ego, Professor Michael Waterman, writing this on your behalf. He says, “As I rummaged through the files, 110 boxes of them, I remember thinking that some future historian would be able to reconstruct much of the sequence of events with which they did, but you couldn't possibly

know or understand the private thoughts and feelings of the participants. This struck me, particularly when I read a memo from the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs. At the time it was dry as shredded wheat in a preferred State Department style, its bland paragraphs gave no hint of the perfidy that lay behind it." Now, recently there's a professor, a historian, Melvyn Leffler, respected historian of America's foreign policy, especially the Cold War. He spent 20 years working on the decisions, the mechanics and personalities that led America to confront and overthrow Saddam in 2003. [He] published a book earlier this year. He states that he's an avowed documentarian, written evidence rummaging through archival boxes as Waterman was doing In your novel. Leffler mentions you. When you go to the index, he mentions you once. When you go to that page, he is just citing your name as one of the Vulcans who was advising candidate George Bush at the time that he misidentifies as a former Undersecretary of Defense. So, he gave you a promotion.

**PERLE**: A promotion is always welcomed...

**KAZIMI**: When a Leffler looks at this document from February 1998, what does he not see?

**PERLE**: I think he doesn't see first of all the the argument which we were hoping to stimulate, real discussion, assessment, analysis of the policy. You said Sandy Berger probably threw it away. I doubt that he read it. I mean, the administration.

**KAZIMI**: How can he not read it when you and Steve Solarz have walked it over..?

**PERLE**: I don't remember there was a response, but they were convinced that the policy they were pursuing was right and they did not want to be pushed on any of these these issues. So we had no traction at all in that debate. I mean, it's sort of amazing that when the Iraq Liberation Act was passed in Congress and sent to Bill Clinton, he signed it! He didn't want the controversy attached to vetoing it, but he signed it.

**KAZIMI**: And that's the heart of the matter to get here, right, because that doesn't just happen. So, there's a biography about you by Alan Weissman, all right, but two thirds of it is okay

and then a third is preachy. It was useful to me in preparing for this interview. But it struck me, as like the whole of that whole period, that whole year, that very busy February in which you were really doing stuff, he just passes over that. He says the Iraq Liberation Act happened, right.. It didn't just happen. That's not how Washington works and…

**PERLE**: It happened one vote at a time.

**KAZIMI**: Yeah, but let's get to that, right, because, you know, I'm focusing and I want to go back to this letter. A decade prior to this document. So it's not a long time a decade, right uh back in the mid to late 1980s, you're a star, controversial star, but a star. And people who knew that history in the 1980s and there are lots of people in Washington who knew that history would have spotted some incongruity in, among the signers of the letter, uh, for example, there's Frank Carlucci, he comes in as Secretary of Defense after you and Caspar Weinberger leave in 1987, he takes over and he proceeds to purge the so-called Perlites, the people who you have mentored, you have directed, you've advised, and you have placed in.., and you've helped in a way that you've placed in strategic positions in government. So, I mean, somebody would go, Frank Carlucci is now signing letters that, you know, as putting down his signature under Richard **PERLE**'s name? But I think that the oddest name there is Richard Burt, former Assistant Secretary of State. He was your rival. I mean, in retelling that story of the 1980s, he was your rival. I mean, you even extolled the virtues of your dog, I think, was it Rembrandt at the time?

**PERLE**: Rembrandt

**KAZIMI**: Yeah Rembrandt…To a reporter by telling him that he had bit Richard Burt.

**PERLE**: [laughing] It wasn't a serious bite.

**KAZIMI**: Okay, all right. Were you sending an inside baseball message within that letter to Washington? As if you were saying: okay, I'm back, I'm stepping back into the limelight and I'm about to do something big.

**PERLE**: I would not have thought of it that way at that time. I was pleased that it was possible to pull together so many people. You're quite right to raise a question about Frank Carlucci, who was a career diplomat until he went to the Department of Defense, who was very much a State Department man, who thought like the State Department, but he was also capable of independent thought much more than many of his colleagues. And he looked at the situation…he was not a person to sign a letter without reading it carefully. I think the appeal of that letter to a pretty broad group of people was that it was an alternative to a strategy that was going nowhere, that did not call for American military action against Saddam. It was, look, in many of the battles, the question was, will the United States go in and deal with this? And here was a proposal that did not involve the United States sending troops, I mean, at the margins, protecting the no-fly zone. I think Rick Burt and some others undoubtedly wanted to be on the letter that with the others who were on the letter, that might have some impact.

**KAZIMI**: You were the one gave them this opportunity. You reached out, so this is engineered.

**PERLE**: This is how you build a coalition.

**KAZIMI**: But it's so if we go back to Professor Waterman and he's trying to understand this letter as a fictional character, and he understands how personalized a lot of these relationships in Washington can get, the acrimony that can build up, the rancor.

**PERLE**: It can, it can be debilitating,

**KAZIMI**: It can be debilitating and...

**PERLE**: I mean, how many times have we seen an administration reject even the sensible policies of its predecessor because they were the policies of its predecessor? I think we're seeing it right now. It's human nature. There are rivalries involved in these matters, and they go way beyond substance, they're personal conflicts often, Rick Burt and I had a personal conflict.

**KAZIMI**: Well, I want to talk about this personal conflict between you and Rick Burt because I discern very different approaches to… to the drama. So there's a portrayal in Strobe Talbott's book *Deadly Gambits* it's sort of glamorization of your rivalry with Richard Burt. It came out in 1985?

**PERLE**: Right.

**KAZIMI**: There's a review of the book saying that in practice, the strategy of the negotiations, these are negotiations that concern all mankind. These are nuclear weapons and technology destruction and mutual destruction and the window of vulnerability, all this stuff. This is not just, you know, some bureaucracies hashing it out, and the implications are for the species, for whole species. And, uh, so this reviewer is saying its effectively controlled by two third level bureaucrats. So you were famous in DC before this book, or at least in a in a subsection of DC, the national security crowd, you know, but this was, this was a sort of what they call the entertainment industry a crossover hit. All right. There's you know, intellectuals in New York are reading it, the elites over in Chicago and the West Coast, everybody now starts paying attention, even the reviewers at the *New York Review of Books*, when they choose a caricature that goes with the story, they have a caricature of you like a drawing of, you know! I don't know if you have a copy of that, you can order a print of these. So this bureaucratic infighting turned Shakespearean, and colorful, charming characters, you and, you know, your cooking, your in kitchen and, you know, people are a fascinated by that aspect. Burt is a new way of diplomat; he gets posted later beyond this rivalry to the sensitive job of ambassador in Bonn and head of the mission in Berlin. He's six years younger by age and 13 years younger by government experience with you. Uh, you first meet him as a national security reporter for the New York Times.

**PERLE**: Right.

**KAZIMI**: He's a rocker, a maverick, brash, aggressive. Um, there's a profile of him, I think, in the Washington Post when he was ambassador in Berlin. He was a newlywed. His wife had been the social secretary for Nancy Reagan. Uh, there's a bit in there where he gets backstage at a Dire Straits concert. Do you remember this band from the 1980s? Well, at

the time, they were at the height of their fame, probably one of the most famous bands of that time. Uh, he gets to meet his musical rocker idol who's the vocalist and the lead guitarist, and he gifts him a copy of his *Deadly Gambits*, as if he wants to say: look here uncle, okay, look at what I have done!

**PERLE**: [Laughing]

**KAZIMI**: You know, he's the one who's greeted Nathan Sharansky walking across the bridge in Berlin. Uh, later on in that you know, rocker, by the way, you know, I tried to do some background on his family, are they Mormons or lapsed Mormons? Do you know anything about?

**PERLE**: I don't know.

**KAZIMI**: They come out of Utah. Uh, his father is in the mining industry, So Rick Burt is, uh, Richard Burt is born in Chile, uh, because his father was working there. But his mother was also very involved with Masonic, uh, activities, social activities and fundraising. So, Masons and Mormons don't go together. So, I don't know. But you were never that interested in his background, I guess?

**PERLE**: Look, I think that our rivalry had a lot to do with the Rick's view of the world before he became Assistant Secretary in the in the Pentagon, in the in the State Department, because I knew him,

**KAZIMI**: Alexander Haig brings him on…

**PERLE**: As a matter of a fact I was the one who was designated to phone him. I was on the transition team at the State Department, and I was all for putting Rick in that position.

**KAZIMI**: Why would somebody bring somebody from *The New York Times*, a reporter, no background in diplomacy?

**PERLE**: Well, he had been covering issues that he would be covering in the State Department, and he'd done so intelligently and

**KAZIMI**: Intelligently? But wasn't it just Brzezinski leaking through him most of the Carter administration?

**PERLE**: I think that's not entirely fair. His reporting was far better than most of the reporters who were universally on the left, then and now. I thought he was realistic. I thought he understood the issues. I was happy to see him come into that job. And I had recommended him. And and Haig said, well, you call him.

**KAZIMI**: Okay, well, see when I look at this moment when he's giving this Talbot's book to this rocker, all right, it's as if he reveled in it, in this notoriety and in this glamor. You seem to have turned it into a yet another tool, it's not without uses, when you get designated accidentally as the 'Prince of Darkness', but it sticks. And it's helped in getting things done because people assume there's, you know, all sorts of power.

**PERLE**: Right.

**KAZIMI**: You leverage that notoriety as power. And of course, there's always the danger that it turns you into a caricature, you know.

**PERLE**: To some degree it did.

**KAZIMI**: You've lived with this through most of your career also. Yeah, because your initial, your initial mentors like Dr. Albert Wohlstetter and others, they were turned into characters with *Dr. Strangelove* the movie, in 1964.

**PERLE**: Right.

**KAZIMI**: Uh, uh, Herman Kahn and Paul Nitze and all of this you know. So here you are, uh, with this burden, with this tool. Uh, and one of the things that gets leveled at you is that, uh,

now you're Rasputin-ike a character who's managing upwards, uh, and you're at the head of a cabal. Uh, I mean, this, this, this goes all the way to, the Iraq war. I mean, you were also accused of manipulating George Bush to do your bidding. Now, you are quoted many times as saying that power comes, or at least your understanding of your power, came from crafting good arguments for busy people. And, you know, did the detractors come back and say, you know, just as you were manipulating later, you know, uh, going back in time, you manipulated Scoop Jackson and Caspar Weinberger, but I want to focus on Scoop Jackson here, uh, because that was your apprenticeship and apprenticeship in real power, and you meet him in 1969. Uh, what do you think he saw in you in that moment? Because he had been a congressman and a senator since you were born, uh, in 1960 was a serious contender for to be JFK's vice president. Uh, and it took you a while to get to Washington, he sees you for the first time when you are twenty seven....

**PERLE**: I never intended going to Washington.

**KAZIMI**: Well, this is the thing, you, uh, there's a famous poolside chat when you were 16 or 17 with Albert Wohlstetter, you're reading his Foreign Affairs article, uh, you're having a conversation with him, and then, you know, all the way until you get to Washington Paul Nitze, upon the recommendation of Wohlstetter hires you for something called the Chief Researcher for the Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy. There's Wolfowitz there, your former, uh, uh, uh, roommate in London,

**PERLE**: Edward…

**KAZIMI**: Edward Luttwak is there and it's anti-ballistic missile defense later of derisively called Star Wars and the Reagan years. By the way, did you get to watch the movie, *Oppenheimer*?

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: What did you think of the portrayal of Edward Teller?

**PERLE**: Teller was one of the people I knew best, and I had an enormous regard for Teller, who had a thick accent and walked for much of his life with the walking stick and was easily characterized and had been by ..I thought he was intelligent and effective. I thought he deserved more space in that in that play.

**KAZIMI**: In that movie. All right. Okay, so there's a journey, let's say in 1957, there's, uh, Sputnik. Uh, the Russians send up Sputnik. Uh... Along this journey - I'm just setting the scene until you get to Scoop Jackson's office. You've heard Eisenhower warning about the military-industrial complex that in 1961 there was news of the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile Crisis, you were in London at the time, the Kennedy assassination, civil rights, Vietnam. Uh, you're a registered as Democrat at 18, I found your registration record. You still are, apparently, according to some.

**PERLE**: I still am.

**KAZIMI**: And in deference to Scoop Jackson who was a Democrat.

**PERLE**: Exclusively in deference to Scoop Jackson. I can't think of another good reason [laughing].

**KAZIMI**: You go to University of Southern California, which is near home Los Angeles. Uh, was it between your junior year or the junior year and senior year that you go to Berlin?

**PERLE**: It was 1962.

**KAZIMI**: Oh, so you're already in London? You're already at LSE?

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: All right. We'll get back to this. The then you do an MA at Princeton, hold on Princeton is before LSE. Because at LSE, you're trying to do your PhD…

**PERLE**: No, no, no. LSE was before I, it was essentially a junior year abroad at the LSE, although I was already a senior. Oh, right. So, the opportunity to spend a year there came along.

**KAZIMI**: It's your first time abroad?

**PERLE**: It's my first time outside the U.S..

**KAZIMI**: Okay. Uh, did you meet Elie Kedourie?

**PERLE**: No, I never did, and regret never having. But I wasn't interested in the region at that at that time.

**KAZIMI**: But you met Ralph Miliband. You took a class?

**PERLE**: Yes, I did. I…

**KAZIMI**: He was a Marxist, the father of David and Edmund, they are going to have their trajectories.

**PERLE**: I did.

**KAZIMI**: I had a question about…were you impressed by the Brits?

**PERLE**: Yes, I was. But I, I was impressed by the quality of the teaching at the LSE. Like a lot of Americans, I thought the accent was terrific, clear, crisp. The cultural scene in London…

**KAZIMI**: Before you embarked on this, you were thinking of becoming an English major at university?

**PERLE**: If I had started, I'd started out as an English major and had taken all of the English classes that that interested me.

**KAZIMI**: You have a literary bent, let's say…

**PERLE**: Yes. And I mean, I imagined myself then teaching English literature at a small college and having my students over for tea. That was my image of my future.

**KAZIMI**: How did you develop that image?

**PERLE**: Uh, it just seemed like a perfect world.

**KAZIMI**: Okay.

**PERLE**: Pursuing topics of interest, reading great books, discussing them with graduate students, I. I couldn't imagine a better life.

**KAZIMI**: All right, by the way, Edward Luttwak the Romanian, he's going to write a manual on coups in 1968. Was that accidental, though? Did they just place you as roommates, or did you, uh, choose a place to live?

**PERLE**: We chose a place to live together. Neither of us had enough money for a place of our own, so...

**KAZIMI**: When did you meet?

**PERLE**: We met as I arrived in London about to begin courses at the LSE, and somebody said to me, there's this guy looking for a roommate. And so I sought him out and we ...

**KAZIMI**: Very opinionated about ..

**PERLE**: I didn't know him at all when we decided to become roommates. But a remarkable guy. I mean, extremely intelligent, well-educated, well read. Yes, I remember *Coup D'état* because I had spent the previous summer working at the Institute for Naval Analysis in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And I had done a study on the involvement of the Navy in

conflicts. And among other things, I had produced some charts which find their way into Edward's book, not with any attribution [laughing].

**KAZIMI**: And so it's ironic that fast forward to the one day arguing that Saddam's is coup proof, right and that the mission of trying to find a general around him that puts a bullet in his head, that's not going to work that way.

**PERLE**: No, no. A lot of bullets wound up in heads, but they were the people who thought they might organize a coup against Saddam, I couldn't imagine that a coup could be put together against Saddam.

**KAZIMI**: So, you are back in Princeton, you live in Denmark for two years. You're in Waltham, Massachusetts, which was my sort of American hometown, this is one of the first places I went to Brandeis. And you were working at Westinghouse?

**PERLE**: At the something called the Institute of Naval Analysis, which was which was run by Westinghouse.

**KAZIMI**: So, this is a military-industrial complex?

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: Uh, now Nitze hires you, I'm pronouncing his name correctly?

**PERLE**: Sorry?

**KAZIMI**: Nitze?

**PERLE**: Yes Nitze.

**KAZIMI**: Okay. So, you and Wolfowitz are doing a presentation to Scoop Jackson. So, your mentors up to this point have all been these high priests of, uh, of, uh, these very, uh, you

know, people working on higher mathematical assessments of what these weapons can do, these nuclear weapons, the physical capabilities, game theory. Um, you know, it's all very neat and intellectually elegant to argue, and you're drawn to this, uh, drawn to the debate, to the argument. You were in the debate team in high school, right? And then you were there, and there's this Norwegian Protestant, uh, Senator, and, uh, he's going to save you from a life of wonkiness.

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: You're already set in your ways at 27. Uh, I mean, you're, you're, you know, you in many ways fully formed to be somebody who's going to be a disciple of Wohlstetter, your endless elaborations of his theories. Uh oh. Uh, you're, you're a student in that academy. Uh, what is, what is, I mean, Scoop Jackson is going to introduce you to a world of politics, which is messy, acrimony, rumor leaks, moodiness, some guy has had a bad day and it influences policy, and you thrive in this world. What was going to be a year with Scoop Jackson turns into 11, and…I want to ask a question, and this is a what if question, …

**PERLE**: I never anticipated any of that. What drew me to Scoop Jackson was his enormous charm, intelligence. I remember what, 27 you say, sitting on the floor in his office, pouring over charts about ballistic missile defense. And at the time, he was already an extremely influential senator, powerful senator, Kennedy's test ban treaty, the first significant piece of arms control would never have been ratified by the Senate without Scoop and that's a whole story in itself. But here was this very powerful individual, and we're sitting on the floor together. I was enormously taken by the Scoop, so when…

**KAZIMI**: When you go back to that, what did he see in you?

**PERLE**: Oh…

**KAZIMI**: Because one of the things that Ahmad Chalabi talk about later, he says you have the gift of *farasa*, which is an Arabic attribute, you can see into the hearts of men, all right, what did Scoop Jackson see in the heart of this 27-year wonk, he's seen plenty of these, right?

Uh, you know, there's a lot of people who come with charts and try to, you know, sway him on this side of a policy debate or another, right? Why you?

**PERLE**: I don't know how to answer that question. I think there was a significant influence on Scoop from his long time, very close and trusted advisor Dorothy Fosdick. And I saw Scoop for, I don't know, three or 4 hours maybe on that visit to Washington. But I saw Dorothy for a great deal more of that. No, on, during that week and I liked her. She liked me.

**KAZIMI**: Now she's a very significant person too, I mean, she she comes from a very prominent New York family. Her father was a famous pastor here. Uh, she has had a very storied career up to that point. Uh, she worked with Eleanor Roosevelt on on putting together the Declaration of Human Rights, uh,

**PERLE**: With Alger Hiss.

**KAZIMI**: Yeah, that's right. Nelson Rockefeller is going to be interested in that point later.

**PERLE**: She was brilliant.

**KAZIMI**: So, what did she see in you?

**PERLE**: I don't know. I knew what I was talking about on the issues that I was being asked to discuss with Scoop and I think she appreciated that, she was easy to learn from. She had very clear grounding on the big issues. I was dealing with a small subset of those big issues. But I can't tell you at that point. The relationship with Scoop became extremely close...

**KAZIMI**: But in the beginning, an intellectual, you know, they saw you as an intellectual at the beginning?

**PERLE**: I think so, yeah.

**KAZIMI**: But..but what did they figure out that you have a talent for? There's a very cumbersome word that that sometimes is used, a 'maneuverer'. What did they figure out that you also have that kind of unique skill set?

**PERLE**: One of the things I did and Senate staffers do, and by the way, the Senate and the relationship of senators to staffs was entirely different in… at that time. I would have lunch or dinner with Scoop three times a week, four times a week. Now the staffs or four times the size, the relationship between senators and their staff is much more hierarchical and bureaucratic. So, we were working on issues day in and day out. On legislative strategy. Scoop was brilliant at building coalitions, and the way he did it was by understanding the people he was bringing in. It wasn't his conveying his views as much as his understanding the views of the interlocutors. And he taught me that. And he's right.

**KAZIMI**: but how many of his staffers or of his people worked for that can claim to have learned that off of him?

**PERLE**: Well, I think he produced over the years an enormous number of deeply loyal staffers and they called themselves Scoops troops.

**KAZIMI**: But you were his adjunct to leading them?

**PERLE**: No, no, I wasn't the... and I think a lot of Scoops staffers worried that I was commanding too much of his time because he was, he was chairman of the Energy Committee, which at the time was the key environmental institution in in the Senate. He wrote the National Environmental Policy Act, and he was being pulled in a lot of different directions and others on the staff, I think, were often jealous of how much time I spent with him. But that's because the issues that he was most intensely interested in were the ones he had me working on. He was, he was a cold warrior, an internationalist.

**KAZIMI**: Soft socialist or social democrat?

**PERLE**: He was a social democrat for sure.

**KAZIMI**: Which was your politics at the time...

**PERLE**: Well, I had never thought all that much about domestic policy. He was a big spender. He was very close to the trade unions. But my focus was fairly narrow on the issues that I was responsible for. But he, he taught me a great deal about how you pull people together.

**KAZIMI**: Okay and which will little later to be a very important for example for what would what happens in 1998. But there's a reporter who once wrote about you that the Soviets would have instinctively understood your trajectory: through mentorships, bureaucracies, factions, networks, infighting, purges, counter purges, all right... like they would have a hard, hard time understanding somebody who rose up through elections. But you, the Soviets, I don't know whether that's true or not, but let's have very let's invert that, let's say your ancestors stayed in Russia, they never emigrated and, uh, here you are at a fork in the road: You can join the state and become an apparatchik yourself and work through the system and change it, right? Or would you have ended up being like a dissident copying *samizdat* and that? It's a difficult question to ask, but would you, would you address it?

**PERLE**: Well, I like to think I would have been a dissident reading and circulating *samizdat*, that took tremendous courage. And whether I would have exhibited that, I don't know, but I like to think I would have had the courage to do that. I had, of course, enormous respect and admiration for the Soviets who did that. And it wasn't just Soviet Jews. Sakharov was a hero of mine.

**KAZIMI**: And even after he was dismissing SDI?

**PERLE**: Yes, yes that had no bearing on me.

**KAZIMI**: My question here is whether or not you're drawn to power. You know how to wield it, which is a skill that not many people understand or even historians understand about the people who actually wielded power. Uh, but a lot of people also try to pigeonhole you as an idealist, somebody who has as a calling, as a mission, as a cause. This hostility towards

totalitarianism, which, uh I mean, Scoop apparently at his formative experience was Buchenwald in April 1945, and he saw what evil was.

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: So no exaggeration...

**PERLE**: But even before that, by the way, he he told me how when he was a prosecutor in Everett, Washington, he drove the Brownshirts out of Seattle and he made no bones about it. He said, yeah, he said they would break the law. And the moment they did, I got right to it. He believed in fair trials. He believed in due process, but he wasn't going to let the Brownshirts run things the way they want to do,…

**KAZIMI**: Jaywalking.

**PERLE**: Jaywalking [laughter].

**KAZIMI**: So…but who, who was Richard Perle the day he decides to go for a day trip to East Berlin to see what it's like, it's related in your biography...

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: Not in details, but this Walter guy that you meet, and his family knew, you were with the newspaper, I mean, you were you really sought it out. But but if you if you look back at this young Richard Perle, who does that, where would you place him? Is he going to be the dissident or is he going to be the person who wields power?

**PERLE**: I was just curious at that point. I wanted to see what East Germany was like. And as it happened, the day I arrived in Berlin, and I was on my way to the London School of Economics, was the anniversary of the death of the young East German who was shot escaping to the West. And what made this particular case so poignant was he was shot by the VoPos, was in the no man's land between east and West Germany, a small space of

maybe 100 yards where he bled to death. And it was ..the VoPos would not allow Germans to rescue him and save his life. So, it was a very emotional moment in Berlin, hadn't anticipated that, but it happened. And so I was very curious. I really wanted to see what …what life was like in in East Germany, in a communist country. I bought a copy of *Die Welt*, didn't read a word of German, but I knew that if I was seen with that it might result in an encounter. And it did. And I brought a I also had it in my briefcase a *Peanuts* cartoon, which they took away from me at the border.

**KAZIMI**: The inspectors...

**PERLE**: Yeah, I could keep the *Die Welt*, but the *Peanuts* were.. I think they just wanted it for themselves. The border guards.

**KAZIMI**: You meet Walter Guy and his family had you go for lunch and you had this conversation, and, uh. Going back to this, the duality of you being curious, you being curious as to the nature of of the intellectual curious of totalitarianism when you go to East Berlin, your human connection to this Walter guy and his family..as you say goodbye to them, you know, you know that there are tears in your eyes. You know, you know, you're never going to see them again. These are the emotional hearts. The heart strings are being pulled here. Now..

**PERLE**: The last thing Walter says to me on the U-Bahn platform is I'm getting the last train back to the West was, was send me magazines, send me newspapers. And his wife pulls me aside and she says, don't do that, he's already been in jail twice.

**KAZIMI**: But that stays with you. You got out of this what you set out to learn, you really,

**PERLE**: But I learned something deeply emotional, which is not it isn't what I expected. I expected to look around to observe, to see how people were living. I never expected to get so engaged with this family. The little girl. Little girl. The little girl was eight. Couldn't understand someone speaking a different language. She'd never heard anyone speak a different language. No, it was a really emotional moment. And how could it not be?

**KAZIMI**: But also, the emotional laws. The beneficiaries of Jackson-Vanik, which was passed in 1975, they come to your office, they come to Scoop's office. They're thanking you. Right. That's also very emotional. but you're also you're also a lot of them are scientists uh, who were in various institutions, Soviet institutions, …You're also understanding some very good insights about what's happening over the Soviet side from that. So, there's always this emotional aspect, but there's also the practical power aspect, right?

**PERLE**: Yes, for sure.

**KAZIMI**: When did you start developing the sense that this regime, the Baathist regime that's coming into focus in Iraq in the 1970s is a totalitarian state? That it's not just some run of the mill dictatorship, but this is something more sophisticated, more sinister, more menacing, that this is a unique beast?

**PERLE**: Well, I, I don't recall the first stories I heard, but stuff leaked out about barbarity that …I mean, the way, there were famous incidents, of course, where Saddam shoots a number of people in a meeting, you remember, and I'm not quite sure when that came out..

**KAZIMI**: In 1980, 1979

**PERLE**: So there were lots of stories coming out. But I think my attention was focused because of an interest that developed in the Kurdish situation. And..

**KAZIMI**: How did that develop? Who was that first Kurd that you met?

**PERLE**: He was a really wonderful man named Mohammed Dosky, and he was the representative of the KDP in the U.S. and he was a lobbyist for the for the for the Kurdish Democratic Party, which was a tough job. It was a tough job because Americans knew very little and didn't have a lot of interest. And so just to get people's attention, he was very friendly with a man named Beinish Epstein and Beinish Epstein worked for the ZOA, the Zionist Organization of

America. They were personally friendly, and I think it was, and Epstein was also a wonderful human being. I think Epstein introduced me to Mohammed.

**KAZIMI**: This is so this is Mohammed Sa'id Dosky, a son of Kassim Dosky, and he was an Iraqi diplomat until 1971, and he leaves the diplomatic service because he started to be hounded because his wife is an American. Uh, her name is Norma Norma Dolly, but she's a Syrian American. Her father was born in Aleppo, grew up in Michigan, where she meets Sa'id Dosky in the fifties when he's a student at Michigan State, studying agriculture. In the 1960s he's posted in the embassy the Iraqi embassy in Washington. So he has some background to Washington of what's happening in Washington. But he decides to leave the service of the Iraqi state. And he comes and he starts, he decides to join Barzani's revolution. He's ethnically Kurd, but his story had had been up to that point being part of the central Iraqi state, and now he is going into rebellion. Uh, do you remember what date he walks into your office?

**PERLE**: I don't. I'm terrible about dates generally. And that date? I don't remember.

**KAZIMI**: Was it the year that Barzani, Barzani's rebellion collapses or before that? So that was [19]75.

**PERLE**: It was when Barzani had already been received in the U.S. and put in a safehouse in Virginia.

**KAZIMI**: So that's [19]75. So you're to you start taking an interest in the story as it's already collapsed they don't have many friends. Uh, Barzani Mullah Mustapha is snubbed by Ford and Kissinger uh, this brings up memories of Solzhenitsyn being snubbed by them also…

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: And what the Scoop Jackson do with that?

**PERLE**: Well, he invites Solzhenitsyn to the Senate, and I think Kissinger understood the moment that invitation was extended that he made a mistake, …

**KAZIMI**: He's received as a hero?

**PERLE**: He was received as a hero in the Senate. I mean, by then, everyone had had read *The Gulag Archipelago* and some people had read other books by him. And the idea that the White House wouldn't invite him was just it was it was the proof, if anyone needed it, that detente was corrosive, that you're trying to build a detente, you change your moral standards because they become inconvenient to the objective of *detente*.

**KAZIMI**: And what a person to do that with, I mean he's the one who conclusively shows that this is a totalitarian state beyond anybody's even imagined …

**PERLE**: I just reread it recently, an amazing book, *Gulag Archipelago*.

**KAZIMI**: in the rereading, what did you feel?

**PERLE**: I just marveled at how he collected these stories in great detail, many of which come from the time when he was in the gulag. He didn't have a word processor. You know, he's probably putting things on little scraps of paper. But he recalls with such clarity the discussions, and he understands so well the psychology of the zeks, the prisoners and the guards. I mean, it's a brilliant work and it's a brilliant literary work. I mean, the political importance is obvious, but even without that, this would be a book, book worth reading and rereading.

**KAZIMI**: So, you have this Mohammed Dosky, you meet, this General Barzani. What's your first impression of Mullah Mustafa Barzani?

**PERLE**: Well, he was a a a charismatic, word is overused, but you sort of immediately took a liking to him. He was warm. He was charming. Dosky was interpreting for him because he didn't

speak English. And he's making the case for his country and he's dying. He's dying of cancer. I don't think he lived more than a year after our first meeting. Maybe, maybe, maybe, …

**KAZIMI**: He made it to 79, he dies in March 1979..

**PERLE**: Right. I used to go and have lunch with him at his safehouse because he was alone in a foreign land…

**KAZIMI**: Isolated. And the CIA and the Iranians wanted it that way, the SAVAK. He had a SAVAK officer and a CIA officer with him, watching him, and trying to keep him away from people like you.

**PERLE**: Well, that was not entirely successful, maybe because I was this young kid being brought there, but I liked him immediately...

**KAZIMI**: You were a young kid but you've already, in '75, you've already, uh, you've already given a lot of a heart take to Henry Kissinger. The particularly story of Barzani's story is going to look pretty bad for Henry Kissinger. So. So they have they were mindful this is a significant breakthrough for the for the Kurdish cause to be talking to you and talking to your office, to Scoop's office.

**PERLE**: Well, and I was able to help them spread their message.

**KAZIMI**: There's a dinner party?

**PERLE**: Yes, I gave a dinner party for him. He was quite frail at this at this point, uh…

**KAZIMI**: What was the goal of this dinner party?

**PERLE**: To introduce him to people who could be helpful.

**KAZIMI**: So, networking?

**PERLE**: Networking and in particular some press people. And so I remembered three of the press people who were there, George Will, who was my neighbor in Chevy Chase and a very close friend…

**KAZIMI**: Very influential.

**PERLE**: Very influential, Bill Safire, …

**KAZIMI**: *New York Times*.

**PERLE**: Who was also extremely influential, and Ben Wattenberg, who was a friend from, had written a number of books and wrote enough articles so that I was hoping he would write about about the Kurds. I don't remember now whether he actually did.

**KAZIMI**: Well, Bill Safire certainly kept writing,

**PERLE**: Yes, I think Bill Safire was already of the view that the Kurds deserved all the help we could give them.

**KAZIMI**: Well, I'm not sure about that because he starts writing in 1976, in February. Uh, this is probably the biggest thing that is happening for the Kurds in those years, because everybody was keen on forgetting them, and Bill Safire is making sure they're not forgotten.

**PERLE**: Right.

**KAZIMI**: But…So, what happened in this, what was going on in this dinner? What do you remember?

**PERLE**: Well, the dinner had a comic aspect. I wanted to cook something that would remind Barzani of home. So, I looked around and I found a recipe for *fesenjoon*, not a Kurdish dish as such, but as close as I could get. And I'd never made the dish before. I don't think I'd ever

had it before. So you're reading a recipe which isn't terribly helpful if you don't know what the end result is supposed to be. And I was missing a key ingredient, which is the pomegranate syrup, which is thick. And so I used pomegranate juice instead of pomegranate syrup, and it was a disaster. It was inedible. And I've got a dozen people around the table. I pride myself on my cooking and I serve up this.

**KAZIMI**: People know about your cooking, they're anticipating a wonderful meal!

**PERLE**: Bill Safire, who had a wonderful sense of humor, looks up and he says, this is the best chicken with pomegranate sauce I've ever had. And it was horrible. In the end, Barzani didn't want any, it didn't remind him of home. Of course, he wanted an onion and some olive oil and some bread, and that was his dinner. He had the best dinner of anybody there. The dessert might have been okay.

**KAZIMI**: Do you remember what the dessert was?

**PERLE**: I don't remember the dessert, but it has to been better than the *fesenjoon*.

**KAZIMI**: In later years did you make *fesenjoon*?

**PERLE**: I've never made it since. I think I should try it one of these days.

**KAZIMI**: Well at least some of the ingredients will be easier to get...

**PERLE**: But if I told Leslie I was going to make chicken with pomegranate, she'd say, what? But it's a good idea. I should try it now that I can get the ingredients and I've eaten it. So, I now know what it's like.

**KAZIMI**: It is one of the tricky dishes to really do well. I've tried a couple of times, but have not succeeded, even though I know what the result right and I have all the right ingredients so don’t be hard on yourself. And I've only had it once done well in Tehran, at the home of the Hakims, through their own kitchen, their own household kitchen.

**KAZIMI**: Right before breaking. Now, very quick question on this topic of Barzani, was Barzani going to be used as an election issue in the Democratic primary for Scoop? Because Scoop is going to run in 1976, right?

**PERLE**: Yes. I don't think there was enough interest in the plight of the Kurds to for that to become a political issue in a national campaign.

**KAZIMI**: It would have been useful against Ford and Kissinger?

**PERLE**: Yes, it's true. I don't recall I don't recall making much of it in the, if anything, in in that context.

**KAZIMI**: So it stayed an emotional issue. It was not wielded as part of the domestic debate?

**PERLE**: Look, it was made more poignant. I mean, you could read about what was going on. And in due course, we saw the nightmare of Halabja and... But what made it so poignant was the image I had of Mustafa Barzani with the ammunition, and then to meet him frail. And it was shocking. I mean, here was this warrior pining away in a safe house in in Virginia. And friendless.

**KAZIMI**: The U.S. betrayal, perfidy, realpolitik had a lot to do with seeing this broken man, and that stayed with you?

**PERLE**: Yes, that's true. Yes. No, it was. And every time I went, I went hoping I could cheer him up a little. And in fact, it was a fairly easy, easy rapport, but…

**KAZIMI**: But looking back, would you say that he was your friend?

**PERLE**: Yes, I certainly regarded him as a friend. I don't know, do we know much about his life in those years? Is there any...

**KAZIMI**: We do have a record of somebody who did the hard work of putting it together, I think he was a former CIA person[1]. He did it for Daniel Pipes's the Middle East Forum, they put it out. We're going to we're going to focus on this. We're going to focus on Mohammad Dosky that's part of the project, we will do later. But yeah, we want to get that paperwork because that will... Would you say that the Kurdish issue was your entry point into caring about Iraq?

**PERLE**: Yes. Yeah, it clearly was. I mean, I had never paid significant attention to Iraq. I read the same headlines as other people, I was in those days pretty narrowly focused on on the U.S.-Soviet issues in particular on the defense aspects of those issues, because it was an expertise and there weren't many people on the Senate staff. And in in those days when the Senate staffs were much smaller and the relationship of the staffs to their senators was much more intimate, and senators achieved leadership positions on issues. So, Scoop was known as deeply knowledgeable on a variety of issues, defense issues, military questions, U.S.-Soviet relations, Cold War questions. So, he was looked at as a leader, and I think I've seen this in print somewhere, but I know it's true that there were 17, 18, 20 senators who would always vote with Scoop on those questions. They didn't have to know what the vote was on. If Scoop said 'aye,' they said 'aye' and there were other senators who had similar influence on similar, on other issues. There was a system of recognizing knowledge and expertise and because Scoop was in that position on the issues I worked on, I inherited a bit of that. And these stories about how much influence I had as a Senate staffer, it really wasn't me. It was Scoop. It was Scoop's prominence, Scoop's authority, and some of which kind of rubbed off on Scoop's aide. I used to I used to marvel at these mostly conspiratorial sorts of things, which I was manipulating. Scoop …Unthinkable. I mean, everything I knew, I learned from Scoop. He was like a father, apart from the working relationship, I loved him. And I look at the Senate today and say, where's the Scoop Jackson? And you don't find it…

[Break]

**KAZIMI**; Oh really? by who? [asking about a portrait hanged on the wall in Perle's living room]

[1] Kazimi is mistaken here. He is referencing former Ambassador David A. Korn who was a diplomat with the State Department, not the CIA.

**PERLE**: By an American, now dead named Charles Wells, who was a brilliant printmaker.

**SHAMMARI**: I didn't get the first explanation of this one, sir, I was busy doing the camera.

**PERLE**: Oh, she is Käthe Kollwitz, a German did a lot of lithographs with conspirators. I mean, she was interested in politics. And so you can see that these are people who clearly are hatching a plot of some sort. And the Louvre in Paris had original plates for her and a great many others. And up until, well, maybe it still exists, but there used to be a little side door in the Louvre you could go in and rummage through these things and they would print it for you if they didn't have off the original plate.

**KAZIMI**; Speaking of conspirators, I want to now come to the year 1998 again. It's the year, by the end of the year, Iraq will become a domestic American political issue. Now, a year prior, in 1997, there was an opening salvo. So, this is Peter Jennings Reports, uh there's an hour of that talking about how the CIA betrayed Ahmad Chalabi and all their faults and foibles and that's joined with a double whammy by Jim Hoagland taking three pages of newsprint, including on the first page in *The Washington Post*, writing up the story also about what the CIA is doing wrong, right… its many failures on Iraq, and specifically with Ahmed Chalabi. So, this was Chalabi's opening salvo against the CIA because the Peter Jennings's thing that happens through Frances Brooke, he was friends with the producer, with Jim Hoagland, whom we interviewed last week. Uh, that was 30 years of friendship, getting him interested in the story. And by the way, it was Chalabi arranged for Jim to meet Barzani, And Jim was also an early person who gave focus to the Kurdish issue.

[A dog interrupts the interview]

**KAZIMI**: So, now there's a new director that's going to take over in the CIA, is going to take over, in the month after this opening salvo, in July, he's confirmed, which is George Tenet. There's a hope that he might fix up the Agency, and that could be a beginning. Getting the INC back on track and getting these plans back on track, by the good graces of this George Tenet guy now. And it's always easy, as always, you can always find friends in Washington

by beating up on the CIA. Um, now, prior to this, when Tenet was deputy in March 1996...Chalabi claims in speaking to his biographer, Richard Bonin, that you had arranged a meeting between Chalabi and John Deutch,…

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: Which happened at the Ritz Carlton Pentagon City in March of 1996.

**PERLE**: Well, that was the second meeting. The first meeting was at the university at the, uh, the club on Massachusetts, at the Cosmos Club, because Chalabi's message was very urgent and John was giving a talk at the Cosmos Club, and we retired to a room for just there was only a few minutes possible, and they had a very brief chat. And then the subsequent one…

**KAZIMI**: Do you hear what was said?

**PERLE**: Well, I knew what, uh, why Ahmad had come to report that the operation had been compromised.

**KAZIMI**: The coup that the CIA was putting together.

**PERLE**: Have you talked to John [Deutch]? Do you plan to talk to John?

**KAZIMI**: I'd love to talk to John if he wants to talk about this but he's been quite mum with me.

**PERLE**: He may not, but he's a very, very old friend, you know,

**KAZIMI**: from the arms control issues? Because he's a scientist…

**PERLE**: He's a scientist. I knew his father.

**KAZIMI**: Oh, really? Who was his father?

**PERLE**: Yeah. His father was a businessman who came to the U.S. I think he may also, he may have been an engineer, but then was in business. And he, his father and Scoop were very friendly. So that's how I met John when we were both very young. And John went on to have a brilliant academic career at MIT, became the provost of MIT and remains a very good friend.

**KAZIMI**: So and you were telling your friend, the director of the CIA, that,…

**PERLE**: I mean, there was no other director of the CIA who I could have called in a situation like this. But it just happened that John was.

**KAZIMI**: Can we characterize your feelings towards the CIA as one of contempt?

**PERLE**: Yes, because I'd been a consumer of their product for so many years. And I had watched failure after failure. They were very good in one area. The scientific and technical intelligence during the Cold War was really first rate. And they frequently knew the performance parameters of Soviet weapons before the Soviets knew because we were intercepting telemetry and we had an analytic capability that the Soviets didn't have. So, they would test a missile and it would take them another year to define the performance characteristics and we would know it in days. That was brilliant and consistent, and I believe, essential correct, on issue after issue, the accuracy of Soviet missiles, the throw weight or lifting capacity of Soviet missiles and so forth. Where they were appalling was on political intelligence and economic intelligence.

**KAZIMI**: Which is where, eh, what was Team B?

**PERLE**: Team B was set up by Bush Senior,…

**KAZIMI**: When he was Director.

**PERLE**: Yes, to explore, who was an interesting guy. I didn't like him much. But anyway, he… there were a number of people, serious people who dissented from the CIA view of the Soviets

in a number of different respects. And Team B was set up by Bush to permit a group of these people independently to review the available intelligence and form what could well have been a dissenting opinion. He didn't know at that point, and it was.

**KAZIMI**: Was it his initiative or was he pushed into it? This is after the Church hearings, this is after,…

**PERLE**: I'm not sure who, Paul will, Paul Wolfowitz will know.

**KAZIMI**: Okay, but Richard Pipes is picked for that and people say that this was your pick?

**PERLE**: Well, I was very happy with it. I was a big fan of Richard Pipe's. I had arranged for the first hearing at which Dick Pipes talked about the Soviet Union.

**KAZIMI**: So, you're a talent discoverer here?

**PERLE**: That was one of my jobs working for Scoop, was. Jim Schlesinger was another. He was a researcher at the RAND Corporation. Bernard [Lewis] was another. I kept finding these people that it was really important to give a voice to. And that was sort of one of my tasks working for Scoop. He chaired a subcommittee of the Senate that that could do pretty much what it wanted to do because it had almost no legislative authority. Legislative authority was prized and protected and you didn't encroach on somebody else's capacity to initiate legislation or review legislation. But this subcommittee, which was the Subcommittee on International Security and International Operations, never brought any legislation forward, we just held hearings.

**KAZIMI**: It's a big writ, a big..

**PERLE**: You could do what you wanted as long as you didn't encroach on someone else's jurisdiction. So, we had we had Bernard testify there. We had Dick Pipes testify there.

**KAZIMI**: But it might have contributed to an… impression left at the CIA, that you had something to do with this Team B, and nudging it in certain directions?

**PERLE**: Possibly because, at the same time, more or less the same time, there was the Committee on the Present Danger, there was some overlap between the membership of those two organizations.

**KAZIMI**: But what was it like an incident or an interaction where your opinion of the CIA fully formed? Your negative opinion…

**PERLE**: In the many briefings which were unimpressive, I suppose the most critical was an incident involving a fellow named Dave Sullivan. And Dave was very passionate about his work as an intelligence officer at the CIA, and he did a pretty careful analysis on Soviet deception in arms control. It was a document of maybe 50 or 60 pages. It was painstakingly researched. The Agency would not propagate it within the CIA. They just shelved it. And Dave was concerned that they would make it disappear. So, he gave me a copy. I was cleared for the level of intelligence that was in there, which was very high because I was on Scoop's staff. He gave it to me. I immediately took it to the SCIF, the secure facility in the Capitol where it was immediately locked up. Of course, I told Scoop about it and he did this because he was sure that they were going to destroy it and he wanted it to be seen. He was, he was fired for this. And the head of the CIA at that moment tried to get me fired.

**KAZIMI**: Turner?

**PERLE**: Turner. He came to see Scoop and he said to Scoop, I want to talk to you about Perle and Scoop said, well, in that case, let's get him in here, which was not what he wanted. So, he was hemming and hawing. He was really very nervous. And he said Sullivan had passed me this document completely outside CIA rules. Sullivan was fired. And he said, and frankly, I think you ought to consider dealing with Perle in the same way. And now this has been misreported in some places. And Scoop said, I think what he did was entirely appropriate. He handled the document exactly the way it's supposed to be handled and I have no intention of firing him. Now, I've seen a story in which I can't remember whose account it

was, in in which Scoop is reported to have reacted to Turner by saying, well, I'll have to take that under advisement or some rubbish like that, but no immediately on the spot he told him where to go.

**KAZIMI**: So, here we have an example of you having this connection to John Deutch, the ..as you said, the only CIA director I could have talked to because of that connection, and you needed to leverage that connection to get Ahmad to deliver his message..

**PERLE**: Ahmad says there's an operation that's been compromised. He had flown from London for that specific purpose without a meeting, and it had to happen.

**KAZIMI**: Did Ahmad know that you're friends of John Deutch? How did he make this connection?

**PERLE**: You know, I'm not sure whether he knew that or not. And John asked Tenet to review it as well. So …

**KAZIMI**: But later years, Tenet would put out the message that Ahmad had contributed to it being compromised, which was a complete lie,…

**PERLE**: Yes, a complete lie and not a shred of evidence.

**KAZIMI**: We have the evidence to the contrary because we have the regime's files on it, that shows a different …

**PERLE**: It was, it was part of the campaign against Ahmad.

**KAZIMI**: So I'm interested in how these networks of relationships were leveraged to do two things. So, starting out from the starting point of 1997, 1998 is a big year of your contribution to this story. But you had to shoot down containment, the idea that Saddam can be tethered down, it's something that actually you'd be arguing for …

**PERLE**: For a long time and it later became he's in a box. That was the shorthand for it.

**KAZIMI**: And the other part of this is that the INC is an alternative to Saddam, and not just to Saddam, to the CIA's strategy of coups, and things like that. So, what I'd like to do is go back now in revisiting this, is what was Chalabi's in terms of networking. For example, he had, he had Jim Hoagland. He had a way to get to Peter Jennings and what was yours? And was Chalabi part of your toolbox, or was he a partner in this?

**PERLE**: I believed in his view, we shared a common view, and I believed in him as a leader and in the INC, in the INC had everything you would want: the diversity, secular, religious, Sunni, Shia, all walks of life. I saw it in action in meetings in London and was impressed with the stability of the conversation, the intelligence of the conversation. There was never any doubt that it was Ahmed's organization, that was clear. But their vision was my vision. And Ahmed was a man, as we know, of extraordinary intelligence and depth and knowledge on all things. We spent a fair amount…

**KAZIMI**: You first meet him in 1985, and we were discussing this, you can't remember who initiated it?

**PERLE**: Whether it was Bernard Lewis or Albert Wohlstetter, or both because if Bernard and Albert met him at about the same time and I was in touch with both,…

**KAZIMI**: It turns out Bernard would meet him in [19]91.

**PERLE**: So, it must have been it must have been Albert.

**KAZIMI**: And the Albert's connection is?

**PERLE**: I don't know how Albert met him, but I know he was immediately very high on him as he would be, because of just, Ahmed's sheer intellectual power.

**KAZIMI**: So, it doesn't go back to the University of Chicago days, you think?

**PERLE**: I don't believe it does.

**KAZIMI**: So, in 1998, there's a conscious decision that... So, it's not anymore that maybe we can win over this new director of the CIA, no this is going to be a domestic political issue where the Republicans, along with some sympathetic Democrats, are going to use this to, uh, are going to use this against Clinton, Sandy Berger, George Tenet, Anthony Lake, and that whole crew, who pushed things in this direction?

**PERLE**: We thought of it less as an instrument to bludgeon the Clinton people and more as a source of pressure on them to change the policy. I mean, we were not happy, of course, when our letter got such short shrift, not even a serious examination. I'd been through that once before when I when I was working for Scoop. Scoop wrote, I mean, I largely drafted a memo that he was very happy with on how to handle the, when Clinton, when Carter came in on how to handle the negotiations with the Soviets. And it was a detailed memo, I hope it survives somewhere. I think it was a really good memo. I worked very hard on it. Scoop, of course, was quite willing to pass it along to Clinton [Carter], which he did. And he got a letter, I believe I have a xerox of the handwritten letter from Clinton [Carter] back thanking him for it and saying, he was asking his director of arms control, Paul Warnke, one of whom we were very critical, to review it. And at that point, I knew it was dead. You know, we'd sent this potentially important document hoping that it would move policy and it didn't. And so here we are again sending a letter hoping it will move policy. We weren't deeply hostile to the to the administration. We didn't agree much with them. And if you ask me about the individuals, I can tell you what I found wanting in them. That's easy to do. But we were, this wasn't just a political effort to embarrass them, or we were trying to get them to look at this alternative view because the view that they had adopted was to leave things as they were. And we saw the sanctions falling apart. We saw that the international support for isolating Saddam, falling away and believed that this was a better course. And I don't know that we could have imagined the better course until we ran into Ahmed and the INC. But here was a group of people who wanted to do what we thought was the right thing. And so, it was not a difficult choice to endorse them.

**KAZIMI**: So, in [19]98 is bookended by the Monica Lewinsky scandal. And this White House, the Clinton White House is feeling besieged. And if your intention was not hostile, they sensed that, they interpreted as hostile, they were in that mindset of paranoia. But in that very busy February let's see what would happen. So, it starts off with your opening salvo: 'No More Halfway Measures', you wrote that in *The Washington Post* and you say that "as long as Saddam remains in power, it is idle to believe that this threat can be contained. That is why even a massive bombing campaign will fail, unless it is part of an overall strategy to destroy his regime by helping the nascent democratic opposition in Iraq to transform itself into Iraq's new government." Then, you list the same conditions for victory or for success that you had in that letter to Sandy Berger, uh to Clinton. And you say that U.S. recognition of the opposition give them the U.N. seat, billions in frozen assets, lift the sanctions off Kurdistan, media support, logistical support, military equipment, use air power to defend…cloud seeding these ideas into the conversation. In that same month in February, there's a Munich Security Conference and you traveled with Chuck Hagel and John McCain. And you'll also hear this is not the first time you travel with John McCain. In the 1970s there was a trip through the Middle East. You went to Saudi Arabia, I think in Iran and Israel, who was John McCain then?

**PERLE**: John, was the Senate liaison, the Navy Senate liaison. I don't think he was even the most senior of the Navy Senate liaison. Scoop Jackson had known his father, who commanded U.S. forces in the Pacific. And so, Scoop, as he tended to do, kind of took John under his wing. And of course, he was a hero and they liked each other. And so when Scoop traveled and the Navy was providing the liaison officer to travel with him, he would always request John. And so I got to know John pretty well.

**KAZIMI**: He was going to be one of the sponsors of the Iraq Liberation Act, because I'm thinking of, as you're putting together, as the two networks are merging, yours and Chalabi's. I mean, Tenet has a network in the Senate. He was a staffer there, and he has a lot of friends. Um, it's sizing up to be quite a standoff of where…

**PERLE**: I don't know what Tenet's views were before he becomes the head of the CIA. I just don't know. I never discussed it with him. I knew what his views were on arms control issues.

**KAZIMI**: I think his trajectory, his upward trajectory shows that not many people knew what his views were and they couldn't really place him.

**PERLE**: He was… Bush W was bound to be attracted to Tenet. I mean, he was slick, he was a hearty fellow well-met, a back slapper, had a good sense of humor, was a good raconteur, the kind of person that Bush would really like.

**KAZIMI**: Since we're talking about him now, he's also a demonstrated fabricator. He starts off his memoirs relating an anecdote about you…

**PERLE**: Yes, yes.

**KAZIMI**: This is the first chapter in his memoir about his career and it's a fabrication.

**PERLE**: A complete fabrication. I pick up this book. And he begins the book by saying he ran into me on September 12th, the day after the September 11 and early in the morning in the West Wing, at the entrance to the West Wing, the White House. And he says in the book, I'm asking myself, what is Perle doing here on this day of all days? I was in France on that day, right! So when this was pointed out to me…

**KAZIMI**: You had alibi…

**PERLE**: I had an alibi, when it was pointed out to Tenet that I was in France, he says, well, maybe I got the date wrong, but the essence of the piece was on this day of all days, I mean, he didn't get it wrong. It was just false. Never to the best of my knowledge, never apologized to me.

**KAZIMI**: He quotes you as saying that we need to get Saddam and he was taken back by this why you're talking about Saddam right now, on this day, in this hour, God knows who you spoke to in the White House about this. The implication was that you got to the President before the Director of Intelligence could do that.

**PERLE**: No, I did not rush to the conclusion that Saddam was behind 9/11. I thought we should explore not as in a forensic sense of whether Saddam was responsible. I didn't believe he was, but I thought it was important as we decided what to do with Iraq down the line, to understand what connections there were, if any, both in terms of weapons of mass destruction and the connection to terrorist organizations

**KAZIMI**: On WMD also, you're always about capacity and intent rather than the actual stuff.

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: And, we're getting ahead of ourselves in the story. But now, as I look back at it, so your whole thing throughout your arms control career is your point, is that verification is very hard to do. And without verification, you can't have arms control.

**PERLE**: Sometimes it's impossible to do. And I had seen again and again I'd seen the CIA get it wrong and the most dramatic example of their getting it wrong in my recollection was their last estimate of the East German economy before the Soviet Union collapsed. They put the East German GDP as comparable to the West German GDP, roughly the same.

**KAZIMI**: That's not what you remember Walter telling you about how he lived his life?

**PERLE**: No. Walter had come to Berlin for food. He lived in Mecklenburg, which was an agricultural area, and he and his wife and daughter got on his motorcycle and came to Berlin because they couldn't get enough to eat in Mecklenburg.

**KAZIMI**: I remember they required permits to travel inside of the country. So, as you say, verification is at the heart of arms control, and here we have Saddam throwing out UNSCOM and doing all sorts, which is something that's also happening in 1998. And who's better to make the case about verification and arms control than you, right? It was auspicious that this was also the thing that you can grab at with Saddam in the conversation.

**PERLE**: Well, we knew a fair amount about Saddam's mendacity and the perfidy, that was sort of general knowledge, but when you were trying to get a specific thing like; did he have WMD, it helped to have had some experience looking at issues like that in a different context. And you knew how hard it was to get exact evidence.

**KAZIMI**: When you'd be skeptical about it, people would listen to you, because of that past?

**PERLE**: I was skeptical about the people who were forming the judgments of the CIA. I remember the CIA observing because we, the satellites were very good. There was a complicated arms control issue related to SALT that had to do with the test launchers that were not counted in the permitted level of launchers and the Soviets had a fair number of test launchers. Well, the question at one point arose, how do we know these are test launchers and not operational? So, satellite imagery revealed, and I don't remember whether I got this from Sullivan, but satellite imagery revealed that every time there was a heavy snow, the Soviets were removing the snow over the launchers. Now, you don't do that if it's not an operational launcher, you wait until the snow melts. Right. You wait until there's a necessity to go to an individual launcher. But they were clearing the snow off all these test launchers. And I know there were 110 of them or something which made a difference. The CIA refused to accept that this constituted a violation of the SALT agreement. And their explanation was that clearing snow was the responsibility of the base commander. And you cannot conclude on the basis that that was done, that this was a deliberate violation and that the missiles in those silos were, in fact, operational missiles. So this is what you're up against; an Agency that was more inventive than the Soviets were at finding explanation for their bad behavior. And I'd seen that again and again. I argued it again and again in endless interagency meetings. So, I was I was not comfortable with the CIA's analytic capabilities, except in the narrow area of scientific and technical intelligence. And when it came to anything political or economic, they were hopeless. They thought the Soviet economy was steadily growing. And when it was imploding and the, there were some skeptics, not many, but of course, I ended up knowing them all because that's how Washington works. And I would read their assessments, the skeptics, and they were really very convincing. But the Agency was immovable on this stuff. By the way, when David Sullivan came to me with a

dissenting view, I took it seriously. And because it was such a carefully researched and reasoned paper, it really confirmed my view of the capabilities of the agency to get it right.

**KAZIMI**: So, right after you published the letter, maybe I think on the day and the Op-Ed comes out in *The Washington Post*, your op-ed, you hold an AEI conference with Chalabi, the American Enterprise Institute, you after that wraps up, you take him to the House Republican Policy Committee, this is Chris Cox at the time.

**PERLE**: Right.

**KAZIMI**: A lot of important staffers start noticing Chalabi and one of them is Steve Rademaker. The following month, Chalabi testifies in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with, I think it was Sam Brownback presiding. Now this is all sort of one thing is leading into another, and it's all choreographed, almost perfectly. I mean, starting out from trying to get Sandy Berger to respond to something and then ending up with the Iraq Liberation Act, which is a unanimous vote in the Senate, and then 360 verses 38 in the House. Uh, this is radical. It's the first time anything, any kind of legislation like this has ever been written. It's committing the United States, uh, through an act of Congress to, to overthrow Saddam. This is the policy now, um, this, this is like alchemy here. This is, this is magic. It's never been done before. To your knowledge, has anything like this done before?

**PERLE**: Not that I'm aware of.

**KAZIMI**: You know, you would be aware of something like that. At least 20th century history. Uh, now back in the days when you were in arms control with Scoop Jackson at DOD, somebody had quipped that you're clever at stopping things and things can, you know how to put sticks into the spokes of wheels and make the bureaucracy or the legislative end of things, you know, just sort of, uh, be a dead weight against things moving towards what these other people were trying to achieve. All right. Now before the ILA, happened, the Iraq Liberation Act, the House and the Senate even passed a material breach resolution against Iraq, uh over the VX story which came out of course in *The Washington Post*, also with Jim Hoagland as his byline. So, Scott Ritter is also being choreographed with Ahmad. Scott

Ritter is hanging out in Ahmad's house, he's one of the lead UNSCOM people, and that this contributes actually to the regime, to Saddam, saying, oh, this is how you're going to do it? All right. So in August, he throws out UNSCOM, stops cooperating with inspectors. And of course, now, now it's all building up into a crescendo. I got to see some of that. And my impression of those days is that you're there as a maestro, as a choreographer. Right? Before you say that, because this is my impression. Just my look, it, uh, and I'm just asking you from a purely operative vantage point. If you're not you and somebody, a historian is looking at this, was this you at your finest and ablest, in terms of technical ability and making Washington work?

**PERLE**: Yeah look, there were a great many other people involved. I think I was pretty good at sensing an opportunity, knowing who to introduce to whom, because networking in Washington is really important, getting people together to produce a letter or a barrage of Op-Eds. But I think you make it sound as if there were a maestro there, and there really wasn't. There were people with a common view acting independently, but willing to act in concert, on a letter, on a hearing on...So I was kind of in the center of some of that. But I ask myself this: if I hadn't been there, would the outcome have been significantly different? And I don't think it would.

**KAZIMI**: I strongly disagree. And I think Ahmad Chalabi would have strongly disagreed. Actually, I know that Ahmad Chalabi would have strongly disagreed. Because that's what he left me with, a very strong impression that this is the man, this is why this is happening. So, all right. Now what ends up happening is that what you warned about in that op-ed, which is a massive military strike with no strategic vision, does happen, that's Desert Fox in December 1998, uh, people started accusing the Clinton administration of trying to misdirect from the Lewinsky scandal. And that, you know, that's four days of bombing, intense bombing, not helping an Iraqi opposition, not doing anything much, just, you know, bringing down buildings and stationary targets.

**PERLE**: Yeah, I don't think it… I don't think it had any kinetic consequence.

**KAZIMI**: Now you realize that this administration is not going to do anything, uh, you're starting to look forward to the election for the 2000 election that's shaping up as what's happening on the Republican primary, what's happening on the Democratic front, maybe even on the Democratic primary, because I found a transcript of a meeting where there's an INC delegation, Jalal Talabani is part of it, Ahmad Chalabi naturally, and a lot of other people are, uh, and they're about to go meet Al Gore, Vice President Al Gore, who's going to be running against George W Bush, and in it, Ahmad Chalabi says this meeting is happening because of Richard Perle. And then I start putting two and two together because there's another part: Leon Fuerth comes in and he's the National Security Adviser to Al Gore. And apparently. Okay, so how does that happen?

**PERLE**: I don't recall. And it's because I don't recall a matter like that that I say to you, there were so many people involved, so many moving parts.

**KAZIMI**: But Leon Fuerth was your friend?

**PERLE**: Yes, he was a friend and colleague. We weren't terribly close because we differed pretty fundamentally on the arms control issues. But I kind of liked him and I can well imagine phoning Leon and saying, look, you really ought to listen to this guy. But I don't I don't recall it.

**KAZIMI**: So Al Gore is going to run with, uh, Joe Lieberman. Um, now, I know that Joe Lieberman is brought in by Max Singer, but who brings in Max Singer? Was it you?

**PERLE**: I don't recall. I mean, I knew Max and liked him a lot..

**KAZIMI**: Great guy and I hope also to give him attention in this project. Um, who brought in Tom Lantos?

**PERLE**: Probably Steve Solarz.

**KAZIMI**: That makes sense. Uh, um, I have a bunch of these questions. Who brought the Judge William Clarke?

**PERLE**: Not me, I didn't have a close relationship with Clarke. Um, I mean, I knew him, but not very well. It could well have been someone that that you haven't mentioned at all: Sven Kraemer.

**KAZIMI**: I don't even know this name.

**PERLE**: Very important person who was on the National Security Council staff.

**KAZIMI**: In the Reagan years?

**PERLE**: In the Reagan years and was tireless in in advancing the Reagan agenda and became very skillful at working issues at the National Security Council. He was a very interesting guy, I mean, he was the son of the of a man named Fritz Kraemer, who Henry Kissinger says 'found Henry Kissinger.' I mean, Fritz kind of plucked Henry from an obscure position in the Army, I mean, it's such a tangle, isn't it? But anyway, Sven could well have. He was close to Judge Clarke.

**KAZIMI**: And he was also involved in trying to push this INC..

**PERLE**: He was sympathetic to it. I, I really don't recall how much time he devoted to it, but I know he was sympathetic. And because he was close to Clarke, it's entirely possible that Sven was involved in that way. But again, I don't I just don't recall.

**KAZIMI**: What about Dewey Claridge?

**PERLE**: Dewey Claridge was a good friend of Michael Ledeen's.

**KAZIMI**: And you brought in Michael Ledeen?

**PERLE**: We were very close friends and remain close friends to this day. And Michael was a given. I mean, he was he was with this from the very beginning.

**KAZIMI**: Simone was my next-door neighbor in Brandeis, the housing. Um, what about Wayne Downing?

**PERLE**: Uh, yeah, I, I'm trying to recall how I met him, but I vaguely recall pushing him to be involved,…

**KAZIMI**: Because these names are going to matter, Wayne Downing, four-star General. Gravitas,…

**PERLE**: What I think we were looking for with Wayne Downing was validation for the concept or the concept laid out in our,..

**KAZIMI**: The ink blot.

**PERLE**: The ink blot.

**KAZIMI**: But Dewey Claridge also brings in a lot of other, authentication of these ideas…

**PERLE**: I would guess, Michael Ledeen and or, Barbara Ledeen. Barbara's a fabulous networker and knows everybody and she, she was almost certainly involved, although I don't recall the details.

**KAZIMI**: What about Bob Kerrey? Who brings in Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska?

**PERLE**: Yeah, he kind of identified himself. I mean, he publicly said he supported going after the regime.

**KAZIMI**: He came to the INC conference here in New York in 1999. I think that might have been Chris Straub, his aide who…

**PERLE**: Yeah, could well have been.

**KAZIMI**: I think Ahmad starts knowing in the late 1980s. So, these are friendships that go back?

**PERLE**: A lot of them go back a long way.

**KAZIMI**: Chalabi was taking on your friends, you were taking on his friends, uh, but he was taking on your enemies and you were taking on his enemies too. One of your enemies was Sam Nunn?

**PERLE**: Uh, you know, for a long time, that wasn't the case. And Sam Nunn was on the subcommittee, Scoop's subcommittee where we were organizing hearings and so forth. When Nunn came to the Senate, Scoop mentored him, and he said to me, I want you to coach him on arms control. He didn't know anything about arms control. And I liked Sam Nunn. He was smart and capable. We had a very sudden falling out, which I would never have anticipated, it wasn't over a policy question, although he became more and more enthusiastic for arms control than I was. But the falling out came when and when I left government in 1987. And a story was leaked to the *Washington Post*, I think, that I had agreed with Random House to write a novel after I left and Nunn without ever calling me, and I knew him well enough, so that the right thing to do would have been to call me, denounced this, and made it sound as though I was going to reveal secrets. And it was I don't know what it was very sudden, and I did not expect it.

**KAZIMI**: Nunn is head of Armed Services until 1997, so it's auspicious that he leaves as this new thing. Chalabi's enemies are more current in their ability to do damage in those years, especially from the CIA. Three years to the date, you're going to right a fax or send a fax a four page fax on February 19th, 2002 to Rumsfeld, I believe, I'm gonna quote you, you're going to say, "To defame, to defame Chalabi, they have resorted to lies and character assassination in a shocking scale. You have, you would have enough confidence, in my judgment, considering the time and attention I have devoted to this matter, to come down on my side of this." Uh, you're asking Don Rumsfeld, he's about ten years older than you.

And, uh, uh, when Schlesinger is fired, Ford fires him, he comes in as Secretary of Defense. There's somebody within you peer group, your age peer group in the Ford administration; that's Dick Cheney, uh, he's chief of staff. So again, these are friendships and relationships. Uh, let's not call them friendships, relationships of respect, of, uh, of appreciating that when you're saying I have put time and effort and attention into this matter telling you this guy is being wronged, Rumsfeld will pay attention to what you're saying, so did Dick Cheney. How come another friend of yours, uh, Colin Powell, did not hear you out when you were vouching for Chalabi?

**PERLE**: You know, I don't remember discussing it with Colin. Colin, Colin would have listened to what I had to say if, in fact, I was arguing that with, uh, with Colin. But I later on, when Colin is Secretary of State, I didn't have the, our relationship had changed and I could not have sent that memo for example, to Colin.

[Chatter with cameraman]

**KAZIMI**: So, Colin Powell, uh, this was no ordinary friendship. Like, this was not just a relation... he was a friend?

**PERLE**: He was a friend. He was at my house in France. I was many times with him in Washington. Leslie and Alma were friends. No, this was a very difficult …

**KAZIMI**: Rupture…

**PERLE**: Breach with Colin over Iraq and Colin, and I understand why he reacted the way he did now, I didn't then. I was very vocal about this. And I had no real authority to purport to reflect the views of the government of the United States. But Colin saw me frequently on television arguing for my view on this, and I was chairman of an advisory group, which was not an important institution in any sense, made no decisions, met infrequently and so...

**KAZIMI**: You made it important…

**PERLE**: Well, nobody ever knew about it until I chaired and but I tried to make it less bureaucratic.

**KAZIMI**: This is the Defense Policy Board?

**PERLE**: The Defense Policy Board. Yeah. I mean, I'd been on the board as a member and typically a meeting consisted of some Pentagon officials briefing the board on various things going on. They never brought in outsiders. And I thought this is a very important group of people. It was Kissinger and Schlesinger and Jim Woolsey and former chief of, several former chiefs of their services. And I thought, I guess it went back to my days working for Scoop, where we organize seminars because we thought people we thought people had something important to say and it should be heard. So I started this practice of bringing in outsiders, and it was, by and large, greatly appreciated by the board. So, but on Colin, so Colin, I understand Colin sees this person who has no decision-making authority, arguing a position that is not the official position of the government of the United States. And I think it annoyed him a lot.

**KAZIMI**: I mean, but he's no stranger to the politics of it. I mean, he's in uniform. He's, uh, uh, Pentagon liaison to the, to Caspar Weinberger, right?

**PERLE**: He was his military assistant.

**KAZIMI**: Yes, military assistant, then he is Deputy National Security Adviser. Then he becomes National Security Advisor. So, he's in the thick of things. He understands how Washington works. This is his friend, Richard Perle, and he's talking up this this plan. Colin Powell at that point is not in government, all right, that he's because the Bush administration still hasn't come into play, I'm talking about 1998-2000.

**PERLE**: Oh, okay.

**PERLE**: Even Richard Armitage who what? He was his friend, his sidekick. What do you want to call him? He's one of the signatories to that letter.

**PERLE**: Yes. I mean, Armitage just flip flopped.

**KAZIMI**: Well, there are theories about why that happened. Uh, but yeah, so. But you don't you don't think it was politics, Colin Powell, because Colin Powell was also hearing the distant thunder coming from George H.W. Bush through Jim Baker, through Brent Scowcroft. They're sending a very clear message, don't do Saddam. This is prior to 9/11 and then it comes out even into the pages of the press after 9/11, as it's clear that George W Bush is going to go and try to overthrow Saddam. So, you don't think Powell was picking up on the signals from Brent Scowcroft?

**PERLE**: Yes, of course he was. And Brent Scowcroft was very active on the other side. My ..

**KAZIMI**: You never liked these guys?

**PERLE**: I never liked I never liked Scowcroft. I never liked Baker. HW was okay, but I didn't like that when he became President - only because he had been Ronald Reagan's vice president, he immediately threw out all the Reagan people, not me, I was already gone but…

**KAZIMI**: Quick recap how come when Carter comes in, how come he doesn't bring in a Scoop Jackson's people? He is a Democrat. Scoop is a Democrat, the most influential Democrat on foreign policy?

**PERLE**: It's an interesting question. I remember a conversation with Scoop in which I was urging him to sit down with Carter and make some points and specific points. And he said he said he'll just turn it over to …and then he mentioned one of the various aides to Clinton, to Carter. He said he'll just turn it over to whoever it was. I forgot most of the names now. So it's really pointless. I mean, he had no confidence that Carter would process what he said, which I suppose is why Scoop's initial effort to win Carter over on the arms control issue, took the form of a very careful and lengthy memo rather than going down to talk to him.

**KAZIMI**: Going back also to those years when you're trying to push the INC plan, why was AIPAC and Israel, why were they? You couldn't, you never have managed to win them over on

Chalabi and Iraq. And that would have made life easier in the Senate, in different places in Washington?

**PERLE**: I think the Israelis were not eager to go after Saddam. They understood the threat coming from Iran. And while they weren't doing anything about it, they were pretty focused on it. And so they, uh, they were not interested. I remember appealing to Rabin unsuccessfully on a visit to, uh, to Israel. I could not get the Israelis interested in concern about Saddam. And I think they thought he's a horrible person, but as we look at the things that threaten Israel, he's not high on the list.

**KAZIMI**: Let's just put the rest to things. Um, my colleague brought it up, so a lot of people just threw the tag of Likudnik on you, it's rubbish. Would you like to say anything about this? Are you Likudnik?

**PERLE**: Well, my two closest Israeli friends in political life were Amos Eiran, who was a leader in the Histadrut and was in Washington as the labor attaché, but in fact, he was really working Capitol Hill. And Rabin. I became quite friendly with Rabin when he was Israeli ambassador. Likudnik?!

**KAZIMI**: You never met Ariel Sharon?

**PERLE**: I met him once and I didn't like him much…

**KAZIMI**: Why?

**PERLE**: Because I thought he was arrogant.

**KAZIMI**: What about Benyamin Netanyahu, another arrogant guy?

**PERLE**: I didn't react to him the same way I reacted…, Sharon, there was an element of bluster and that was never true with, with Bibi.

**KAZIMI**: Bibi is smart enough to understand that he needs you...

**PERLE**: Bibi is smart. When Rabin was ambassador, one of Scoop's missions was to engage senior U.S. military people with the Israelis. And he worked rather hard at that and was proud of having established a lot of significant connections between Rabin and senior military people.

**KAZIMI**: One thing I saw mentioned is that you attribute to Scoop an interest in Israel rather than your own Jewish background.

**PERLE**: It's true. I never had much interest in Israel. When I was a student in London, my parents went to Israel, and they invited me to join them, and I turned it down. My first visit to Israel was in 1970 when I went there with Scoop. No, Scoop was a Semitophile, there's no question about that.

**KAZIMI**: He is a Norwegian American.

**PERLE**: He's a Norwegian. He used to talk about, he used to identify Israel with Norway, a small country in the case of Norway, a small country that by any standard of the social welfare was the ideal, but it was destroyed overnight by Nazis. And the lesson this left with him is you have to be strong to preserve your freedom. And in the endless debates about guns and butter, he was always driven by that sense that if you don't have the guns, they'll take away everything else. And so he identified with Israel as a small country, a beleaguered small country, and he was very keen on…

**KAZIMI**: It had the socialist tinge in it.

**PERLE**: Yes, that too.

**KAZIMI**: At the time. In later years, you've even disputed that there's such a thing as a neocon foreign policy. I mean, you're yeah, you're the sheikh, the mullah of the neocons. But you say you're saying that's not even a thing, you don't call yourself that.

**PERLE**: No. And I said this on one occasion in a in a public event in Washington, and I was stunned by the guffaws of laughter.

**KAZIMI**: At the National Interest, I think.

**PERLE**: Was that it?

**KAZIMI**: Yeah,

**PERLE**: What do the people who see in neocon foreign policy see? Well, the first thing they invariably say is it is a desire to democratize the world by force if necessary. I don't believe in that. And I don't believe that the neoconservatives I know, certainly not Paul Wolfowitz or Doug Feith or a great many…Harold Rhode, a great many others. I don't know anyone who believes that simple version, and it carries a sense of readiness to go to war, of a bellicosity. It's not part of my view of the world.

**KAZIMI**: And doing it on behalf of Israel and all the attachments…

**PERLE**: And there's all there, all of those suggestions, too. I mean, there's often an anti-Semitic tinge to this.

**KAZIMI**: The word cabal…

**KAZIMI**: So you're heading into 2000 this is prior to 9/11. It's already a very wide alliance. You're making the case containment doesn't work, here is Chalabi the alternative. I mean, you have Christopher Hitchens on one end soliciting donations through *The Nation* for the INC. I used to get checks for 10 to 12 and 17 dollars, you know, care of Christopher Hitchens,

**PERLE**: He was a remarkable person.

**KAZIMI**: When did you meet him and when did you became friend? Did you bond over his opinion of Kissinger?

**PERLE**: No, we never really...I can't recall ever really discussing Kissinger with him. I mean, I had problems with Kissinger, but not the same problems that that Christopher Hitchens had. No, I think we bonded when he was stunned to discover how many friends he lost by joining the opposition to Saddam. I don't think he ever anticipated the number of old friends who would never speak to him again.

**KAZIMI**: So, you have Christopher Hitchens. You have the Wall Street editorial board sorry, The *Wall Street Journal* editorial board. Um, there's Fouad Ajami, he's probably the one who got Chalabi to speak at CFR in 1991. That's how he meets Bernard Lewis. He walks up from the audience. Bernard Lewis had just a year prior written 'The Roots of Muslim Rage' at *The Atlantic*. So Bernard Lewis is saying there's a big storm coming, people, and that we need to have something to answer that. And he sees this living, talking, walking Middle Eastern democrat. But how does your relationship with Bernard…?

**PERLE**: With it, with a deep sense of Western civilization and, of course, the question of civilization is always important in Bernard's mind.

**KAZIMI**: Bernard arrives in the U.S. in… I forget which year, but when was your wedding?

**PERLE**: [19]77.

**KAZIMI**: So [19]75 he arrives, because two years later he's a guest at your wedding. Uh, how did that happen? How did that, uh. You spotted him; he comes to Washington. he gives, he speaks to that committee...

**PERLE**: I went. I went to a seminar that he addressed. There used to be a lot of those. They probably still are on the hill, but my guess now is that they're not that they're driven more by interested parties than by people wanting to learn. But in those days, there were lots of these things and I went along, and I can't recall ever having been as impressed by a man

giving a talk as I was when I listened to Bernard. He spoke not in sentences, not in paragraphs, but in pages without drawing breath. And if you had the manuscript in front of, you wouldn't make a single change. He was extraordinary, erudite, interesting, with a sense of humor. And I was mesmerized by Bernard. And the next day I went into the office, and I said to Scoop, I just heard this most remarkable man. I'd never heard of him before last night. And I think a day later we had him in the Scoop's office.

**KAZIMI**: He becomes a go guru to Scoop Jackson on Middle East.

**PERLE**: Yeah, yes.

**KAZIMI**: And a guru to you?

**PERLE**: Yes, very much. And to others. And to others, Moynihan…Pat Moynihan, Scoop introduces Bernard to Pat Moynihan. And I believe that Bernard, although he never told me I'm sorry, he never told me this, but I believe he had a hand in a number of Moynihan's speeches at the UN.

**KAZIMI**: So, uh, and of course, it helps that Bernard in [19]91 says your instinct about this Chalabi fellow is not misplaced.

**PERLE**: No, that was important to me. If Bernard had said, "Be careful about Chalabi," I would have taken that seriously.

**KAZIMI**: But I just want to just touch on how Chalabi looked at you. I mean, he's actually quoted saying that, uh, saying great things about you, but you know, you but what really got to me was when, uh, the Soviet coup of 1991 fails and he's somewhere in Spain on vacation, he finds a phone and he calls you and he says, "Congratulations." He's congratulating somebody that he understands as an architect of that moment. Uh uh, uh. He quotes you through Bonin's biography to say you're probably going to be the one, the only one who remembers this. Uh, let's set that moment aside. But I just wanted to say that when I read that, that was the clearest in my mind of understanding of how he looked upon you. And I

would describe it as a hero, because to him, I mean, regardless of where he stood on the Soviet Union and all that history, but there is a particular archetype from history who is this unsung character who manages to set historical inevitability into motion in furtherance of what they believed in, in their cause that he had to heroes from history. and he had two heroes from history: Alexander Helphand, Parvus was his pen name. He's the one who puts Lenin on that train. Uh uh, from Switzerland through Finland and back into Russia. Uh, there's another guy called Mohammad Sharif Al-Farouqi who is a second lieutenant or something and he defects at the Gallipoli to the British…and he tells them, Wait till you hear what I'm here to tell you, I have, I'm an emissary of the big conspiracy, like these conspirators in the picture, of these Arab nationalist officers throughout the Ottoman military, uh, and we have these secret organizations, and we are all ready to go if you support us to bring down the Ottoman Empire from within. And this is actually Lawrence of Arabia gets sent on that mission. This is the genesis of it, the British actually fund, bankroll through gold, contacts and ammunition the Arab nationalism. That's through this guy, Ahmed, I think would have understood you as one of these people who has set something very big in motion and brought it to victory, uh, of history. I mean, historically, the Leflers of the world may not understand where that fits, but to Ahmad it fits, and I think that was the biggest gratification of his life in 2003 when he can join this pantheon of heroes, when he can say that I believe in something, I've got things moving, all right… and it ended up brining down Saddam. So I just wanted you to know that. What do you think Ahmad saw in your apart from what I just said?

**PERLE**: Well at that point, a friend. I had become very fond of him, much of the time we spent together we were talking about other things because the breadth of his knowledge was really impressive. I'm sure he thought that I was able to help, and I'm honored that he would say what he said. I don't recall the conversation. I don't recall the phone call.

**KAZIMI**: Okay. By the way, what were these other topics that you would talk about? Art?

**PERLE**: Art, music. I would ask him questions about science because he had a way of explaining complicated things that made them comprehensible to a layman. I mean, we talked about pretty much everything. And I was successfully amazed at how much he knew about

subjects that had nothing to do with his formal education or his practical experience. No, he was a really cultivated, highly cultured man. So, one of the reasons why these descriptions of him rang so false, if you had known him, you would know that this was not the person that he was demonized to be by his opponents.

**KAZIMI**: Snake oil salesman, charlatan, Jay Gatsby of Iraq,…

**PERLE**: Yeah all of that.

**KAZIMI**: Thief! All right. So, in the 1980s, you're also overseeing the technology transfers, you lose few battles on, maybe all the battles, on tech exports to Saddam. Washington, DC is completely enamored of Nizar Hamdoon the ambassador, uh, it must have rankled, it was frustrating. You know, you had the memory of your friend Mullah Mustafa, uh, by the way, did the Barzanis stay in touch through the 80s?

**PERLE**: I made some visits to Kurdistan and always saw them.

**KAZIMI**: In the 1980s?

**PERLE**: Oh, in the 1980s? No, no. After,…

**KAZIMI**: Who was an ally on Iraq during those years in Washington when it was a very lonely group to be against Saddam?

**PERLE**: Well, we've talked about a great many of the people who were allies. I'm not sure I'm...

**KAZIMI**: We talked about 1990s, I'm talking about the 1980s, or it wasn't a priority?

**PERLE**: Yes. It wasn't an issue that the country was confronting. So, there were not a lot of allies. But in the beginning, it was rather more narrowly focused on the plight of the Kurds. But there weren't many allies. There wasn't much activity,…

**KAZIMI**: Just the collapse of the Soviet Union, uh, Ahmed is claiming that he called you. You don't remember it. Did you feel that it was vindication when it happened?

**PERLE**: I thought that it was vindication of Ronald Reagan's break with all of his predecessors who all believed that the single most in, from the 1950s on, that the single most important task of American diplomacy and the challenge of the American president was to find a way to get along with the Soviets. And Ronald Reagan comes along and says, basically; I don't want to get along with them. They're not inevitable. Let's see if we can bring about their entirely justified demise. This was a radical departure from all previous, and one of the reasons and why I believe, why he encountered such resistance in governmental institutions; the State Department, the Pentagon, the Treasury, all of them, is that it was so radical and so new, and they had all bought into the idea that getting along with the Soviets is the mission. *Detente* was one expression of it. Sometimes it was called coexistence, but suddenly there's a president who talks about them as an evil empire, who understands the fragility of the of the regime's grasp on the sentiments of ordinary Russians. And he's waging a political war and other aspects and economic war. He's rearming the country. He's breaking completely with the tradition he inherited.

**KAZIMI**: So, there's this intense focus over generations on the Soviet threat, uh, a lot of people didn't see the collapse coming. You were the few that anticipated it.

**PERLE**: I didn't see the collapse come in either. No, I really didn't.

**KAZIMI**: Oh you didn't! Were you surprised by it?

**PERLE**: But I knew that. I knew that they were not nearly as formidable as they were portrayed, but I didn't see the collapse. I have friends who saw it, but I didn't see it.

**KAZIMI**: Who saw it?

**PERLE**: Harry Rowen, who was, who had a career in government and was president of the RAND Corporation, and later a professor at Stanford. He saw it. I think Albert [Wohlstetter]

expected it, but I didn't. I mean, I thought that in the end we would prevail. But it came sooner than I expected.

**KAZIMI**: But in [19]92, you publish your novel, *Hard Line*. It's a completely different world. And like within one or two or three years, it's as if that whole thing with Russia, with the Soviet Union was ancient history?

**PERLE**: Yes. Was not good for the sales of my novel either that it came out at exactly the wrong time. A Cold War novel as the Cold War is ending!

**KAZIMI**: Yeah, it's a disinterested world in the novel, and it's exemplified by Bill Clinton, right? I mean, he is now this this face of a of a very different Washington. Even Strobe Talbott, he was Clinton's Rhodes Scholar buddy, I mean they were in that same batch. He becomes the Undersecretary of State. I mean, he was he translated Khrushchev into English. And it's a different world, he's the one who wrote about you, who glamorized your story and your rivalry with Richard Burt. That must have seemed very strange to you?

**PERLE**: It was a very abrupt shift from the world that I'd worked hard in, to a world that was gone. I mean, I never believed I'd go to Moscow, except as part of an official delegation. By the way, I had an extraordinary experience in Moscow, which I think is sort of worth recording. It's after the collapse. I'm in my hotel room and I get a call from a stranger who says he is a general in the GRU, and he needs to talk to me urgently. I've always had an open door for people, even some who've turned out to be not worth the time, because I'm just fascinated by people who have something urgent to say. So, I invite him up, we sit down, and he tells me the following. He says, we know, of course, that you Americans know about our secret stockpiles, but there is one secret stockpile that you don't know about. And he starts to tell me about the massive quantities of war material that had been produced in the Soviet days. Everything imaginable, all the natural resources, machine tooling and everything for another war-oriented economy. And then he said, I've come to see you because it is being stolen. It's the property of the Russian people, and they're stealing it every day. You've got to do something about it. I said, and it was a very convincing story that this huge stockpile of copper and aluminum and titanium and all the rest was being sold off by scoundrels who

were getting rich. And there was this burst of oligarchs. So, I said, Look I'm going to see the American ambassador tomorrow, I will raise it with him. It was Bob Strauss who was the ambassador. I was due to have a coffee with him and I told him the story and he said he would make sure that Yeltsin was apprised of this. And this general said nobody is telling the truth about this because they're robbing the nation blind. Amazing story.

**KAZIMI**: This Robert Strauss who was ambassador to Turkey also?

**PERLE**: No, no, no. Robert Strauss, who was a major Democrat, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. You're thinking of uhh…

**KAZIMI**: He has an Austro-Hungarian name…

**PERLE**: Yes. Strausz-Hupé, who was a remarkable guy, by the way.

**KAZIMI**: Well, that's a good segue way into Turkey here. I mean, you worked with him. He was a, uh, and you described him in a speech you gave in his honor, uh, that he was one of the few State Department people who worked fruitfully with you on a strategy for Turkey, integrating Turkey better to defense against the Soviet Union at the time. But…

**PERLE**: He did something really extraordinary, he said to me, we have been trying to negotiate the the next iteration of the U.S. Turkish base agreement. And he said and we've been at it for three years without success. He said, I think you should take a crack at it. And I said, The State Department will never allow that. And he said, well, let me give it a try. And he enabled it, enabled me to pursue this. Dick Clarke came along on the various delegations that I headed, and we got the agreement. It took about a year, but this was, he was a professor of history and he'd been ambassador in Brussels and in Sri Lanka, and he was not a person of the State Department. And he correctly understood that an agreement on American military bases in Turkey, which at that time were exceedingly important, Incirlik and so forth, had to be done by someone who had a relationship with the military. And one of the first things I did when I became assistant secretary was establish a U.S. Turkish working group. I was the chairman on the American side and the Chief of Staff of the Turkish

Armed Forces was on their side and we met frequently. And it was a very fruitful collaboration because the emphasis prior to that had all been on the diplomatic side. And in those days, the Turkish General Saff meant something. So, I knew and worked with all of the senior military and Strausz-Hupé correctly anticipated that I might be able to get this treaty agreed.

**KAZIMI**: And eventually, you're going to meet somebody who you become very enamored of, which is Turgut Özal.

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: Now, my question is, now we're going to talk about that beyond 2003, because let me just understand this characterization, and you can; but your position has always been our mistake was in 2003 we bring down Saddam and we should have just turned things over to Chalabi. Now I wondering where does that come in? Because you knew Chalabi, the revolutionary Chalabi, the intellectual. But what, I mean, you have no idea if Chalabi can pull something like this off a very difficult country and try to fix a very difficult, but you had an example of the transformative, energetic statesman in Turgut Özal and what he can do with him and his young staffer, uh, is that how you saw it?

**PERLE**: Well, I, I saw Özal transforms Turkey in many ways, I remember him saying that one of the first things he did was repeal the law on smuggling because he said this traffic across the border is not smuggling, it's business, it's commerce. It's absurd to make it illegal. So, he changed the law so that it was now legal. And he said it took months before the various authorities stopped arresting people coming across the border with suitcases and he had to lecture them all the time. He said, this is not this is not criminal activity. This is commerce. We need commerce. No, he was a remarkable guy.

**KAZIMI**: He became a friend.

**PERLE**: And he became a friend. Well, when I was involved in the negotiations on American bases in Turkey, which were called NATO bases, but they were really American bases. He was very much involved in the negotiation.

**KAZIMI**: Beyond government, you also helped advised him how to raise Turkey's profile in Washington?

**PERLE**: I was as helpful as I could be. I thought he was …you know, it was commonplace to talk about Turkey as the exception in the Muslim world. It's a democracy, it's modernizing. And he was and that was essentially true of Özal. And it's no longer true, of course, under Erdogan. And that really, we've seen a terrible transformation in Turkey from the Özal days. And in fact, the people who followed Ozal were nowhere near had, nowhere near his capabilities. So, it deteriorated until Erdogan came in and now it's gone completely.

**KAZIMI**: So Ozal dies in [19]93. And there's a there's an interesting correlation here because conspiracy theories came up that he was poisoned uh propagated by some people. It's very interesting that a lot of Iraqis believe Chalabi was poisoned also. So, but did you help, did you make introductions for Chalabi with the Turks?

**PERLE**: I don't believe I did.

**KAZIMI**: So, there's Mehmet Bey Eymur of MiT, do you know whom I'm talking about?

**PERLE**: No

**KAZIMI**: So that wasn't you.

**PERLE**: That wasn't me.

**KAZIMI**: The testimony to your effectiveness in the months right before the war, 2003, Saddam was trying to talk to you, the Saddam regime.

**PERLE**: You know, I've never really gotten to the bottom of what that was all about!

**KAZIMI**: They sent to two different emissaries, one a Lebanese, Imad Al-Hage, and one Harb Al-Zuheir, a Saudi, through Khashoggi.

**PERLE**: Uh, so he's the one I saw in France?

**KAZIMI**: Yes, in Marseille.

**PERLE**: In Marseille, yeah.

**KAZIMI**: And again, you just said that you're always interested in hearing people with urgent messages.

**PERLE**: How could I turn this down? I mean, I was out of office, but how could it..

**KAZIMI**: Clearly the regime thought that you're the guy to talk to! You're the guy who could roll back this drive to war, uh, so that's at least the Saddam regime understood that much. Uh, you had, uh, Hassan Azbeh Theleg Al-Ubaidi, Taher Jalil Habboush, hatha Mukharbat [i.e., He is an Iraqi Intelligence] running, trying to run this Imad Al-Hage. I mean, their interest in him was that he had met you, and that he wanted, they wanted him to see you again, but they wanted, through him and through you to talk to the CIA, right?

**PERLE**: Or to the U.S. government. And I reported it back to, sorry?

**KAZIMI**: To Buzzy Krongard.

**PERLE**: Yes, Buzzy Krongard.

**KAZIMI**: Who was number three at the CIA.

**PERLE**: Yes, I think that was it.

**KAZIMI**: He was a friend of yours also?

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: All right Uh, auspiciously for everybody involved, at least for me, he said, uh, it's too late. Tell them we will see them in Baghdad.

**PERLE**: Yes, that's exactly what he said. But the offer didn't sound credible anyway, what they were saying was Saddam was prepared to leave the country, and I didn't really take that seriously.

**KAZIMI**: Not only that, but they were also even saying, bring in American companies for oil development, and we'll talk about joining the peace process with Israel!

**PERLE**: It was very extravagant.

**KAZIMI**: Was it too good to be true?

**PERLE**: But the idea that Saddam would leave Iraq sort of colored everything else in the package.

**KAZIMI**: So you listened politely?

**PERLE**: I listened politely, and I was rewarded for that by a malicious attack by Seymour Hersh.

**KAZIMI**: Well, it is it was Prince Bandar through Seymour Hersh. Uh, probably some sort of payback for Laurent [Murawiec].

**PERLE**: I think that may have been the motivation, because I had worked with Bandar after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. I co-chaired a committee with the former head of the Democratic National Committee staff, Democrat and Republican, to try to get Bush to recognize the importance of not allowing this to stand. And I worked pretty closely with Bandar.

**KAZIMI**: You know the irony of this, in this particular aspect is that Chalabi had me work with Sy Hersh on Saudi Arabia in 2001 and 2002, doing research on that, and I don't remember where it went but he found it helpful at the time. But it was a damaging attack?

**PERLE**: Oh, it was very damaging. It led to a to a serious investigation in the Defense Department that went on for a year. I had to get a lawyer. And, you know, these things are, the allegations were all laid out fairly prominently in the press. And when a year later I was exonerated on all of the allegations, [it had] a tiny little mention here, and there.

**KAZIMI**: But it effectively it knocked you out of the debate on Iraq at a critical time when you were arguing that, you were pressing for a provisional Iraqi government and no U.S. occupation, right?

**PERLE**: Yes, but then so were many other people at that point.

**KAZIMI**: But your voice would have counted.

**PERLE**: I think, less than the I mean, Paul was undersecretary, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Doug was Undersecretary. So, they and this was very much their view. I don't think it had a serious effect except it had a personal effect. I don't think it had a big effect on policy. And I continued to, I wasn't silenced by it.

**KAZIMI**: Just a very quick thing on the neocons and being, you know, beholden on this sort of, uh, missionary drive for democracy, when it came out in the press that you had been meeting Gadhafi, not you alone, but Joseph Nye and Francis Fukuyama and Bernard Lewis, uh, I felt betrayed. I wrote something. I was writing a column at the *New York Sun* at the time. I wouldn't go after you because I knew, I had enough gratitude, but I went after John Bolton, maybe at the time. Uh but..

**PERLE**: but it was an amazing meeting, I must say.

**KAZIMI**: These are the dividends of peace -okay, you showed the world what you can do to something Saddam, Gadhafi got the message and gave up his WMD. What was meeting Gadhafi like?

**PERLE**: Yeah, well, he'd given up the WMD, and his son was talking a very progressive line or reform line. The fact that he'd given up the WMD had a big effect on opinion in in official circles, State and the Agency and all the rest. So, I was asked by this think tank to go and meet him,…

**KAZIMI**: the Monitor Group or something,…

**PERLE**: The Monitor Group, a Canadian consulting group. And I went and I never said a word after that about Libya in in public or in private. The only thing I said privately was to report the conversation to the NSC when I came back. I mean, Gadhafi, among other things, offered to introduce me to the tribes that would align with the U.S. in in opposing Saddam. He said, you know there are people you can be working with, and I'm happy to introduce you.

**KAZIMI:** But this was after Saddam had been gone, had been overthrown?

**PERLE**: This was during the insurgency that followed. And we were doing rather badly, as you recall.

**KAZIMI**: Well, I have it on some good authority that he was funding the insurgency as well…

**PERLE**: If he was, I mean, I don't…

**KAZIMI**: In 2007 let's put that way…

**PERLE**: When was my meeting with him? Anyway, He said Sheikh so-and-so and Sheikh so-and-so, he may have been funding them. He said, they're ready to work with you and I can help. I just reported this back. I mean, I had no way of evaluating it independently.

**KAZIMI**: By the way, this might seem like a a piece of trivia, but the first person we interviewed was Mithal Al-Alusi that he relayed in his drive to get funding and support to try to do something against Saddam in the 1980s, that he managed to have a sit down with Gadhafi, uh, Gadhafi said, I'll support you. And then a little while later, the Turkish, sorry the Libyan intelligence tell him, oh, by the way, all right, we're going to deliver this transmitter and whatever number of rifles and ammunition, but can you bomb the American, uh, embassy in Ankara while you're at it? Mithal says he informed the Americans, and this was during the Reagan years, that might have been part of a countdown towards trying to take down Gadhafi. What did Reagan call him, a 'mad dog'?

**PERLE**: I think that's what he called him. Look it was bizarre. I'm sitting there in this in his compound, driving, it's right in the center of, uh, of Tripoli. And you drive this sort of secured route with guards all along the way. And we get to his tent and there are two chairs outside the tent, I'm invited to sit down, I'm offered tea, Gadhafi comes out of the tent. I'm five feet away from a camel and ten feet away from a goat and there's livestock all around us. And this conversation starts. I mean, he knew I'd been in the Reagan administration. A bomb had killed his daughter. And he's treating me with the utmost civility.

**KAZIMI**: Did he think that you're in control of Washington?

**PERLE**: I don't know what he thought. I think the Monitor Group was just getting a bunch of people together who they who they thought could encourage this this development and enrich the Monitor Group along the way. The Monitor Group's specialty was transforming developing economies. So, we have this. And he says the most amazing things. And he says to me, you know, this Israel, Palestine, it's just a question of property. He said the Israelis want it; the Palestinians want it, there's never going to be a solution to this, they can't both have it. And then he hands me a pamphlet in which he describes his way forward, which is the creation of something called 'Israeltine'. I mean, you've probably seen that stuff. By the way, I have a present for you, which just occurred to me.

**KAZIMI**: Oh, thank you. I have one last set of questions about, uh, I saw a review you wrote about Lockheed's Skunk Works, a book about the Skunk Works in Burbank, California. Uh, you

wrote a review. Uh, very laudatory. Uh, you love the story of this can-do people, scientists and the CIA. You…

**PERLE**: Oh, they put, they put this thing together in 14 months or something?

**KAZIMI**: Yeah. Growing up in California, uh, I mean, you're, uh, you had a good relationship with your parents. Happy go lucky, modestly well-to-do family where your father was in the textile business, a lot of your friends in high school, their parents were. It was one of I think it was one of those things in the second recording, uh, and, uh, uh, so a lot of people are in Hollywood or professionals. Were you aware that there's this big looming military industrial complex in California? When you were a teenager?

**PERLE**: I don't think I was terribly conscious of it. I mean, a lot of wartime production in World War II had been done in California largely for climate reasons. You didn't have to, you could build facilities differently in California than you could in, uh, in Connecticut. No, I wasn't deeply conscious of that. And my friends, most of them were the sons and daughters of the Hollywood Ten, the blacklisted screenwriters they were communist. The families were communist. I mean, my earliest doubts about communism came from visiting the homes of my friends and watching the way the communist parents were living.

**KAZIMI**: They were living well.

**PERLE**: They were living extremely well. I one of my closest friends was a lawyer who represented most of the Hollywood Ten. I was at his home.

**KAZIMI**: The child of the lawyer?

**PERLE**: Yeah, yeah, yeah. My friend was the son. The lawyer was quite famous. I was in their home and watched him abusing the household help. And I thought, wait a minute, he purports to be a communist.

**KAZIMI**: This is the proletariat... right here.

**PERLE**: Yeah. No, it was so I was very suspicious of, you know, like most kids growing up in the circumstances I did, I thought socialism was really interesting, but my experience really disabused me very early on about communism.

**KAZIMI**: The radical chic crowd.

**PERLE**: The radical chic.

**KAZIMI**: So. But do you think that there was. I mean, Scoop Jackson, Washington state, Reagan, uh, Weinberger-California, uh, do you think there was a particular Western, American West outlook of California, outlook to national security, uh, uh, you yourself?

**PERLE**: Clarke! I don't think so. I really don't. I mean, my California roots were pretty shallow. It was childhood. Uh, I left L.A. at the earliest opportunity. I didn't love it.

**KAZIMI**: You parents went to New York and shortly afterward they moved…

**PERLE**: Right when I was four, four and a half. So, I didn't know much of New York then. When I left L.A., I never came back for more than a visit. I didn't love Los Angeles.

**KAZIMI**: Help me understand this: Jack Perle, your father…

[PHONE RINGS – Interview Disruption]

**KAZIMI**: All right, Jack Perle. but in his draft card and his marriage certificate, it says Perlmutter. Your parents, uh, or at least Jack Perle, it says that his parents were born in Russia.

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: Now I found another record where it says that he's the son of Charles and Elizabeth Perely - P-E-R-E-L-Y, is that correct?

**PERLE**: No, no, no. There was no Charles. No Elizabeth.

**KAZIMI**: There were no Uncle Steven and Charles.

**PERLE**: No.

**KAZIMI**: All right. Who were your grandparents?

**PERLE**: Well, I never knew my paternal grandparents. They died before I was born. They were from Ukraine. Harold actually knows more about it than I do…

**KAZIMI**: I would have contacted Harold but I'm assuming Harold is busy with all the stuff happening, he would have been my go-to person.

**PERLE**: You know, he does all genealogy...

**KAZIMI**: what was your grandfather's name?

**PERLE**: Jacob.

**KAZIMI**: Jacob, do you know which part of the Ukraine?

**PERLE**: A shtetl near Odessa is what I've been told. Excuse me for just a second. I have to go to the toilet and then we'll finish up.

[Break]

**PERLE**: My paternal grandfather, who I never knew..

**KAZIMI**: What was his occupation?

**PERLE**: He was a learned man, he read Talmud. And there's a Jewish tradition of communities supporting learned men. I don't think he ever worked at a job. He was supported largely by his by his wife. My dad left school and went to work at 14 when he died so that he could support the family.

**KAZIMI**: D you know when they came over to the U.S.?

**PERLE**: I don't know exactly when, it was.. I'd you know, I'd have to, you must be amazed that I don't know more about that.

**KAZIMI**: You never cared about these…?

**PERLE**: I never paid much attention to it. I'm rather sorry now that I didn't learn more from my father about what his family was like.

**KAZIMI**: Your maternal grandparents?

**PERLE**: I knew them.

**KAZIMI**: You had Hyman Needell, right?

**PERLE**: And Greta, his wife.

**KAZIMI**: And his father was born near Lvov and your grandmother's family was from Hungary, right?

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: And in the dedication, you dedicate your novel to Jack and Martha, your parents, uh to Scoop Jackson, to Leslie, your wife, and to Leslie's father: Sonny-Morton Barr, right?

**PERLE**: Yes. Wonderful guy. Really terrific person. They called him Sonny, not because that was his real name, but because he was always full of good cheer. He never had a bad day.

**KAZIMI**: This, your paternal grandmother was with you in California, right?

**PERLE**: Yes.

**KAZIMI**: I mean, your maternal grandmother. Uh, what about the paternal that the grandmother?

**PERLE**: No, never knew her.

**KAZIMI**: So, yeah. So, this is this is the story that I wanted to cover. Thank you so much. Uh, if you would just sign a copy of *Hard Line*.

**PERLE**: Oh, of course.

**KAZIMI**: Now, I apologize because I got this from out-of-print place. So, it's already been dedicated to somebody, so I hope you can re-dedicate it.

**PERLE**: I tell you what I mean I'd be happy to give you. Who did I [sign it for]?

**KAZIMI**: A Bill Farman,…

**PERLE**: He has a lot of nerve selling the book!

**KAZIMI**: [Laughing] maybe it was stolen from him. I like this copy because I've been reading it, so. Do you know him?

**PERLE**: No, I haven't a clue. It was probably signed at a book signing or something. Okay. So I'm going to put it on the dedication page.

**KAZIMI**: Thank you very much.

**PERLE**: If there are gaps, we can do this again or however it's best for you.

/end.