



Harry Kreisler: Welcome to a “Conversation with History.” I’m Harry Kreisler of the Institute of International Studies. Our guest today is Ambassador Barbara Bodine who is a lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University. She has just recently completed her thirty-year distinguished career in the Foreign Service which included service as U.S. Ambassador to Yemen. Ambassador Bodine, welcome to Berkeley.

Barbara Bodine: Thank you very much. Lovely to be here.

HK: Where were you born and raised?

BB: Well, I was born in the Midwest, born in Missouri, but I was raised in California. I came here when I was eighteen months old, so I’m a Californian in my heart.

HK: Looking back, how do you think your parents shaped your thinking about the world?

BB: Well, I think probably in two ways. My stepfather was in the Navy, and so there was a sense of service and a sense that there was an outside world, and my mother was extremely interested in politics, but I think the decision to go into the Foreign Service I really credit with a high school teacher more than my family.

HK: And what was it that the high school teacher did, taught you about the world or...?

BB: There was a special class one summer in L.A. City schools on international relations that I somehow got selected for, and it was run like a college class, and one of the things that the professor did was have people from the consulates in Los Angeles come out to talk to the class. And I was already interested in politics and international relations but growing up in the west end of the San Fernando Valley you don’t know a lot about the outside world, and I became intrigued that there was this thing called diplomacy where you could go out and do international relations. And a very nice British diplomat sat me down at sixteen and explained to me this wonderful world, and I decided then. So, I credit it more with some unknown British diplomat.

HK: And then where did you go and do your undergraduate work? And then you were set from what you're saying, you knew that you wanted to do international studies then?

BB: I did. It maybe shows a lack of imagination but I decided when I was sixteen and I never changed my mind. I went to U.C. Santa Barbara. They had a very fine Asian studies department and I decided I wanted to study China, and also chose U.C. Santa Barbara because I wanted to do education abroad, and I was lucky enough to spend my junior year in Hong Kong which was a remarkable opportunity, I think probably the most important step I ever took.

HK: And why was that?

BB: Well, I think for one thing it confirmed that I really did like the international world, that I loved living abroad, I loved living in other cultures, and I had the opportunity to get to know the American diplomats at our consulate there and find out what kind of people are these and what is it that they do. And even though I had been pretty committed before I went to Hong Kong, by the time I left Hong Kong it was close to an obsession that I was going into the Foreign Service.

HK: Did you have any professors at Santa Barbara who really influenced you in confirming and helping you along in that direction that you already...?

BB: A little bit but not really. I mean, you have to remember that in those days women didn't go into professions. They certainly didn't go into the Foreign Service. I think one professor was very helpful. When I got back from Hong Kong he looked at my resume, he looked at what I wanted to do, and he said, "You have a wonderful background in everything China. You don't know anything about your own government." And so, my senior year of college I sat down and got a degree in American political science, and that was excellent advice.

HK: So, how did you wind up...? We know that you wanted to do this, you had prepared to do this, but again, this was a time when women were still struggling to move into positions they had not had. So, talk a little about your deciding to do the Foreign Service. And then what were the obstacles you encountered at this time in your life?

BB: Well, it wasn't easy and I think in some ways I was very lucky that no one around me knew enough about the Foreign Service to tell me I couldn't do it. [laughs] So, there's a certain blissfulness to ignorance. I was preparing myself. I took the exam when I was an undergraduate and passed both the written and the oral as an undergraduate, but I had been advised by my friends in Hong Kong from the consulate to get a Master's and to really focus my studies. And so, even though I had passed all the exams I went to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and I think that was kind of an intellectual finishing school that was terribly useful. Ran into some real resistance there.

HK: At Fletcher?

BB: At Fletcher. My faculty advisor, for example, told me on the first day he met me that he had never met a woman graduate student above the B+. You know, hello, very nice to meet you and besides that, you're a B student. But there were enough people around who said, no, continue to do this. It wasn't easy in the beginning. The Service was only beginning to open up to women, but I was single-minded about it and just never really – there was incoming fire but I just kept going forward.

HK: Before we pick up your career in a few minutes let's talk about being a diplomat and being in the Foreign Service. What does it take to do that? What are the skills involved in terms of preparation but what are the attributes you have to have to do it well?

BB: I think it's more attributes than particular skills, and I try to dissuade students from thinking that there's a set academic course that you can take. The two primary skills that you need – you need to be able to write well. You absolutely need good writing skills and without that you're not going to be able to do the job. Interestingly you also need very strong people skills, and I think this is one of the things that distinguishes the Foreign Service in diplomacy, is that you have to be enough of, if you want, an introvert to be a very good analyst and a very good writer, and enough of an extrovert to be able to deal with a broad range of personalities, gather their support, their trust so that they will talk to you. So, it's an odd balance between these two. You need a passion for the job, and I think the diplomats who are the most successful are those for whom this is a deep personal commitment, almost a calling, and a passion. I mean, at the end of the day you have to see the constant moving around, the living in difficult circumstances, the bureaucratic frustrations, to be honest, and if you can't sort of see this as part of the job and something that you're going to enjoy, then you're not going to do it well. And I think for every profession you have to have a sense of humor.

HK: [laughs] Yeah.

BB: As someone said, if you can't look adversity and absurdity, particularly absurdity, in the face and laugh you probably can't do it.

HK: On this extrovert dimension it has to link up with this analyst dimension, and you have to have your ear to the ground, basically, once you're in a setting, be able to sort of grapple with very different cultures and talk to all kinds of people.

BB: All kinds of people, often some things in people you don't like, but I think you touched on an important point. You have to be able to listen. Your job as a diplomat is not to go in and lecture and talk at, but to really listen and listen very hard to what you're hearing and why you're hearing it, not just the words but what's the message, and understand the context in which it is being said. If you just go in and talk to a couple of government ministers and get the – I think Ross Perot, many years ago, said that we could be replaced by fax machines.

HK: He would say something...

BB: He would say something like that. And if you think our job is simply to deliver a message and get back a canned message, then he would be right, but our job – we're interpreters and it's not just a word interpretation, it's a cultural, political, what's underneath interpretation. And a good diplomat does not spend their time in their office. They're out, they're around, they're not just talking to government ministers. And so, you really have to get into where you are without ever losing sight of the fact that you are representing the United States. And so, you're not a cultural anthropologist in that sense where your job is only to understand that culture but to be able to move back and forth between your own and theirs.

HK: There must be some aspect of the role that's like a broker, and by that I mean you're finding out what's going on, there might be a tendency to identify very strongly with what you know is going on, on the ground, but then this has to go back ultimately to Washington where what your analysis is going to be is subject to all the bureaucratic politics that is Washington.

BB: Right. You are a broker, you're a negotiator, not just on a particular issue but between two cultures and two political systems. You have to be credible enough as the American diplomat with the host government and host society, that they know who you're representing and why, and credible enough with Washington that you understand where you are. If you become an advocate for the host government and host society you're probably going to lose your credibility in Washington. If you are simply delivering messages from Washington and not listening you're not going to be very good. So, you have to have that ability to move back and forth and be equally credible to both, never losing sight of who you represent but understanding what your job is. And yes, sometimes you do also have to go into the host government and say we don't agree, this doesn't make sense, and I think candor is a particularly important quality. When I went to Yemen, I remember my very first meeting with the president there and I told him openly, up front, that he might not always agree or like what I said but that I would never lie to him, and sort of the same thing with Washington. You have to have that credibility.

HK: And you, in your distinguished career, were involved in the programs that trained Foreign Service officers – I don't remember exactly the role that you had – but I'm curious because – has the Foreign Service changed a lot in the course of your career, and has what the training has to involved changed?

BB: I think in some ways it has, certainly the range of issues that we deal with. The transnational issues are far more complex.

HK: Health, terrorism...

BB: AIDS, avian flu, human trafficking, human rights which is now an integral part of our diplomacy, but it's a far more complex range of issues. You have to understand economics and development, you have to understand basic security needs, and so the ability to be intellectually adaptive, to be able to move from one subject to another – we're generalists but that doesn't mean that you're a dilettante, so you have to really understand how all these different issues fit together. And it's the ability to integrate the range of issues and how do they support, sometimes conflict, in our own policy or in the policy of a country. So, there is that adaptive ability. When I'm teaching I'm always telling my students that you have to be able to analyze, synthesize, and then extrapolate, and the same holds true in the Foreign Service. We have to be able to work across the interagency field in Washington, as well. You have to know how to work with the military, you have to know how to work with the intelligence community, and so there's a multifacetedness to us which I think has always been there to a certain extent but it is certainly much more complex now than it was before.

HK: You started with an interest in Asia but the bulk of your career has been in the Arab world and the Gulf states. Tell us how that transition came about and how you adapted to the new environment.

BB: My undergraduate and graduate degrees were both in China, hours and days and months learning to read and write Chinese, and that's where I wanted to go, and my first couple of tours were in Asia. I decided with the arrogance that only a 25- or 26-year-old can have that I was too narrow, because I had kind of started in China in this high school class, and thought I really need to go look at another part of the world and get some perspective, or as I said, I'm going to be far too narrow, and ended up with a job working on the Arabian peninsula. And I really did that – it was going to be for two years, it was going to be, if you want, an intellectual or a professional sorbet, and I absolutely fell in love with the region. I found it fascinating. The U.S. national security interests there were obviously critical but it was just – there's something very intriguing about the region and what was supposed to be a two-year diversion ended up being a thirty-year career and I never really looked back. Every once in a while I've thought about going back to Asia, or the Asia Bureau would ask me to come back, and I just kind of kept falling back to the Gulf region.

HK: And during the course of your career America's policy toward the Middle East really evolved, and some would say not for the good in the recent period, but I'm struck by some of the very interesting positions that you had at very interesting times. In one case you were deputy in Kuwait right before the first Gulf War. Talk a little about that because here you were developing, and had developed, a notion about the area and suddenly you and the embassy in Kuwait were confronted with a very different situation.

BB: Well, before I went to Kuwait I had served in Iraq for three years, and so I had some familiarity with Saddam and his regime, and had actually been assigned to Kuwait as a reward for having worked on the tanker protection regime, which you might remember from the Iran/Iraq war, because Kuwait was supposed to be this nice, quiet, pleasant little place where nothing happened.

We were there when Saddam invaded and oddly I count the Gulf War from August 2nd, 1990, not from January 17th, 1991. I count it from his invasion. And we were confronted with – it was interesting – what the essence of diplomacy is, because Saddam wanted us to shut our embassies, everyone to shut their embassies, and the ambassador and I decided that we really couldn't leave, that we had three thousand Americans trapped in the city and while there was safe passage for diplomats out, there was no safe passage for American citizens, and we went back to Washington and said, "No, we are going to stay." Saddam's regime was threatening us with all sorts of horrible things and you always took Saddam's threats seriously, but there was a very deep commitment within the embassy that we couldn't abandon the Americans. On the more political side there was a decision that we the United States, we the rest of the world, did not recognize the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait, and so to stay with our flag flying was a way of demonstrating. So, it was the crystallization of what we do overseas.

HK: Now in an earlier period – and you talked about this yesterday at a seminar at the Institute, the whole question of Saddam's signaling about what his intentions were, and there was an interesting play here between what you were seeing in the course of the buildup prior to the war and what was being said and thought in Washington, which is a revealing, I think, example of what you were talking about earlier, namely what's going on but having communicated back to Washington.

BB: Well, for one thing, we were the – the conventional wisdom in Washington was that Saddam was simply rattling his sword, and the Iraqis had done this over the decades. We sat down – to be honest, I sat down and analyzed what Iraq had done prior to the invasion of Iran and then what Iraq had been doing for the previous six months and we came to the conclusion that Saddam was going to invade. And we sent what I thought of as a very well written cable off to Washington explaining this, and Washington's analysis was, no, that this is just saber rattling and we don't need to worry about it. There was – I think a lot of people still hold this belief that our ambassador in Baghdad signaled Saddam that we didn't either care about what he did in Kuwait or wouldn't take any action, and to be perfectly honest, that's really not a fair analysis of her meeting, and even the Iraqis have admitted that, but we did have an assistant secretary who...

HK: In Washington.

BB: ...in Washington, who in a hearing with a House International Relations Committee, chaired at that time by Lee Hamilton who we all know from the 9/11 report, who asked our assistant secretary, do we have a defense agreement understanding anything with Kuwait, and he asked the assistant secretary this three times and three times the assistant secretary said, no, period – which was not the correct answer. He could have referred to, he should have referred to, and I think someone who understood the region better, understood our history there, understood Saddam better, would have given an answer that would have been, no, we don't have a formal agreement but there is the Carter Doctrine which is still U.S. policy and if anyone questions whether or not that policy is real, they would look at the navies of seventeen countries coming in to protect international shipping. By

just simply saying no, we had an assistant secretary who signaled, I think, if anyone signaled, to Saddam that we were walking away from our previous commitment to protect the Gulf.

HK: One wonders here – because this is a problem that I think you must have encountered over the years, namely where our policy changes with regard to actors in a particular region. What I have in mind here is during the Iran/Iraq war – we're going back – we aided – or it's alleged that we aided Saddam in certain ways, providing satellite technology. So, what I'm curious about is, is this a case in Washington of not listening to what they're being told from the ground because Washington is not attuned to the new realities created after the flip? In other words, for strategic reasons we supported Saddam in that war but now that situation has changed. What's going on here, do you think?

BB: I think there were a couple of things going on. We did support Saddam less than some people think, but we did support Saddam as did all of the Arab states, and that was pure strategic necessity. Saddam was fighting Khomeini's Iran – this was right after the Iranian revolution – and this was a very radical and revolutionary Iran, and he was kind of the bulwark against an Iranian victory. And so, it wasn't so much that we were looking for an Iraqi victory but everyone was quite conscious that we couldn't allow an Iraqi defeat, so it was a 55/45 at best balancing. There was a school of thought in the U.S. that because we had supported Saddam and kept Iraq from being overrun that there would be a measure of gratitude, and I think a number of us in the region – this was part of our report to Washington was, Saddam is not a grateful personality by nature and that he is emboldened, he's greedy, and he does not make judgments based on what we would consider rational decisions. And then again, you have to look at what he did before he went into Iran, what he was preparing to do now, and by his calculation he had done this buildup on the Iranian invasion – we have to remember he invaded Iran first – and the world had let him get away with it. So, if I did A and B and got away with C, I could now do A and B and get away with this. The other element of the construct was the Soviet Union was falling at this time. There were a lot of other big events happening and I think Washington was overly focused on these, what they saw as the big events, and they wanted to hear – there were two competing analyses, sword rattling, invasion, and the sword rattling analysis was more convenient. If we go with this one then we don't have to act. And I think that they were busy, they were distracted, they wanted to hear there wasn't going to be an invasion. That's why I think our analysis just didn't carry the day. And the final point is that if they had accepted our analysis, that he is going to invade, they then would have had to make some very difficult decisions about what do we do to stop it, and I don't think that anybody had thought through how far would we go to stop an invasion, and even the decision to try to reverse it took about a week.

HK: Let's talk now a little about your later role as ambassador to Yemen. Yesterday, again, in the seminar you were talking about how one would move forward with the agenda for democratization in an environment in which everybody in the region is coming to question American policy because – now we're talking about the invasion of Iraq. So, I'm curious – I want you to talk a little about the job of ambassador and how you work in this environment, and let's pick this particular issue of

democratization, how you work with other embassies with different actors in Yemen to move forward the democratization agenda at a time when it's clearly not working in Iraq.

BB: Well, I was in Yemen '97 through '01.

HK: Oh, all right. So, let's talk about that. Sorry, my error. So, let me ask you the question this way then. Was it easier to do your work then because our invasion of Iraq had not happened yet with all the consequences that occurred there.

BB: It was probably easier than it would have been in '93 – I'm sorry, 2003. But while there has been an enormous – there was enormous popular resistance in the region to the Iraq invasion of '03, and still, I think even within the governing structures in a lot of these states what you need to – and this is what a diplomat does – is that you have to have is a depth and a complexity to relationships so that one issue doesn't drive the entire process. I do think the way that the current administration has gone about democratization has probably made it as difficult as what happens in Iraq specifically. It's important to remember that – and I have trouble with “democratization” as the term – but that the reform and the liberalization effort in much of the Middle East predates Iraq and in fact was fairly well along in the '90s. You take a look at a number of the Gulf states, excluding Saudi Arabia, and you see parliaments, you see elections, you see women's political rights. And so, these movements have a very strong indigenous component to them, and it was more a question of how to you support and encourage rather than – to me, “promote” is us coming in, and supporting and encouraging is finding the indigenous players and finding out what are their priorities, where do they see the best avenues to move forward and then figuring out how to help. There is a little bit of nudging, there are some times when you go in and say, we're not really quite sure about this, we don't think this is maybe the best way to go, but at the end of the day it's theirs. And you are going to be much more effective if you find out who are the people you can work with within the government, within civil society, within media, within all of these various players, and then work with them to move it in those areas where they see it as most important and most amenable to reform, and then you sort of take it sometimes in a different sequence than we would but you kind of keep that going. That has survived the invasion of Saddam, the invasion of Iraq, but it has been...

HK: The recent invasion.

BB: The most recent one. But it has been damaged and it's been damaged by this sense that we are exporting an American model, that we have criteria and conditionality rather than really, as I said, looking at the organic and the indigenous. And I think in that sense you have seen a stalling. We have, by our actions in many cases, more discredited the reformers than we have assisted them, and we need to recalibrate, not walk away from but recalibrate, how we do this.

HK: And what you're suggesting here is that the democratization and transforming the regimes was on the agenda in the Clinton years...

BB: Absolutely.

HK: ...and it was being done in a constructive way that sort of reflected the nuances and subtleties of really our changing role in the world because we're less and less, even before the Bush administration and into the present – to tell people how to do things.

BB: Well, I'm not sure that you're ever really in a position to be telling people to do things and the minute you start telling them what to do, I don't care if it's in your personal life or in diplomacy, people will shut down. Our efforts to support democratization, yes, they were very strong under the Clinton administration and they actually even predate that, but I think what's important to remember about this region is that these efforts and these debates were going on within these countries themselves, this was not a bringing to. There's been a very vibrant, very dynamic, as yet inconclusive but still ongoing debate within the region, particularly the Gulf states and Yemen, that they recognize that the status quo relationship between the government and the governed is not supportable in the long term. They don't want to go back to the 7th or 9th century. They're very skeptical about foreign models, which I think is where we have made a mistake recently, and they're trying to work out what does option D look like. And it's going to be different in Kuwait than it is in Bahrain than it is in Yemen, they're going to have different sequencing and priorities, but it's becoming a constructive partner to that debate, as opposed to coming in and saying, this is what the debate should look like, this is the order in which you should do things. And that's kind of what we need to go back to, is involving as a partner rather than promoting as an outsider.

HK: And is the negative turn that these issues have taken the result of the militarization of our foreign policy...?

BB: Yes.

HK: ...in the recent period? Talk about that. How does that sort of play out? Because the idea in the Bush administration, for example, after you were no longer in Yemen – the idea here is that through military intervention we will transform and then it will all come into play.

BB: Right. Well, this administration has coined, I think, one of the more remarkable phrases, which is “impose democracy,” which is just a fundamental oxymoron. They do believe in this transformational, that if you wipe the slate clean that democracy will spring up spontaneously, and they conflate freedom and democracy. They have not come to terms with the fact – they still don't understand, don't seem to be willing to understand that democracy is something that has to grow up. To say that it's going to take two or three generations, I don't particularly like that because people have a tendency to say, “Well, we're start in a generation or two.” No, you start now and have it grow. The militarization of our foreign policy, particularly in the Persian Gulf, has been damaging, extremely damaging. It puts everything that we do through one prism. We have, in a number of cases, in a number of countries, actually put security and stability ahead of

democratization. One of the things that's odd is that this administration started off by saying, "Too much emphasis was put in the past on stability and not enough on democracy, so now we're going to go full bore on democracy and we don't care about stability." What they've done is almost go the other direction farther than we've ever gone before. For example, we've put almost no money into democracy support in Pakistan. It's all been how many of the bad guys can we kill. We're still operating on this idea that we are dealing with a military problem and not a political problem or an economic problem. And what's ironic is Saint Petraeus, as he is – if you really read his counterinsurgency manual it talks about that the military's only twenty percent of the effort. It's eighty percent politics, it's eighty percent development, and diplomacy, and governance, and yet we're still focusing on that twenty percent. And so, in that sense I think that we have – some say we also have this fundamental disconnect where we have people in uniform talking to people about the importance of civilian government, we have people who do propaganda, getting themselves involved in public diplomacy. And so, we send a very odd, mixed signal, and I think in that sense, again, our friends in the Gulf kind of pull away because we're pushing for a militarized definition of security, stability, and friendship that is very one-dimensional, and I think we have hurt ourselves deeply.

HK: To what extent is this the result, and I guess in its extreme form it is a result of the Bush administration, but on the other hand, it would seem that our financial commitments to the military, a \$400 billion budget now, versus the commitment to diplomacy which must be \$30 or \$40 billion, whatever.

BB: Yes.

HK: I mean, isn't it almost inevitable that this logic would work this way, no matter who was in office?

BB: Well, I think at this point the imbalance on the resources – it's always been unbalanced, and I did some testimony on the hill recently and I said that the State Department, the civilian agencies, we're not looking for parity with the defense budget, we are looking for some equity, and the defense budget includes aircraft carriers and jet planes, and stuff, and we don't do that, we just have people. So, we're not looking for the numbers to end up this way, but there has been, and I think this is what has happened over the last several years – is the imbalance has grown so sharp that it's – as someone said at one conference I was at, that you have one agency on steroids and everyone else on life support.

HK: [laughs]

BB: And all the resources are there. And so, what has happened is that in normal budgeting process you define missions and you then have the resources go to the missions, and the missions follow the agency that has that mandate, so you've got mandate, mission resources. Well, what we've got now is resources mission, mandate, we've got it reversed, so that the only agency that has the resources is getting the missions, and they're now getting into areas that even the military says is not their

business. The more this happens, these start atrophy and they atrophy very badly. You don't have the people to pick up the civilian side, and I think any new president – well, the new president is going to have to decide if he or she wants to continue with this unitary cabinet approach to foreign policy or do we really want to balance it more, and if they're going to do that, they need to not only move resources back to the civilian side, they have to move the missions and mandates. And that's going to take a while to do, a lot of retraining that's going to have to happen, a lot of shifting. I think the military would actually prefer it. I'm not sure – and I think Secretary Gates understands this better than anybody. He has given all the kinds of speeches that you would want the Secretary of State to be giving.

HK: The way this change has come about, obviously as a result of the 9/11 attack, but the important formula, if we can call it that, was the notion of a war on terrorism. I'm curious as to how terrorism came on your agenda, and I'm talking about the span of your career, from seeing it as the State Department must have been seeing it, as a problem, one of many transitional problems, and somehow there was a leap over time made as we began perceiving these attacks where it became more significant until the point after 9/11 where it became the end all and be all. Talk a little about how it came on your radar screen.

BB: Well, I think terrorism certainly is something that those of us who have lived and worked in the Middle East – we've always been dealing with this. We just had, I think, the 25th anniversary of the bombing of our embassy in Beirut. So, this has been an ongoing issue and one that the U.S. Government's been aware of and involved in. I was a coordinator for counterterrorism in the early '90s and as coordinator that was coordinator of the interagency, that was the military, the intelligence, law enforcement and diplomacy, and we saw it as an international problem. It was not Islamic terrorism solely or – mostly we had the **BOS** [?] separatists, we had the IRA, we had Sendero Luminoso – that it was an international problem and that we needed international partners, and we also needed a broad range of tools from the U.S. Government. We very specifically worked to criminalize terrorism, to take away their hero status, and say, no, these are thugs, that hijacking is hijacking, murder is murder, kidnapping is kidnapping, and you can't wrap it up in a pretty political package and get away with it. And we were actually very successful. If you look at the number of terrorist incidents and their lethality up to 9/11, the numbers were going down dramatically, and I think we really did have the right approach. We saw terrorism as a tool used by thugs, for a political purpose, but we weren't going to give them that validation. When 9/11 happened and it was referred to as the war on terrorism, my first thought was this was a rhetorical flourish. It was sort of saying – you know, crime doesn't have the same impact in a headline. The administration did choose to see it as a war, and they explicitly dismissed using intelligence, using law enforcement, using diplomacy as a tool to get at it. As any number of people have said, terrorism and terror are tools, they're not an ideology, it's not a movement, and so we're having a war on a tactic, which makes no sense. I think it has badly distorted our ability to deal with the phenomena. A famous quote from Rumsfeld about – you know, are we killing them faster than the madrasahs are producing them. And the answer to that, Mr. Rumsfeld, is we will never be able to kill them faster. You need to get ahead of the curve. And I think in the State Department, in diplomacy, in the

intelligence world, there is an understanding that if we don't deal with this at its roots, we will always be fighting this, and we need to take it away from being a war, we need to take it away from giving the terrorists the political justification and the political status that we've given them. We've hero-ized them, if I can make up a word here, in a way that was not necessary, was not smart, and was strategically a blunder.

HK: One of the issues that comes up is the way a history is created to justify what we're doing now based on an interpretation of what happened in the past, and as ambassador to Yemen you were at the center of one of the alleged stories in the sense of how it is interpreted about the involvement of the FBI in the Cole. The Cole was based in Yemen, there was an al-Qaeda attack, the FBI came – talk a little about that because there're several things going on. One is, it could be that we're distorting the story, but secondly, it involves this question of criminal investigation, moving into the area of terrorism as a global phenomenon, moving into the area of your duty and responsibility as an ambassador to be sensitive to the position of the government without becoming necessarily its supporter.

BB: Yeah, or its advocate. There's been, I think, a lot of misunderstanding about what happened after the Cole. The Cole was a terrorist attack, it was by al-Qaeda, it was the first time, and I think so far the last time, that we've actually had a boat bomb. And what happened in the aftermath was less than the story in some ways. It was actually much less than the story in some ways. The real issue that came up, particularly between me and one senior FBI agent, was not one of trying to undermine the investigation or thwart the investigation or becoming an advocate for the Yemenis. It really was, at its very simplest, a chain of command issue, and the gentleman in question – I remember him coming into my office, visibly armed, by the way, and announcing – nothing like having a large man with a gun walk into your office and say, "Hi, I'm in charge" – and I was not armed – and explaining to him that no, he was in charge of the investigation, he wasn't in charge of everything that we were doing, and this does really get to the role of an ambassador and the role of diplomacy in all of this. And has been explained, we really had four missions and they were very explicit, we had them on signs all over the place. It was to recover the ship and the crew, obviously a critical mission, protection of the Americans who had come in – we had gone from zero Americans in Aden port to three hundred – a joint investigation between the Yemenis and the Americans, and the maintenance of the bilateral relationship. And the misunderstanding has been that I was somehow focused on the fourth one to the detriment of the other three, or at least the investigation. Only if you see those sequentially does that make any sense. And my response at the time was, I have three missions and one specific mandate. Those missions have to move forward simultaneously. We have to recover the ship and the crew but the way we recover the ship and the crew can't jeopardize the investigation. It's a crime scene, forensics. At the same time, we can't let the investigation get in the way of the basic human need to recover those remains, and at the end of the day, if you're not providing protection for everybody it can't go forward. What I was explaining, and I think this is, again, the essence of diplomacy, is that the maintenance of the bilateral relationship was the matrix within which the rest of this happened. It wasn't an end in itself, it wasn't, you know, let's do this and make those others wait. If you didn't have the relationship, then

you couldn't tackle the problems, the misunderstandings, the obstacles, the resistance, and there were problems on all three of those – those three couldn't move forward if you didn't have this stronger relationship. And a good diplomatic relationship is not one – diplomats, our job is not to make people happy. That's not our job. Our job is to have a candid, open relationship that has the strength that when you hit a problem you can go in and you can have that conversation, and you can say, "Look, we're getting resistance on cooperation here. I need your help, Mr. President, I need your help, Mr. Prime Minister, that I can go into the head of Yemeni security and say, 'Your president has pledged cooperation and I'm not getting it. How do we get this fixed?'" It also means that I have to be able to go into the FBI sometimes and say, "What you're asking for is not reasonable," or "It doesn't make any sense to me and if it doesn't make any sense to me as to why you want this, I can't explain it to the Yemenis." But that is part of my job. The other debate we had with the FBI was that, "Look, I don't know how to do a criminal investigation." This was before CSI was on TV, so none of us were amateur forensic scientists. And I said, "I'm not telling you how to do your investigation. I can help you understand how to operate in Yemen so that you will be the most effective. You tell me what your goal is and I'll help – tell you how to get there. If you try to do this goal this way, you're going to fail, but if you do it this way, you're liable to be successful. So, let me help you do your job. Let me manage the government, let me manage the press, so that you can then do your job as the investigator." That's my job, is to make this thing happen. And that was the disconnect that we never got past, and I want to make the point, with one individual. With the rest of the FBI, with the hundreds of agents who came through in the course of the ten months that I was there, we did have this understanding. We did understand that they had a role, they had a mission, they had tools. My job was to make it work, to intervene and intercede when necessary, to back off when it was useful. But that was the essence of it.

HK: As you tell the story, and again, we're talking about a historical account that has been misinterpreted, but it's interesting. It strikes me that part of the problem with making diplomacy as important as it should be is that the events of 9/11 and the history that's created to go back and explain how we got there is one where the ticking bomb scenario prevails, namely that everything related to these issues has to be perceived as if the country is Jack Bauer and the bomb is about to go off, and so on. But the thrust of all that you've been saying is that these problems are long-term, they require a multifaceted solution, so that obviously you want to be able to do something if there is a ticking bomb but maybe there isn't a ticking bomb, and in fact there won't be ticking bombs in the future, if you deal with these problems in a multifaceted way that includes diplomacy.

BB: You have to have the diplomacy, and I can't remember if it was the commandant of West Point Military Academy or somebody from the Chief of Staff of the Army who actually got on a plane and went to Hollywood and asked the producers of "24" to stop glorifying torture, and that the ticking bomb scenario was a highly remote scenario, that if you really were going to get at the ticking bomb you needed intelligence services, you needed good law enforcement, you needed good diplomacy to either keep the situation from happening or deal with it afterward, and that if you just focused on the Jack Bauer approach, you were never going to get ahead of the problem. In fact, you probably weren't even going to get ahead of the ticking bomb. We have to understand – kind of as a parallel

– if you have a spike in crime in a neighborhood in the United States, yes, you need SWAT teams to go in and take down a crack house, you need to increase maybe the number of patrolmen on the street, you need to get the bad guys off the street corner, absolutely. If you just stop at that, you're going to be doing that forever. You also need to go in and find out why has the crime spiked, why are you not getting cooperation from the local citizens, why won't anyone cooperate with you. How do you then walk it back so that you're not just getting this year's bad guys off the street but you're keeping that next generation from coming out of junior high and high school and becoming the next generation of gang leaders. So, that's the parallel that I would put on it.

HK: What do you think will be the long-term consequences for the Foreign Service of this recent period of U.S. foreign policy? What is your greatest concern about the Foreign Service now, and then how do you see us moving beyond your concerns in dealing with the problems you're raising?

BB: A concern that I have, and a number of my colleagues of my generation who do remember when diplomacy was an equal arrow in the quiver, where this balance of interagency players worked and where the interagency decision making process worked, and it has been perverted and subverted very badly in the last seven years – we know how it used to work and that it can work, imperfectly but it worked. I think our concern is that you now have a generation of diplomats and military officers, and others, but talk about diplomats, who really don't remember how it can be. We've had eight years, and so we now have officers who are almost mid-rank who have been in the Service as long as I was when I went to Baghdad as the deputy chief of mission who don't know anything else. And there's a concern that the new President, new Secretary of State, reaffirmation of the role of diplomacy, all of these things happened that I'm talking about, and that diplomats don't know how to pick it up, that we've lost the ability to lead. We've stopped thinking of ourselves as the formulators and implementers of foreign policy, and we've lost the concept of foreign policies, this broad range of issues, and part of this is going to be a re-training process. We need to remember who we are and we need a Secretary of State who is clearly the President's chief advisor, we need an interagency process that is open and transparent, and then we need to remind and retrain and relearn our diplomats on what their role is. You were asking me at the beginning what were some of the core competencies and one of them is risk taking. One of them is the ability and the willingness to make hard decisions, to make a decision knowing that somebody's not going to like it, and being able to hold to it. And it doesn't mean being a little dictator but it does mean at the end of the day that the ambassador is the decider, the Foreign Service is the ultimate foreign policy formulator, and being willing and able, and knowing that you have the backing to make the hard decisions when you need to make them, that mistakes have to be – you have to be accountable for mistakes but that you won't be sacrificed for making an unpopular decision.

HK: One final question requiring a brief answer: if students were to watch this program how would you advise them to prepare themselves, if they see diplomacy as something that they want to do?

BB: A couple of things: I'm a huge believer in history. You need to have history. If you walk in that this is ground zero, know your history, love history. Read as much history as you can,

constantly. Languages are important but you have to have something to say in the language. It isn't a skill, it's not an end in itself, it's a tool. Travel and live abroad before you come into the Foreign Service. Be sure this is an environment that you're comfortable with. A little humility, a little sense of humor, but I would say know your own country, be comfortable with other cultures, travel around. I gave a commencement address once at a school in southern California where I told all the students to go out and get dirty. Their parents were horrified, absolutely horrified, but I said...

HK: [laughs] Not your room...

BB: Not your room, yeah. Clean up your room but go out into the world and get out of your bubble. And get out of your bubble and see if you're comfortable outside that bubble. Test yourself, challenge yourself, don't be reckless but be risk taking, and if that's what you end up liking to do, then do it with all the passion that you can muster.

HK: Well, on that note, Ambassador Bodine, thank you very much for being here today and sharing these thoughts about your career and the experiences that you've had.

BB: It's been a pleasure. Thank you.

HK: And thank you very much for joining us for this "Conversation With History."

[End of Interview]