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PERU

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

MARK SILVERMAN
USAID
Deputy and Director of Development Resources
Peru
Lima, Peru
(1984-1988)

Mr. Silverman was born in Boston, Massachusetts and moved to Los Angeles in his childhood. After graduating high school, he enlisted in the California Air National Guard in 1965. He was educated at San Fernando State College and Ohio University. He volunteered for the Peace Corps in Afghanistan before entering the U.S. Foreign Service in 1976. He worked in various positions for USAID in Afghanistan, Egypt, Peru, Washington D.C., Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Mr. Silverman was interviewed by Marcia Bernbaum in 2023.

Topical Focus – Security Crisis and Garcia Administration Debt Issues

SILVERMAN: At the time we had a non-career ambassador in Lima, a political science professor from Virginia. There was a complex embassy dynamic because the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission [DCM] weren't getting along. In fact, they didn't communicate much with each other which was not helpful. The USAID Director was John Sanbrailo, an outstanding senior foreign service officer and Latin America specialist who worked very hard to marshal support for Peru. John was very much a workaholic; one never had much small talk and personal exchanges, but he could teach you so many things about our business.

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SILVERMAN: The impacts of El Nino caused great consternation within the government and amongst the population. The USAID mission spent significant time and money trying to help the government respond, to expand services on the ground and financed a comprehensive reconstruction program. Responding to flooding and drought created two very different challenges. We had a highly effective technical assistance team led by USAID staffer Michael Hirsch who oversaw the disaster reconstruction program. At the provincial level the government had what were called development corporations and USAID placed contractors in a number of those entities providing responsive technical assistance and financial support for recovery from the flooding as well as assistance to help revive the agriculture sector in the drought-stricken areas. At the national level the mission provided $60 million in balance of payments support which helped address key policy issues facing the government. The GOP agreed to provide the local currency resources needed to fund a small business lending program. Under this agreement I helped contract technical assistance to develop transparent rules and regulations and strengthen credit practices which were followed by the Industrial Development Bank in the hope that the program would help small businesses recover in the affected areas. After utilizing

the first $30 million for small business loans an evaluation of the credit program was carried out and it found that the lending program was successful and had a major stabilizing effect on the private sector. Implementation of the mission's large pipeline was also a high priority, and I worked with all elements of the mission to help resolve bottlenecks and advance this objective such that the mission received a complementary message from USAID/W.

George Hill, a master in budgeting with a great deal of program experience was the Deputy Director. Norma Parker, who I believe you have been interviewing, was George's wife at the time, and she was our technical office chief responsible for health, education, and democracy programs. It was an interesting mission experience until mid 1985 when Allen Garcia was elected under the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance banner [APRA]. APRA had never been a governing partner in Peru. They were always on the outside looking in, articulating an anti-imperialist social and political option. They saw a role for bigger government and promoted social democracy. Allen Garcia was a thirty five year-old who never had a job outside of the APRA political machine. One of his first major statements was that the GOP was not going to pay its debts because of economic abuse by the international community.

Fortunately, our new Ambassador, Alexander Watson, an experienced Latin America hand, arrived to lead the embassy during these trying times. President Garcia caused a huge rift in economic relations with the United States because for USAID to be able to continue to provide assistance, Peru had to be current in its debt payments to the United States (no more than six months behind in payments related to the Foreign Assistance Act). Up until 1980 middle income countries received low interest loans instead of grants because they were not authorized under the Act.

Suddenly, we found ourselves in the midst of a major political crisis. The government stopped paying on its foreign assistance related debt, and we of course had to work through legal processes as part of U.S. appropriations policy. We couldn't help Peru if its debt payment obligations to us weren't current. I had never been exposed to such a thorny policy problem and it was both a career lesson and an interesting challenge to work on this complex issue. I helped establish close links with the Central Bank and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, trying to find a way for USAID to influence the technocrats who might be able to help the Peruvian political leadership understand that it was in their interests to meet their obligations even if it was at a minimal level. The economy was going south. Revenues were way down. In the countryside the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso [the Shining Path], a group that followed Chinese revolutionary philosophy attacked government installations and leaders of rural communities while the urban based terrorist group, Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement [MRTA], which was linked to Cuba attacked banks in towns and cities. The Shining Path had no problem murdering people who stood in their way. The MRTA planted bombs at banks that would go off at night when there was no one around, so it carried out acts to create fear rather than to kill. People were nervous, the government refused to pay its international debt and revenues continued to drop.

To confront this security problem the Garcia government established martial law and required people to be off the streets after a certain time at night until the following morning. Returning on a late-night flight from home leave, we had to obtain safe conduct passes from the military

at the airport in order to have an embassy car drive us from the airport to our home in the suburbs. All along the way we encountered heavily armed men with ski masks at checkpoints. When the driver lowered the window to show our safe passage pass, men with AK 47 rifles pointed them directly at us. This was of great concern to all of us in USAID.

Meanwhile Hernando de Soto, the Peruvian economist and head of the Institute of Liberty and Democracy, [ILD] with financial support from USAID Lima, was conducting research on the role of the informal economy in Peru. In his classic book on the informal economy, he looked at the reasons why poverty could be a breeding ground for terrorists, and he described the forces that kept people dependent on underground economies: bureaucratic barriers to legal property ownership and the lack of legal structures that recognize and encourage ownership of assets. President Reagan, in a 1987 address to the U.N. General Assembly recognized the work of USAID's grantee. He said, in part: "We're all familiar with the phenomenon of the underground economy. The scholar Hernando de Soto and his colleagues have examined the situation of one country, Peru, and described an economy of the poor that bypasses crushing taxation and stifling regulation. This informal economy, as the researchers call it, is the principal supplier of many goods and services and often the only ladder for upward mobility".

De Soto went on to write several books on this subject such as The Other Path and The Mystery of Capital. In addition to this research ILD wrote dozens of laws to help promote property rights and bring people out of the informal economy and into the legitimate one in Peru. I was proud that USAID directly supported a lot of this work. The result was not only an improved economy in Peru but one that may have contributed to the defeat of the Sendero terrorist movement in the 1990s.

During this difficult period USAID Lima was confronted with the need to implement its operational year budget in support of Peru's development yet without a policy breakthrough on the Peruvian side USAID could have lost the rest of its budget and possibly put the entire program at risk. Mission management tasked me to find ways to address this debt issue. I supported negotiations by providing detailed reporting on portfolio implementation and potential. I also assumed responsibility within the mission for ensuring that implementation documentation was expedited and decisions leading to disbursements were made in a timely fashion. I worked with key Central Bank staff to consider incentives to the Peruvian government to repay part of its debt to the U.S. which would allow USAID to provide the grant resources to fund critical project efforts. Staying out of sanctions didn't require large sums of money but it did require overcoming policy differences. In terms of new resources, the mission had to address legislative restrictions contained in Section 620q of the Foreign Assistance Act as well as the Brooke Amendment which governed the policies associated with being able to provide assistance to countries that were in arrears. I spent months searching for options and a way forward, with the complete support of mission leadership and the Ambassador.

I worked through the Central Bank General Manager's special assistant who understood the issue, saw the benefit of keeping USAID funding flowing and helped me convince the General Manager that minimum payments on its debt with the US would keep assistance flowing and that the assistance was critical to meet Peru's development needs. We provided several scenarios explaining to the GOP the cost-benefit of making payments to keep USAID funding flowing

and continued project and program assistance implemented.

It might seem odd to some that the donor was trying to convince the host country it was in their interest to work with the United States and honor their debt obligations, but the political situation was worsening, and foreign assistance flows were one of the few tools available to the U.S. to help the Peruvians succeed. The technocrats were not the problem, it was at the political level and therefore Ambassador Watson worked the political levers with the Peruvian government including with the President. An interesting aside—Ambassador Watson and President Garcia were both around six feet four inches tall and the joke was that no other foreigner could look Garcia directly in the eyes. After many negotiating sessions the Central Bank came through and the GOP made payments of arrearages in late September, and we were able to obligate the remainder of our budget in a period of only ten days. DR did great work in leading this set of tasks. Unfortunately, the next year the GOP slipped into arrears again and we were back to the table once more.

Q: During this period how did this affect your ongoing loans? Once the program was implemented, they were not affected by this?

SILVERMAN: Projects that required additional resources were affected and so in order to implement the approved budget we had to have access to new resources, or the projects could have run out of funding. If we were forced to curtail projects, we would have had to consider winding down projects and addressing legal issues that might have come about. Yearly funding needs were based upon a series of spending plans and if additional obligations were not made, then the projects could run out of funding and come to a screeching halt. This might have created legal and contractual problems. The Peruvians appreciated the work USAID was doing to support their efforts, but politics sometimes trumped good judgment.

In this context and with the continuing challenge to keep funds flowing to our projects, mission management tasked me to assume that no further payments would be made by the GOP and to review options and authorities available should USAID need to phase out assistance. I developed an extensive plan, covering the whole project portfolio to guide phase out decisions and had to carry out this exercise in a professional way so as to minimize effects on staff morale. This exercise was not to my liking but needed to be done. Winding down the program was not what we wanted to do.

Even though no new projects were to be funded as development loans, past loans that caused arrears would directly impact the provision of grant resources for the new portfolio. The DR office, where I was the director, was one of the mission units that changed functions over time depending upon mission management approaches. Under Director Sanbrailo the DR office was the largest of six major units containing both staff and line functions including capital development, private sector, disaster relief and reconstruction, engineering, special projects and Housing and urban development. I was asked to develop a special projects division to provide complementary support to the narcotics control and eradication efforts of the embassy by strengthening and expanding a large rural development initiative in the Upper Huallaga valley where much of Peru's coca crop was grown. In Peru the narcotics trade, from growing coca

instead of legal agricultural products, was dynamic and highly efficient. Traffickers would bribe the local police so that small planes could land on dirt strips in the Upper Huallaga Valley and traffickers would pick up sacks of coca leaves (paying cash to the farmers). This was and still is a huge national security policy issue.

We were aware of the routes through Colombia and Mexico. The narcotics section of the embassy pushed the Peruvians to reduce the size of the coca crop while the USAID program searched for crop alternatives and other ways for farmers to create some wealth. Unfortunately, from an economic standpoint few crops could compete with coca and the financing mechanisms working with government banks were highly inefficient. Surveys also indicated a growing drug problem within Peru. Complementary to the rural development initiative we helped initiate USAID's largest investment worldwide in improving host country public awareness of narcotics issues.

In 1987 Director Sanbrailo was transferred to Honduras and a new Director, Donor Lion, arrived. The security environment continued to deteriorate, and the USAID program labored under congressionally imposed narcotics sanctions and the Peruvian governments' continued arrearages on its debt to the US. government. The new director decided to separate staff and line functions in my office, and staff functions were transferred to another office while my line functions expanded. Given the nature of disaster activity in Latin America, we established a small disaster preparedness unit with the assistance of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance [OFDA] that would serve regionally, working with civil defense organizations across Latin America. OFDA carried out training with these different organizations and provided a forward location to help mobilize host countries and the U.S. when disasters hit, and hit they did.

I mentioned earlier that we had some internal issues in the embassy with the Ambassador and the DCM not getting along very well. That had an impact on the ability of USAID to get messages to the embassy front office. Thankfully with the arrival of Ambassador Alexander Watson, who had been DCM in three embassies in Latin America, our embassy and USAID leadership worked better together and had a singular message. I was learning that being able to place individual programs and activities into a much broader foreign policy context was critical when dealing with senior executives. I prided myself in not pushing USAID project priorities but putting projects into a framework that helped senior leaders understand the value of investments and to focus not on promises but the achievement of results and the relationship to U.S. foreign policy.

In Egypt and in El Salvador I developed results reporting that I shared with ambassadors and assistant administrators as well as with congressional oversight staff. Effective reporting of results also helped us address issues raised by external reviewers. Placing the value of what you do in the context of a more strategic view of problems and opportunities was important and during this time I learned that writing for busy executives (like Ambassadors and Ministers) isn't something that USAID officers necessarily excel in. I worked with staff to improve their communications, whether in the speeches prepared to highlight USAID investments or in reporting to the Congress and the executive branch.

In between the change in USAID leadership in Lima I became the Acting Deputy Director during a challenging summer, with increased terrorism, major narcotics issues affecting our assistance and the continuing debt repayment problems. With great teamwork we kept the program going, including successfully negotiating two major food assistance agreements that would generate local currencies in support of development investments over several years. I led this effort and was proud of everyone on the staff who participated in the long and complex negotiations with the Peruvians. This was my first exposure to help lead a USAID mission.

With the arrival of Donor Lion, a senior economist with a long foreign service career with the State department and with USAID, the mission had a director who was both a strategic thinker and a scholar, with a different management style than his predecessor. Donor was part of a tandem couple. Linda Lion was an excellent project development officer who I supervised during her first year in country; imagine that dynamic! Donor was a great teacher, a leader who was well liked and personable but with an economics doctorate he tended to be a bit professorial, and he liked to lecture the Peruvians on the importance of sound economic policy. With the challenges facing Peru and the flashy leadership of President Garcia, there wasn't a great deal that we could do to influence Peru's overall economic strategy and APRA's approach to governing. USAID was in a holding pattern trying to keep our development program moving forward in areas where implementing ministries were cooperating and thankful for the assistance, but the larger political issues continued to get in the way.

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I want to point out that because of the narcotics issues with Peru and the U.S. government's concern with Peru's role in the production of coca, USAID focused increased attention on the Upper Huallaga valley where the coca was grown and where the traffickers operated with some degree of impunity. The basic problem was economic, no legal crops could compete with coca and the financing system was efficient as the traffickers bribed the police force and landed small aircraft on dirt strips while paying farmers cash on delivery. No government financial institution could manage to operate so efficiently. The GOP attempted to support alternative development but at the same time worked to eradicate coca with U.S. embassy support. These actions did not allow for warm relations with the farming community. It was to some extent a hopeless cause. Traffickers operated throughout the valley and the Shining Path threatened and then killed many local leaders who were involved in promoting alternative development opportunities for local farmers and who were working with the GOP.

Availability of drugs became an issue of concern in Peruvian society. Leading Peruvians asked us to assist in the creation of a nongovernmental organization called the Center for Education and Information for the Prevention of Drug Abuse [CEDRO]. CEDRO was a public awareness organization made up of some leading social scientists who were trying to initiate programs that would promote community development, address education issues and the need for increased public awareness about the danger of drug use. Alejandro Vasiliqui was its founder and Carmen Macias was the co-founder. It is a tribute to their leadership that thirty-seven years after CEDRO was launched, the organization has grown, has the support of many other donors and local groups and is supporting community efforts

across Peru. They have expanded outreach to include promoting indigenous businesses, healthy lifestyles and a culture of legality while promoting awareness of the dangers associated with drug use.

…

Q: You are preparing to leave Peru, right? At that point what was the relationship between your programs and your contact between donors' cooperation.

SILVERMAN: I think the European Union was becoming more and more involved. We tried to get the United Nations also involved but frankly I don't recall any major bilateral donors besides the U.S. The terrorism issue was paramount. Martial law was not a welcoming policy although people felt safer when they were home. The Garcia administration was trying to contain the terrorism challenge. With all of this going on we used to joke that the Peruvians loved to party so they would start the party in the evening and stay overnight until martial law was lifted—six am the next day and then go home.

Q: Can I ask as you saw the MRTA and the Sendero Luminoso, both in force. Did in any way their actions affect the programs USAID Peru was implementing?

SILVERMAN: The Shining Path certainly did because they killed local leaders and members of their families living in the Upper Huallaga. There were reports of people coming up on motorcycles carrying pistols and just killing village people, leaving notes that threatened to kill the family members of those who cooperated with the government's programs. All this terrorism had a negative impact on people's willingness to cooperate with the alternative development program that was designed to help rural farmers earn legal incomes and have some basic services available for the community. In a sense Sendero terrorized people away from cooperation, even though that cooperation tried to help improve their lives. Sendero represented a revolutionary political philosophy that hoped to take control from the countryside and then lead to a takeover in the cities. The security environment also had a negative impact on USAID's ability to staff positions as few officers wanted to come to a danger pay post, and many were concerned with the viability of the program. Fortunately, Sendero failed although Peru has since had its political ups and downs.

Now it appears that Peru is struggling with a series of political issues, corruption and significant challenges to its democracy. Nevertheless, we spent four interesting years in Peru; a beautiful country with friendly people and we had made many friends. Before the security situation became serious, we had the chance to travel around the country, to Cusco and Machu Picchu, to the high Andes mountains, (over 15,800 feet in elevation) and to the Amazon jungle. We also spent time in the Peruvian desert near Nazca, where Pisco is famous, and to the beaches near Ecuador. We took advantage of travel opportunities in the neighborhood by visiting Chile, Argentina and Brazil. I remember being in a taxi in Santiago, Chile and chatting with the driver about life in Chile compared to Peru. In the driver's view, if we called Peru democratic then he was happy to have a military government running Chile since the economy was booming and things worked for everyone (at least that was his point of view).

On a working level the last couple of years in Peru was very intense for everyone in the mission yet it turned out to be a great training ground for me. Cairo provided me the opportunity to learn about the entire project cycle, how we design and implement major investments and a lot about U.S. government policy and how one could be effective in an organization. The exposure of having a seat at the policy table in Peru was a valuable management experience that contributed to my learning about aid effectiveness and leadership as well as how individual officers might be able to have an impact outside their narrow job description.

It proved to me that despite the poor security environment and difficult legal and policy challenges we faced, with the right leadership USAID could accomplish a lot that would benefit the Peruvian population. Being focused on how we might operate in a difficult legal and security environment I felt that one of the outcomes was the ability to be more resilient. After completing my assignment in Peru I had been overseas for almost twelve years and I thought an assignment in Washington was an important step in building an understanding of how the entire Agency functioned. Field perceptions of Washington are often guided by one's own experience with the bureaucracy. I thought that understanding the interagency process was an important step I needed to take.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

NORMA PARKER
USAID
Chief of the Heath, Nutrition, and Education Division
Peru
Lima, Peru
(1983-1987)

Norma Parker completed her undergraduate studies at Colorado College, spending her Junior year studying abroad at the University of Bordeaux. She then attended Georgetown University, where she graduated with a masters in Latin American Studies. She joined USAID in 1967. She served in posts such as Columbia, Guatemala, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. She retired in 2017 and was interviewed by Marcia Bernbaum in October 2023.

Topical Focus – Health and Education Development in Democratizing Peru

Q: Today is Friday, December 8, 2023. We are now interviewing Norma Parker for her third interview. Norma, you will be focusing on your time from 1983 to 1987 in Peru, a very interesting time, indeed. Looking forward to it.

PARKER: Thank you, Marcy. I actually arrived in Peru on Christmas Day, 1983, with my one-year-old, as the Chief of the Health, Nutrition, and Education Division in USAID/Peru. I immediately dove into reading the Project Papers for the projects that I was going to be responsible for: two health projects totaling fifty million dollars, a pre-school education project, and the Mission's participant training program. I was assigned to Peru as a General Development Officer. The Mission was quite large. I

reported directly to the Mission Director, John Sanbrailo, whose Deputy was George Hill, my husband. John became another terrific mentor for me during my tour.

We landed in Peru at a very interesting time. It was President Belaúnde's return to power, and Peru's return to democracy after the coup of 1968, when the military had deposed him. Belaúnde proved to be a wonderful partner to work with. He loved USAID [United States Agency for International Development] and wanted to meet every new officer assigned to Peru as soon as they arrived in the country. So, I found myself in the National Palace meeting almost one- on-one with the President of Peru within the first five days I was in Lima. Incredible.

Q: That's amazing.

PARKER: Yes. One-on-one with the president of the country. But he had a vision for Peru, which we shared. It was very exciting to talk to him. We were also in an interesting time, and the Sendero Luminoso—Shining Path—was just starting to heat up. And lo and behold, they chose my projects—the pre-school education projects in the Altiplano—to demonstrate their disfavor and unhappiness with the current regime. They famously hung dogs from lampposts and harassed villagers in these small villages scattered around the Andes. So that was very exciting. And we ended up—my division, and particularly Eliane Karp Toledo, who later became the first lady of Peru and spoke Quechua and Amara–reporting all of the harassment and threats going on in these villages within our education project to the Embassy's Political Section. Eliane was well qualified to be my adviser on this project with her language skills and a degree in anthropology.

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Q: Okay, thanks.

PARKER: There are several things that made my tour in Peru stand out, besides the return to democracy, the Sendero Luminoso, and having an absolutely wonderful staff. Belaunde's cabinet was very technically qualified to lead the country. Half of them had been through the USAID participant training program, notably the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Education. It was really impressive. My direct Peruvian counterpart, the Minister of Health, was the former Deputy Director of WHO [World Health Organization], so we had a hugely qualified cabinet to work with.

The day-to-day contact I had was with the Director General of Health in the Ministry. We became very close *compadres* (close friends) working together, trying to make our two bureaucracies mesh because we shared the same goals and objectives of delivering health care to the underserved. One of the projects was focused exclusively on water. We were one of the few missions in the hemisphere that had a water engineer on staff. We were building water systems in small villages in the Altiplano. But we also extended the health care delivery system throughout the country. It was very comfortable to work with that government. We really missed Belaúnde when his term was up. I was in Peru for almost five and a half years, so I witnessed the transition to the Alan Garcia administration, who was a protégé of the founder of the APRA Party, Victor Raul Haya de la Torre.

The other thing that makes Peru stand out for me, besides these close working relationships, and the transition to democracy, was the threat of the Sendero. I was under death threat for about a hundred and twenty months by the Sendero for my work on oral rehydration therapy. I had twenty-four-hour guards for the house, and everybody in the mission was in armored cars. We had a carpool situation. Later in the tour, I had my own armored car, even when the kids went to the pediatrician, they were accompanied by armored guards. This took some getting used to. It was the beginning of my working in
these very violent and dangerous countries.

Another factor that stands out in my tour in Peru was the testing of oral rehydration salts in the poor *pueblos jóvenes* (young towns) in Lima. We had both CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] and Johns Hopkins personnel on the ground, studying diarrheal diseases and local recipes for oral rehydration. Meanwhile, until we had these local recipes, my division had imported the oral rehydration salts from the U.S. from the lowest bidder—really, the worst thing the U.S. government does—Four babies died in the best university hospital in Lima due to a batch of salts that had too much potassium in them. This was caused by a contractor in New York state who used child labor to manufacture the salts. The children never cleaned the vats out, and so the potassium accumulated in specific batches. Potassium is a silent killer. Fortunately, these babies were admitted to the best university hospital in Lima, and we were able to track the salts through their lot numbers and the specific packages given to these babies. Of course, we knew the contractor.

We were able to trace the contaminated lots and establish a chain of custody by bringing down inspectors from the FDA [Food and Drug Administration]. They wanted to
prosecute the contractor. We were all deposed. (I had never been deposed before). Even the Minister of Health and all hospital staff were deposed in Spanish. The case went to
the Southern District of New York for trial. The DA [District Attorney] decided that she would not try the case because it involved too many people who spoke only Spanish, and the translations might have been too difficult for a jury to understand. Therefore, they plea bargained with the contractor, and he only served seven years in prison for the death of the four babies.

This case caused quite a stir in Washington, putting in jeopardy one of the most effective ways to reduce diarrhea in the developing world. That was why it was so important to get the facts of the case and the prosecution outcome in the public domain. Many Missions
were using the salts in their health programs. This experience made me understand a little bit more about how the U.S. justice system worked and maybe led me into my next job in Washington as Director of Democracy and Administration of Justice. But I remain to this day furious that the contractor got off with only seven years after killing four babies.
Those children did not have to die.

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Q: Norma, what was the reaction on the part of the Peruvian government, and to what extent was this situation made available more broadly to the populace? What was their reaction to it?

PARKER: The Peruvian government was furious. I don't know to what degree this got out into the broader population. But it really upset USAID Washington because we were pinning all our hopes in the health care area on these oral rehydration salts to cut diarrhea rates. There was a lot of backstopping done by Washington to help me bring this contractor to justice and prove oral rehydration salts were safe and viable. It was just a fluke that these three lots were contaminated yet could be traced to the best hospital in Peru. What I was told is that USAID does not pay compensation for its mistakes. So, we designed a new twenty-million-dollar health project and signed with the government shortly after this all occurred. We felt somewhat vindicated. I've always vowed that if I ever won the lottery, I would look up those families and reimburse them for the children they lost.

The other interesting thing about my tour in Peru, which was almost five years, was the returned participants that served in the cabinet. As a result of that, we decided to set up a returned participant directory, the first in the hemisphere. We hired a former Peruvian national who had worked on participant training twenty years ago. She put together a wonderful directory of all returning participants in Peru. We recommended that other missions do that.

We had fantastic success in extending the health care delivery system in Peru. When we introduced family planning, we ran up against the Catholic Church. I learned quickly to use the natural method as a way to introduce couples to family planning, because when it failed, they were already doing family planning and wanted something that was more effective. We had success there. And then in the nutrition field, we had great interest with our two CDC and Johns Hopkins researchers looking at native foods, like grain amaranth, which is a kiwicha and quinoa, that are very high in protein. The Peruvian government had established a Nutrition Institute. It was headed by the famous Johns Hopkins Doctor, George Graham. They made a lot of discoveries with different native plants that have high levels of protein that could be used by indigenous populations at very low cost. Those were some of the outstanding accomplishments in Peru.

In addition, day-to-day living was fantastic. It was easy to make friends with Peruvian nationals, as you know. But later, when I was the head of AOJ and Democracy Development in the LAC Bureau in Washington, I ran into numerous human rights groups from Peru and got very well acquainted with them. But that's for another time.

Peru was just a joy to work in if you could overlook the Sendero Luminoso, which was becoming more and more problematic. By the time we left, we had blackouts three or four times a week as the SL blew up electrical substations. There were certain areas of the town you couldn't go to. It was my first experience with violent, extremist elements in society. Other than that, go to Peru. It's a wonderful country. It's full of interesting archaeological sites. What a dream to serve there under a democratic regime. I felt like we had accomplished a lot. We had a large agriculture division, a very large economic division. And I guess I should say, if I had a mentor in those years, it was John Sanbrailo, one of the hardest-working and most dedicated Mission Directors I've ever met. We got along beautifully. I learned a lot from him. So those are the highlights from my stay in Peru.

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Q: How interesting. Well, there is Vladimiro Montesinos, of course, who played a major role in corrupting him. Norma, you skipped ten years later, and my husband Eric, who you worked with many years later, became the mission director. USAID was a strong supporter of the Human Rights Committee. They were active for many years and played a very important role. I think that's changed now. You mentioned the human rights community; Eric commented that among the human rights community and others, that they were some of the most competent NGOs [Non-governmental organizations] that he had ever worked with. What was your experience with the Human Rights Committee? Were they fairly well developed at that point, when you were there?

PARKER: They were incredibly well developed, very intelligently led, wonderful leadership, very well organized, and very committed. They stood out. They were well known hemisphere-wide. They did a lot of advocating and educating the public on the issues of human rights. Of course, we had the help of the famous author, Mario Vargas Llosa, who published the story of the murder of some indigenous leaders in the Altiplano. He published a lot on human rights issues, as well. We had this incredible array of people who were well-known when I was there.

For example, Hernando De Soto— known for his two books on the Sendero and capitalism. In fact, the Peru mission, and especially the Deputy Director of the mission, George Hill, actually helped Hernando to write his first book. He was sort of his Max Perkins. We've remained close to Hernando ever since. Many people have. When you look at the way his books characterize Peru at that time, you kind of wonder what happened, why did it fail? Why is it sinking into a failed state status right now? Hard to say because at the time we were there, people were working hard to support democracy, establishing the Institute of Liberty and Democracy, for example. The human rights groups were very well respected. That's a mystery. That's something I'd like to explore sometime. A mix of greed, corruption, and authoritarian tendencies I am sure.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ALPHONSE F. LA PORTA
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Special Assistant to Special Representative for The Philippines
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Manila, Philippines
(1991-1995)

Mr. La Porta, born January 15, 1939, is a retired American diplomat with a career spanning over 38 years in the U.S. Foreign Service. He served as the U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia from and held positions including Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Wellington, New

Zealand, and Principal Officer at the U.S. Consulate in Medan, Indonesia. Mr. La Porta also served as Special Assistant to Special Representative Elliot Richardson in the Philippines. His Washington assignments encompassed roles such as Director of the Office of Cambodian Genocide Investigation and Deputy Director of the Office of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore Affairs. Following his ambassadorship, he served as Political Advisor to the U.S. Commander-in-Chief of the Regional Headquarters Allied Forces in Southern Europe from January 2001 to November 2003. Alphonse F. La Porta was interviewed by Mark Tauber in 2022.

Topical Focus – Philippines Democratization

Q: All right, well, we'll pick it up then. Today is the 26th of July, 2004. Al, 1991, you came back and what was this all about the special assistant to Elliot Richardson, what was the job and what were you doing?

LA PORTA: There is a little preface to this that relates to kind of the life and times of the Department and where we were in terms of personnel and budgetary constraints at the end of the first Bush administration and then going into the early Clinton administration. For most Foreign Service Officers this was a time of fear and loathing. Fear and loathing of getting prematurely kicked out and career terminations when a lot of friends of ours went out of the Service involuntarily for reasons of time in class starting in 1988 and '89. Through 1995 there were unnaturally high rates of officers leaving the Service. There was a determined effort for budgetary reasons to sever people at the senior level or FS-01 threshold to reshape the profile of the Foreign Service by drastically reducing the number of senior officers as well as officers at the threshold level. It was an effort to force the Foreign Service into a pyramid shape, rather than the kind of boxy shaped organism that it had become. What was happening was that a lot of area specialists and a lot of people that had particular language attributes that many of us felt the Service needed were being kicked out. Assignments were increasingly hard to get so, coming out of New Zealand having been a DCM for four years, I lobbied hard for all kinds of assignments in the Department and elsewhere, anywhere else. Now, sometimes the best is not always the worst and that was true in this case in taking a job as executive assistant to Ambassador Elliot Richardson.

Elliot Richardson was a five time cabinet member, he was the attorney general who resigned because he did not reign in the Watergate prosecutor. Elliot had a part-time presidential appointment as special envoy for the Philippines. How did this come about? Beginning in 1998 the Cory Aquino "peoples power" revolution occurred.

Cory Aquino led the popular movement against Ferdinand Marcos. After nearly a year of demonstrations and turmoil, Marcos was ousted. He came to live in Hawaii where he expired

after a decent interval and Cory Aquino established a new non-authoritarian government. In ‘89 President Bush appointed Elliot Richardson to basically become a cheerleader for Philippine economic reform, to give the Cory Aquino administration some encouragement, to marshal development assistance resources from the World Bank, the ADB, IMF and other organizations, and to help coordinate economic reform and vitalization. Richardson worked in the East Asia bureau. He had an office. He had an executive assistant. My predecessor was John Forbes who as it happened was one of those officers who was being retired for time in class. We had a secretary and basically our job was to work, to the extent that we could, with the Philippine desk, with AID, with the other government agencies, as well as the multinationals and the business community to help bring things together on the economic side. We prepared for donors consultative meetings in which Richardson headed the U.S. delegation and also to stimulate private sector investments to meet some of the Philippines’ needs especially in terms of generating new high employment industries. As Elliot’s executive assistant, I was his day-to-day link with the bureaucracy, with business organizations such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the U.S.-Philippine Business Council, the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce in New York, the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council and others, including on the Philippine side, the Makati Business Club, the AMCHAM in the Philippines and several other organizations was to basically work with them in two major respects:

1) to prepare for the international multilateral donor consortium meetings. In this regard the meetings were normally once a year, but there was usually a review meeting on a semi-annual basis, so you had two significant meetings each year at which the economic requirements and progress of the Philippines were assessed.

2) to serve as the high profile leader for business leadership delegations. We led about two missions to the Philippines each year. One mission usually was kind of a policy review mission of the most senior leaders of companies having significant investments there.

Elliot led one review mission each year in which we sat down with a whole range of Philippine government officials and looked them in the eye and said, well, what is it that you’re doing or how are you doing or what are you not doing? Then one large mission a year was devoted to bringing the corporate presidents, vice presidents, chairmen of the board and other U.S. business leaders in sectors that we felt were appropriate to the Philippines to meet with the top governmental leaders to visit parts of the country to look at some of the interesting and innovative USAID and other projects.

For almost a solo activity, we never fit neatly into a bureaucratic box in the State Department. Although we were supported by the East Asia bureau, we had free reign to roam widely through the government bureaucracy as well as outside it in order to do what Elliot felt was desirable in terms of getting the Philippine situation some attention and to develop programs that were truly

supportive of the Philippines' efforts. This was particularly true in working with the finance minister, central bank governor and other key officials under Cory Aquino. Then that transitioned into working with the reformist administration of President Fidel Ramos who was elected in 1992. I stayed in that job from 1991 through until 1995.

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Q: What was the situation military-wise in the Philippines at that time?

LA PORTA: From the United States point of view it was pretty dire because the Philippines base negotiations, the U.S. team for which was headed by now Deputy Secretary of State Rich Armitage, had collapsed in 1991. There was certainly a bad taste in most peoples' mouths and especially the defense community in Washington against the Philippines. There was certainly a decided disinclination to do anything for the Philippines. Also, Clark Air Force Base had been closed due to the explosion of Mount Pinatubo that basically rendered parts of it unusable and certainly confounded the runway.

Q: When did that happen?

LA PORTA: I've forgotten the exact month, but it was 1990, it might have been the fall of 1990.

Q: Well, anyway, by the time you got there. I mean with negotiations and Clark rendered essentially unusable, our interests started to disappear.

LA PORTA: We were in the process by the end of '91 and certainly into '92 in withdrawing from Subic Bay and from various other bits of real estate that we had had. I guess in terms of the U.S. government approach, this made the economic side all the more important in terms of trying to keep some positive relationships with the Filipinos and to be able to demonstrate that the United States at least was supportive of Philippine democracy and governmental reform.

Q: It's interesting how with the closure of the bases, how the Philippines had disappeared from international view. I mean the American view of the world. It crops up from time to time, but you don't, I mean, this was the beginning of it, or did you feel that way?

LA PORTA: It was hard, especially in the Clinton administration, to get any profile for other than one or two top issues in the Asia arena. In other words, China was the 900 pound gorilla, as we've discussed before, and China drew the attention only because it was there. The second major issue that attracted largely the energies and attention of the Asia bureau was Cambodia and efforts to kind of patch together a settlement and hold elections and to broker the formation of a government among the rightists, the royalists, the communists headed by Huk Sen and a small

group of reformists. That was a very difficult situation. The refugee flow out of Cambodia occupied a lot of attention as well. Those were the two main issues. It was indeed hard to get space for the Philippines.

Philosophically, the Philippines was in terms of public attitudes in the United States has been considered to be an American appendage, almost another state. Well, after all, the Philippines were ours once, weren't they? And don't they have a government that looks kind of like ours, and gee whiz we have three to four million Filipinos living in the United States. The perception was that the Philippines are out there, somewhere around Hawaii, and that gave them second tier status, if you will. So, not many people were inclined really to look at the Philippines as a foreign relations problem. I think that while the Philippine situation was complex it was not impossible. Certainly the U.S. business community felt that the Philippines had some distinct advantages and possibilities in offshore manufacturing, oil and gas and to some extent in mining. There was interest in making Philippine exports to the United States grow, whether handicraft items, rattan furniture, wood furniture or other kinds of products. Dried fruit is an interesting commodity and the United States today imports significant quantities of dried fruit from the Philippines.

The Philippines, with its legacy of bad government under Marcos, really cried out for attention in trying to convert it into a viable, functioning democracy something that it had not been since the 1960s and very early 1970s. The difficulties have continued because the Ramos administration was replaced by the administration of an actor, Joseph Estrada, that just opened the way to rampant inefficiency, rip-offs and other depredations. There was also a comeback during that period of the New People's Army, the communist rebel movement, and the resurgence of Islamic terrorism in the Southern Philippines. That very checkered record continued through Estrada's eventual deposition again by "people power" and his replacement by Gloria Arroyo. Her first administration was not terribly strong because it lacked a popular base, then most recently in May there was a hardfought election which Gloria won by a great margin. There are a lot of law and order problems, corruption and inefficiency issues are rampant in the Philippines today.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

AMBASSADOR FRANK G. WISNER
U. S. Ambassador
Philippines
Manila, Philippines
(1991-1992)

Frank G. Wisner was born on July 2nd 1938 in New York. Ambassador Wisner completed his undergraduate education at Princeton University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962.

Ambassador Wisner served as the U.S. ambassador to Zambia, Egypt, the Philippines, and India, and held key positions in the Departments of State and Defense, including serving as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and Under Secretary of State. Ambassador Wisner retired in 1997, and was interviewed by Richard L. Jackson in 1998. Ambassador Wisner died on February 24, 2025. Ambassador Frank G. Wisner was interviewed by Richard L. Jackson in 1998.

Topical Focus – U.S. Military Bases in the Philippines, START II

WISNER: Well, Jim Baker told me later that he feared that I was going to have trouble, and I'd actually been told by Mitch McConnell and others that there was some gunning in the conservative side of the Republican party for me. But I was confirmed for Manila and then subsequently for Under Secretary, so whatever the problem was it eventually went away, but it gave Jim Baker some reason for second thoughts on the Middle Eastern and African Assistant Secretaryships. In any case, I'm delighted with what I did with my life and would have been less happy otherwise. I arrived in Manila in the summer of '91, confirmed by the Senate, and was faced with the immediate challenge of taking the base agreement, which Armitage had negotiated on behalf of the United States Government and Nick Platt had seen through in the Philippines, and trying to nudge it over the finish line in the Philippine Senate, where it needed to be ratified in order to take effect. By the time I arrived in Manila, there was a bare four weeks until the Philippine Senate vote was scheduled to be taken. Very quickly, I realized the odds were horrific. For the Philippine Senate, like the United States Senate demands, a two-thirds vote for a treaty. The structure of the Philippine Senate was such that the radicalization of the post-Marcos period produced a number of Senators who had strong positions in opposition to the continuation of the American base presence. Others, for tactical, or less exemplary reasons, had switched sides over the years. The former defense secretary, Juan Ponce Enrile being one of those, and Cory Aquino had been, at best, halfhearted in her desire to see the treaty extended. It was further complicated by the fact that Mount Pinatubo, the great volcanic mountain in central Luzon had blown its lid and effectively destroyed Clark Air Force Base, removing Clark from any consideration, as there was no way we were going to put up the money required to redo Clark, given the overall worldwide defense downsizing. The Navy, on balance, wanted to keep Subic. Well, I have to say that -- though I did about everything I knew how to do, I appeared on television programs, testified, spoke, traveled all over the islands, inaugurated schools, bussed babies, marched in parades -- it wasn't to be, and the base treaty was defeated by the Philippine Senate.

I, then, set my mind on two facts: one, to see if we could work out a three-year arrangement by which we could get out of Subic and turn it over in an orderly manner and have, in effect, a base compensation agreement play out over those years and, secondly, to begin to plan for the post-base American-Filipino relationship. I ran into the complexities of negotiating a fresh agreement with the Filipinos, an interim agreement -- all the complexities that you would

imagine in a wealth of domestic local political environment - - people thought, well, we'd defeated this, but here a dragon lives on. I came to realize that in Washington I faced an even greater negative lobby in the Pentagon -- those who wanted to swat the Filipinos and those whose calculations ran even deeper, that is that Subic wasn't worth it anymore, and that the real benefits that Subic brought United States forces in global reach and the political presence that Subic gave us, by showing friends in Southeast Asia that we would be near at hand, were outweighed by growing concerns over the budget and just exactly how much we needed. I learned further that the Navy loved Subic because of all those admiral's billets and the gorgeous facilities and quarters the base offered. And so, I found myself in a very stressed atmosphere in Washington -- the assistant secretary having a lot of trouble getting Jim Baker's attention, the Pentagon increasingly reserved about all of this. And the Filipinos being nowhere enthusiastic, with some important exceptions -- notably the Filipino military which wasn't at all sure how it was going to continue to have access to American arms and favorable packages of assistance in the absence of any arrangement whatsoever. I came back to Washington toward the end of the year, and I was asked to go over and call on the President and I did and went into the Oval Office, and George Bush really made it very clear to me, "Frank, don't try too hard." Dick Cheney had sent me an equivalent signal, when I called on him in the Pentagon, "don't try too hard." I also saw Deputy Secretary Eagleburger, Larry Eagleburger, and Larry said "Frank, Mr. Baker is going to make some changes, he wants Reggie Bartholomew to go to NATO, and he wants you to come back and be the Under Secretary of State for security affairs, international security affairs." Well, I will do anything the Secretary asks. I hadn't been a full year in the Philippines, I was working very hard on the post-base arrangements, and Larry made it very clear that the Secretary wanted me in Washington. The post-base arrangements would be the job of my successor in Manila, and that would be Dick Solomon, the present assistant secretary himself, who would be replaced. So, I realized that an order was an order, and Christine and I said farewell to the Philippines and left in the late spring to be confirmed for the Under Secretary's position in State by the early part of the summer.

I did, however, very much believe that the Philippine economy was going to come back and that Cory Aquino, who would be leaving the presidency, was not the last word in Philippine economic management; her administration was not effective. In effect, the Philippines had tremendous latent capabilities, and we needed to have access to this strong Filipino market and a platform in which to continue to be competitive in Southeast Asia. Second, I believed that we would, in time, work out some security arrangements with the Filipinos that would give us access to the Philippines and not bases, but places, access -- places that we could stop in, pause in, in the event of another difficulty -- if we could let things settle down. So I was very very keen on moving around the islands, dealing with the political leadership to try to focus on the day after Subic closed. What was the Philippine - American relationship going to be about? We'd been together almost a hundred years, there would been the thin and there would been the thick, and there was no doubt that our two societies and mixings of populations was such that we couldn't

escape each other's embrace and that we ought to be working hard to try to come up with ways to make that happen. I argued that case at a general level and tried in a number of ways to promote American business, to get the Philippine economy in a position where we would have a stronger business presence as opposed to a base presence, in the days that followed.

These jobs were to be completed by my successors, Dick Solomon, John Negroponte, and now by Tom Hubbard, and we have today a much stronger relationship with the Filipinos. They, too, have been able to prove that democracy is a good antidote at a time of economic crisis -- the very crisis that Southeast Asia, in the summer 1997, into 1998, has experienced. My return to Washington was not immediately visible at the time, in the face of the declining fortunes of George Bush as a candidate for reelection and in the diminishing days remaining to Jim Baker as Secretary of State, also a fact I didn't know. The last six months or so of the Administration, including the defeat at the polls, were dominated on my side by a set of issues that play into the upcoming Clinton administration.

Let me touch on these. First and foremost, I was given responsibility for wrapping up and completing with the Russians negotiations over the START II. START II, with its radical reductions, its important reductions in missiles, reductions in war heads, was the last of the great arms control treaties. It remains to be seen if we will be able to wrap up any time in the near future towards START III. The negotiations were detailed, they were highly complex, full of START II protocol. A minute had been reached. I was responsible for leading teams to Moscow and then bringing the final bits and pieces together in Geneva, with strong support from Larry Eagleburger, and finally, signature of a completed negotiating instrument by George Bush after the turn of the year. I was brilliantly assisted by a good interagency team: Steve Hadley (DOD/OSD), and Barry McCaffrey from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. My own able staff and team included Jim Timbie, particularly, one of the great arms control experts in the history of the United States Government, Vic Alessi from the Arms Control Disarmament Agency, Doug MacEachin from CIA, and from the NSC, General John Gordon. These are the people who propped me up, for I was hardly a strategic arms expert, and to be put in the midst of a very complex negotiation late in the day was hardly an easy task. We got the job done, also thanks to the fine work of Russian negotiator Berdinnikov and George Mamedov on their side and Kozarev's interventions which were very important, together with Larry Eagleburger's. I also had a chance to work with one of the State Department’s true heroes, the brilliant arms control negotiator, Jim Timbie, who served on my staff in T.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

G. EUGENE MARTIN
Department of State
Political and Military Officer
Philippines

Manila, Philippines
(1987-1990)

G. Eugene Martin was born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1943. He completed his undergraduate education at Kalamazoo College before studying at Syracuse University. He entered the Foreign service in 1965. He served in Burma, the Philippines, and spent much of his career in China. He retired in 1999, but returned to the foreign service, before re-retiring in 2000. Mr. Martin was originally interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Topical Focus – U. S. Military Bases, Marcos, Philippines Politics, Philippines Senate

Q: How about the Philippine situation? I mean here you had a problem of Marcos getting worse and worse, and his wife had what was considered a fairly close relationship with the president or the first lady. I'm talking about Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan. But the handwriting was on the wall, so how do you prepare the president for this?

MARTIN: That was a long and arduous effort, and a fascinating one to be involved in, to watch. I didn't have any Philippine experience, so I couldn't be directly involved, but I was included in all the discussions that were going on. I give a lot of credit to John Maisto, who was the country director for Philippine Affairs. He had served in the Philippines, was married to a Filipina, and, in my perspective, he was the one that realized that there had to be a change of policy toward Marcos. And so he began working quietly, but effectively, within the bureau -- first persuading the front office of this, including Paul Wolfowitz, who then escalated it (with John's help) up the ranks of the State Department, to the secretary, and finally to convince Shultz of the need for a change; and then they all went to work on the president. I think that was very effective, very well done. Everybody was included -- the CIA, DOD. The Monday afternoon informal, the EAP informal, was a very good mechanism for discussing these problems. There were a lot of differences. There was a lot of feeling that we couldn't just let Marcos go. The military, the security side of the house, naturally was concerned about the bases if we cut off Marcos. Marcos played this beautifully of course saying "You have to support me, or we'll kick you out of the bases." So Clark (AFB) and Subic (Naval Base) became hostages to Marcos, in keeping the U.S. behind him. It went right up to the very end. I think it was finally Shultz and the NSC, going to Senator Laxalt, and getting Laxalt finally to push Reagan over the edge. Laxalt was a Senator from Nevada and a close friend of the Reagans who finally persuaded him that Marcos had to go. It was a fascinating time to watch how our policy was slowly, slowly eroded or changed into what turned out to be the right policy.

Q: But certainly at the working level while you were there, the idea was that Marcos just couldn't keep going.

MARTIN: Correct. At the desk level, that became very apparent, particularly after Aquino was assassinated. That was sort of the final straw, if you will, that broke the back. People realized that this was only going to get worse, and that the bases could not be held hostages. If we had continued to support Marcos, the bases would have been threatened in any case by an increased Communist insurgency, by the increased division within the country. The political opposition was focusing on our role supporting Marcos, and that became a negative. I think once supporting Marcos became a liability to our longer term, more important interests, people began to argue persuasively that it was time to have a change.

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Q: What was the situation '87, when you arrived there?

MARTIN: Well, I missed all the fun with Marcos. That was '86. The election at the end of '85, the people power effort in 1986, and the election of Cory (Corazon) Aquino and assumption of power in February of '86, and Marcos's departure for Hawaii. So I missed all that. I was there for a whole different kind of turbulent period.

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Q: What was your impression of the Aquino government?

MARTIN: My impression was that it was well intentioned. President Aquino was a charismatic person, eager to reestablish democracy in the Philippines, to eliminate the bad influences that the Marcos had engendered - the crony capitalism, human rights abuses, corruption and politicalization of the military. I'm not sure she had the vision or the ability to do that. She said that she was just an ordinary housewife, which she had been. She was certainly smart, she had good leadership qualities, but she didn't really have the support of the people who after overthrowing Marcos, returned to their usual fractious selves and refused to compromise their interests for the greater, national good.. She was unable to overcome her "class background," if I can use that term. She came from an oligarchic family - landowners in Pampanga and Tarlac where her family had a large hacienda estate. I felt that when she first came to power, the way she did come to power with overwhelming support, what was called People's Power, that she could have had carte blanche to make major changes. She could have done just about anything. If she had been able to rise above her origins, and been able to initiate effective land reform, to mandate the breaking up of the large land estates, she could have made a much more successful start than she did. She couldn't do that. She was unwilling or unable to do it. I think more unable to do that. Part was her family's pressure on her; part was her determination not to rule by decree as Marcos had. Rather, she turned to the Congress which was both parochial and controlled by oligarchic interests

She was also very conservative in her views, with a strong Catholic background. The church had been critical in overthrowing the Marcoses; and I think that Cory was beholding to the church, which, of course, is one of the most conservative Catholic churches in the world. She did not touch population control, which was desperately needed in the Philippines, and a number of other issues which I think would have been helpful.

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Q: I take it, in a way, certainly from the diplomatic perspective, this must have been a relief, wasn't it?

MARTIN: My personal belief was that our bases had tipped the balance of U.S.- Philippine bilateral relations totally out of alignment. Everything we did diplomatically, economically or culturally was seen as being in support of our security military presence. Our bilateral relations were dominated by the bases. So in many ways I think it was useful that the bases left. The navy, of course, complained that it might as well scuttle the fleet and fall back to San Diego because it would never be able to operate in the western Pacific again. Fortunately, it found a way to do so. It is a little bit more complicated, and the sailors, I think, all missed Olongapo liberty; but other than that, the U.S. Navy has been able to survive in the Pacific. The post-9/11 U.S. military return to the Philippines and its counter-terrorism activities is a whole different story.

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Q: What was the situation when you got to Manila in '96?

MARTIN: The situation had changed dramatically. I had left in mid-1990, six months after the December 1989 coup attempt; a couple weeks after the Baguio earthquake, which had destroyed much of the hill station of Baguio and other towns in northern Luzon; and a year before Mount Pinatubo, which had buried much of Zambales Province, Clark Air Base and parts of Subic under ash and lahar. A year later, in 1992, the Philippine senate had voted to not renew the base agreement. The U.S. Air Force had actually evacuated Clark because of the volcano, but Subic was closed in the fall of '92, leaving no U.S. military presence in the Philippines except for the attaches and JUSMAG in the Embassy. So when I came back in '96, it was really quite a different situation.

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Q: What is your impression of the Philippine Congress?

MARTIN: The Congress continued to be a colorful institution. Members are great at seeking publicity through hearings on nearly any subject. There's never a shortage of laws. The problem is that the country is "overlawed" but the laws are not enforced. Senators are elected nationwide. So all 24 of them have the same nationwide constituency as the president, and feel that they are as good as, if not better than, the president. Elections are really a popularity contest. People with national name recognition tend to get elected. They are either from old, well-known families or media, sports or film stars. It would be like Katie Couric, Diane Sawyer, or Michael Jordan running for the Senate because everybody knows who they are and would vote for them.

The House of Representatives tends to be parochial. Members are influential figures in their provinces or municipalities, and focus on getting the pork for their districts. Many are from the old families that have been the politicians in the Philippines for decades, if not centuries. You look back at the Philippine-American War, back in the early 1900s, and some of the families that were involved in politics a hundred years ago are still in politics.

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Q: Were there any residual Marcos groups sitting around pouting or being a problem?

MARTIN: When I was in Manila the first time, we used to talk in biblical terms about the earthquake, fire, and pestilence. Shortly before I left, the Baguio earthquake occurred. The year after I left, we had the fire when Mount Pinatubo erupted. And when I came back, the pestilence had returned in the form of Imelda Marcos. We used to joke that the Philippines had to face all these biblical catastrophes.

Imelda was certainly around. She had been elected to the House of Representatives, and was very visible around town with all of her jewelry, but at the same time saying how poor she was, and how difficult life was now. There were still a few Marcos's kids around. I did go up to Marcos' home province of Ilocos Norte where she kept Ferdinand's body under glass. She had refused to bury Ferdinand when she brought his body back from Hawaii because she wanted to have a state funeral and bury him in the national cemetery, the Manila counterpart of Arlington Cemetery. The government had refused her wish as it did not want to create a rallying point and monument for Marcos supporters. So Imelda built a mausoleum in his home province where his body was on display. It was quite a bizarre, morbid monument. I think she may have copied the mausoleums of Lenin, Mao and Ho Chi Min.

The surviving Marcos family members continued to dominate Ilocos Norte politics. Daughter Imee was a Congresswoman, son Bongbong (Ferdinand, Jr.) was Governor, and various members of her family, the Romualdezes, also were still active in politics. But other than making sure that none of the court cases against them succeeded, and the hunt for their hidden wealth

was obstructed, they weren't a big political factor anymore. The country had moved on beyond that.

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Q: How was our reporting on Estrada? Was it reserved? Or were we saying, "Oh, my God?

MARTIN: I think a little of both. We kept in touch with him. I saw him from time to time. Tom and I both visited with him. Initially, he was a little cool to us because he didn't want to be seen as too close to the Americans. But as he began to run for president, he reached out and invited us to dinner several times, and wanted to get together. One of his aides keesp in pretty close touch with us so that we knew what he was doing and we had a channel to communicate with him. We reported on what he was doing but initially, nobody thought he had a chance of winning. As we got closer to the election, it looked like he had a better chance, and in fact, he did win.
Q: You were still there when he came into office.

MARTIN: Oh, yes.

Q: Yes. Did we see this as not signifying good things for the Philippines? How did business people view him?

MARTIN: I think we all were a little dubious as to what sort of an administration he'd 173 have; whether or not this was going to be something that was going to continue the upward track that Ramos had initiated. We'd been quite pleased with Ramos. He had done well until toward the end of his term when he explored the idea of staying on for a second term. Under the 1987 post-Marcos Philippine constitution, presidents are limited to one six-year term. So they're not allowed to run again sequentially.

There were a lot of rumors around town that Ramos wanted to run again, that maybe there would be a coup that would allow him to do it, that he would try to force through a constitutional amendment that would allow a second term, etc. The active Manila rumor mill worked overtime. Cory Aquino and Cardinal Sin got involved and held big rallies against Ramos. So there was a political split there (although Cardinal Sin had opposed Ramos' election in 1992 because Ramos was Methodist not Catholic). The rallies caused a lot of heat and emotion around town. My assessment is that Ramos probably did toy with the idea of running again by amending the constitution. I don't think he ever toyed with the idea of a coup, but his military background, his involvement in the overthrow of Marcos, kept many people on edge.

This did not help the investment climate, particularly right after the 1997 Southeast Asian financial crisis. The Philippines was not as badly affected by the crisis as neighbors Thailand and

Indonesia or South Korea but the economic takeoff Ramos' had helped begin slowed. One comment was that the Philippine takeoff had not gained much altitude so the landing was not as hard as others who had been flying higher. In the end, Ramos wisely backed off from his effort to stay in office, the election was held, and Estrada was elected. But Cory and Ramos had come to loggerheads and the bad blood has lasted.

Q: How did we respond to the Estrada inauguration? Were we reserved? Who went? Were we saying, "Okay. He's been elected. Let's really try to work with this guy and hope he'll be on the right track." Or was it a matter of sitting back and saying, "Well, they elected him, and let's see how it goes," and "We're an observer."

MARTIN: We were forward leaning. We said, "Let's work with him. Let's see if we can do it. We figured it would be a big change from Ramos, as it was. He was a bit of an unknown even though we'd been in touch with him. He told us he wanted to have good relations with us, and was anxious to work closely with the embassy and the U.S. We were not sure how it was going to work out, but we were willing to give him a chance and work as closely as we could.

Q: How did we view the insurgency? There were various insurgencies, weren't there?

MARTIN: Oh, yes, almost as many as Burma, not quite! Ramos had reached a peace agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Mindanao, headed by Nur Misuari. That rebellion had been going on for many years, and the 1996 agreement raised hopes the conflict would be resolved. In fact, the second month I was there, in September of 1996, I was still the chargé, so attended the peace agreement signing at Malacañang Palace. The peace agreement called for the MNLF to end its revolt and for Nur Misuari to become the governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao 174 (ARMM), consisting of several provinces in Mindanao. The agreement provided for a four-year program to set up this autonomous area in which the Muslims would begin to run some of their own internal affairs, begin to improve the livelihood of their people and provide alternate employment for the former in MNLF fighters. USAID was quite involved. We spent some time down in Mindanao, starting new agricultural and livelihood programs for the former combatants.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) , a more religiously oriented splinter group of the MNLF, refused to go along with the peace agreement that Misuari had negotiated with the government and continued to conduct operations.

In addition to that, the extremist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which we now know a lot more about, was holed up on Basilan Island, off of Zamboanga. They weren't as active in my early days, but subsequently, they became violent bandits who kidnapped people for ransom.

In addition, remnants of the New People's Army (NPA) of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) continued to operate in a number of provinces but was much less a threat to the government than it had been during Marcos' years. CPP leaders were still running the NPA from exile in the Netherlands but internal splits and purges had reduced the New People's Army to a much smaller group kept alive by banditry and revolutionary "taxes.

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Q: When you left the Philippines in 1990 were things changing on the ground in the region?

MARTIN: Yes. Vietnam was over. The Soviet Union was rapidly crumbling and the Soviet threat was disappearing. China was behaving itself although relations were chilly 131 after the 1989 Tiananmen incident. The Philippine domestic insurgencies seemed to be settling down. I think the people began to realize that perhaps everyone needed to have another good look at the bases to decide whether or not they were still important.

My personal view was that the bases had totally unbalanced the US-Philippine bilateral relationship. The security side of it, the base side of it, had tipped the balance totally out of kilter. Filipinos interpreted everything we did in the embassy that whole period was interpreted as being base related. When we released opinion poll results showing that a majority of the Filipinos supported the bases, opponents said we were trying to influence public opinion. When we offered economic assistance, or even typhoon disaster relief, the view was, "Oh, the Americans are doing this to try to influence the base talks." Everything we did - visas; consular affairs, (which is a big business in the Philippines), public diplomacy; economic relationships; visits by high officials from the U.S. - every time we had a high official, the press always said, "Oh! You brought somebody else here to beat on us or twist our arms over the bases." So no matter what we did, whether totally unrelated to the defense relationship or not, it was seen through that nationalistic lens.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

JAMES R. MEENAN
USAID
Project Manager for Economic Development
Philippines
Manila, Philippines
(1983-1987)

Mr. James Meenan was born in Rhode Island in 1941. He completed his undergraduate education at Woodbury College. He joined USAID in 1965. His overseas postings included

Monrovia, Saigon, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, Colombo and Manila. He retired in 1992. After retiring, he became a member of the AFSA-PAC Advisory Board. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Topical Focus – United States Bases in the Philippines, Marcos Government

Q: What was your next assignment?

MEENAN: We were pleased to next be assigned to the USAID program in Manila, Philippines from 1983 through 1987.

A couple of days after our arrival at Post in 1983, Mr. Benigno S. Aquino was killed and the remaining years to 1987 saw the collapse of the economy and the downfall of the 31 Marcos government. We lived in Magallanes Village on the outskirts of Makati, that was the focal point for the "people's power revolution", with the international airport to the rear of the compound. At one point the rear wall of the compound fell and for some time we had the problem of flooding in the houses during heavy rain storms.

I worked closely with Philippine governors and mayors on the design/management of over 3,000 economic development projects with a value of $210 million. These projects accounted for the funds the U.S. was providing the country to pay for the use of Clark Airbase and Subic Naval operations.

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Q: How was the economy during these times?

MEENAN: Much like Chile during its turmoil, we had the unpleasant experience of watching the national economy collapse to the point that only the informal (black market) sector was functioning. An interesting thing for the Philippines is their shadow economy, the informal structure literally kept the country somewhat functioning until some semblance of order could be restored. That literally—those informal structures and little shops—kept that economy alive, and people were able to eat and shop even when the national economy collapsed on them.

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Q: How did Marcos exit the country?

MEENAN: When the Marcos administration did fall, he was escorted from the Presidential Palace to the U.S. Embassy grounds on his small boat, whose mast had to be chopped to fit under

a low bridge. Later some USAID staff was called to the Embassy to assist with loading Marcos' heavy bags so he could be transported by helicopters to Clark Air Base.

Related to Marcos' departure was the work of a regional USAID staffer in the Clark Airbase area, who had good Philippine contacts. One of Marcos's colleagues, Eduardo Cojuangco, Jr. then head of San Miguel Corp., also needed to be matched up with the departing flight. This staffer knew Cojuangco, so he made contact, drove him, hiding in the rear of his vehicle, past the Philippine guards and onto Clark Airbase in time to make the exit flight with Marcos.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

LESTER E. EDMOND
Department of State
Asian Development Bank
U.S. Executive Director
Manila, Philippines
(1979-1981)

Mr. Edmond was born on April 28, 1922, in New York City. He received a B.B.A. from the College of the City of New York in 1943, an M.P.A. from the Littauer School of Public Administration in 1948, and an M.A. (1949) and Ph.D. (1950) in economics from the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Edmond was a Foreign Service officer and served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from 1974 to January 1977. As an international economist, Edmond worked in the Bureau of Economic Affairs, in Washington, and with the Office of Philippines and Southeast Asia Affairs. He was also stationed in the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, Helsinki, and the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris as economic officer and counselor. Edmond received a Presidential Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Improvement in Government Operations in 1964.

Topical Focus – Human Rights, U.S.–Bank Relations

EDMOND: Soon after my arrival in Manila, actually in October 1979, in response to growing American concern over human rights violations world wide, Congress passed a law instructing U.S. executive directors at international financial institutions to use human rights criteria in voting on development loans. We were to oppose loans for countries the State Department determined to be "gross violators" of human rights, unless the loans were aimed at basic human needs. Earlier in the month, U.S. executive directors at the Inter-American Development Bank and the African Development Fund had abstained on or opposed loans for Argentina and the Central African Empire These actions attracted

considerable attention internationally and my fellow Board members were alerting themselves to the possibility that a similar action would take place at the ADB. Then on October 31, under State Department instructions, I voted "yes" on a rural road project for South Korea, but abstained on a power development loan to the same country. That vote probably caused the largest outburst of anger ever displayed at the ADB Board despite the fact that the loan was otherwise unanimously approved by the Board. Many of the other directors including some who sympathized with our concern for human rights were angered because, in their view, the United States violated the ADB's Articles of Agreement which specifically forbade the use of political criteria in evaluating loans. Several directors wished to issue a formal expression of regret, a public condemnation that undoubtedly would have seriously strained US relations with the Bank. I literally spent hours attempting to assuage the ill feelings of some of the directors. I approached others, who were more sympathetic to the US position, to persuade them to argue in their caucus against taking any drastic position vis a vis the United States. I persuaded most that an open conflict would only serve to harm the ADB and that United States support for the institution would be bound to suffer I kept the President of the Bank up to date on developments and urged him to use his influence to dampen the hostile atmosphere, despite the fact that he personally deplored the Bank's being dragged into a political struggle. Eventually it was agreed that several directors would issue protests to me personally but that they would not make their approaches public. And so the issue was diffused. After that, I found it necessary to issue a dozen or more no votes or abstentions but they no longer created any controversy. Pat Derian, who President Carter appointed to be the point person in the Administration to promote our human rights program, some time later informed me that she regarded me as one of her most effective supporters.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

AMBASSADOR NICHOLAS PLATT
U. S. Ambassador
Philippines
Manila, Philippines
(1987-1991)

Nicholas Platt was born in 1936. He studied at Harvard. Ambassador Platt joined the Foreign Service in 1959 and served as U.S. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Pakistan, Philippines, Zambia, and as a high level diplomat in Canada, China, Hong Kong, and Japan. He is the former president of the Asia Society in New York City. He was interviewed by Paul McCusker in 1994.

Topical Focus – U, S. Bases in the Philippines, Coup d'Etat, Democratic Transition

Q: So then off to Manila. I guess you had a particularly big issue there with the bases, which came up in your tenure didn't they?

PLATT: Yes. There were two major issues. One was the survival of the government and the other was the future of the bases. It made for a very, very complicated and difficult assignment. I arrived, presented my credentials in three days and two days later there was a major coup attempt. Gringo Honasan tried to overthrow the government. I got to know the members of the government really fast. My job was to try to make sure that Mrs. Aquino held her job without making it look like we were doing very much. And that was very hard to do. There was another big coup attempt in December in which we flew planes from Clark that were essentially a demonstration. But I went through major shell and shot in our efforts to support that government. And at the same time to fashion a bases agreement that would work and develop a constituency in the Philippines that would support it. My feeling was that in the new democracy, if you could fashion a really clear consensus in keeping that basing arrangement throughout the country that the Philippine Senate would have to obey it.

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Q: Why didn't she want to run again?

PLATT: She never wanted to run again. She felt that she had an historical duty to lead her country through the transition from a dictatorship to democracy. She felt that she had no choice, that this was the legacy of her husband's assassination, that there was really nobody else who could do it. She had this sense of divine calling as far as that was concerned. She was not good at governing. She was very good at hanging in. She was very brave and tough. She performed best when she was under fire. But when she wasn't under fire and there was this or that particular bill to be gotten through congress or a decision to be brokered through the various agencies, it wasn't easy for her. She wasn't able to show the gratitude that one would have expected one to show to a foreign government. You would have expected that her government would have been much less equivocal about bases negotiations, etc., but the fact of the matter was that our help and our support and our being there during earthquakes and volcanoes, etc. just made it harder for them. It put them under more pressure to show that they were not being taken for granted and standing up to the Yankees, etc.

Consul
Cebu, Philippines
(1983-1985)

Mr. Ifshin was born in 1942 and raised in Brooklyn and Long Island, New York. Ifshin received his degree from Johns Hopkins University. He then started working for the Peace Corps and received training in Hawaii to go to the Philippines. He then entered the Foreign Service in 1967, and has served as officer, analyst, and economist for the Foreign Service from posts in Vietnam, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Malaysia. He was the American Consul to the Philippines in Cebu. He retired in 1993, and was interviewed by David Reuther in 2001.

Topical Focus – Marcos Regime, Protests, Aquino Assassination

Q: Does this mean that you are meeting people who are later who are later going to be important personalities in Manila, or political trends that start in that part of the country that are going to spread...?

IFSHIN: No, I think it was just simply what's going on in that part of the Philippines. It's a significant, I think half the population lives in the Visayas and Mindanau, and as in so many countries, politics tends to be what happens in the capital city. There are things that are happening outside of the capital and what's happening is not unimportant, and I was able to get into the grass roots and hear them there and listen to them. This is a country where, its not a democracy, it's more of an oligarchy than anything else. It's not a democracy in American terms, but it has democratic trappings and what happens outside of the metropole outside of Manila, is important, does count in shaping developments and shaping trends in the country. I was there when Aquino was assassinated, and of course there was a strong reaction throughout the country, including in Cebu and there were demonstrations and a growing movement against President Marcos. I was reporting on that and how people were reacting throughout the country. And Imelda Marcos was from Samar Leyte, which was part of the consular district as well. In fact, what year would it have been... I was there from '83 to '85, in any case it was the off year... the 39th anniversary of the Leyte landing, I ended up being the senior American representative at the anniversary celebrations, which was interesting of course because of course the Japanese sent a big delegation there...

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ULRICH A. STRAUS
Department of State

Country Director
Manila, Philippines
(1982-1984)

Mr. Straus was born in Würzburg, Germany in 1926. Straus moved with his family first to Japan in 1933, and in 1940, upon receiving American visas, he moved with his family to the United States. He joined the foreign service in 1957. Straus served in the military and also as an American diplomat for 30 years, serving in the United States Department of State with positions including United States Counsel General in Okinawa (1978–1982) and Country Director for the Philippines (1982–1984). He retired in 1986 and was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Topical Focus – New People's Army, Marcos Regime, U.S. - Philippine Relations

STRAUS: Right. The situation in the Philippines was a mess. I inherited a mess. It was a mess in the sense that the security situation was bad and getting worse. The NPA, the New Peoples Army, was getting stronger as the government of Marcos was becoming more ruthless. There were some assassinations that were rather gross, human rights violations, the economy was in a tailspin. So things were not happy there.

Q: When you took over the Desk. Again you were the new boy. What was our attitude at that time towards the Marcos regime that you were getting from the people you were talking to in Washington?

STRAUS: I think the general attitude was that we weren't very happy with Marcos, we saw a lot of the things he was doing wrong, but we could play ball with him and there didn't seem to be anybody who could topple him from power. There didn't seem to be any organization in the Philippines capable of doing that. This was certainly the feeling among many Filipinos as well. I had the feeling, particularly as we got into 1983, that if reforms were going to be made, it was going to have to be Marcos who made them. And this was said by some members of the opposition as well. That was one thing.

I remember talking to Raul Manglapus, who was the Foreign Minister for Mrs. Aquino later on but at that time was in exile in Washington, and his line was essentially this. He said, "Rick, you Americans brought us democracy. Marcos has taken it away from us. It is your responsibility to restore it." It is very typically Filipino to say that and to mean that. My efforts to disabuse him of this and say, particularly after the Aquino assassination, "If you Filipinos took the initiative then I think American sympathy and support would not be lacking." But that was not really the Filipino way. It was on my watch that Aquino was assassination and that came as a real shock.

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Q: This was at the height of the Reagan administration. Did you have the feeling that Reagan was a creature of the American right and the Marcoses had spent a lot of time and effort in cultivating this group. Did you have a feeling that one had to be a bit Careful?

STRAUS: Let me say this. I think the first year of my work on the Desk was concerned with the renegotiation of the base agreement which was due every five years. The previous negotiation had been extraordinarily difficult and the Filipinos had asked for all kinds of things that we were unwilling to provide them. In this case, the Filipinos proved relatively accommodating, although there was a certain amount of quibbling over the price of what we would pay for the use of the bases. So the negotiations, partly because I think we worked reasonably well with the Defense Department, and partly because the negotiations in the Philippines were conducted very well. It was a very smooth operation. Marcos had ironclad control, I think, on their side. He wanted, I think, to retain Reagan's goodwill and they were concluded in less time then anyone would have thought possible. Everybody felt very good about it.

Then the next thing that happened was the state visit of Marcos. Now Marcos had been denied a state visit for quite a while, ever since he had declared martial law. He had lifted martial law but this was under the Carter administration, and they felt there were still things Marcos should be doing. But Reagan said yes...this was before my coming on board. The Reagans did this sort of thing with a good deal of grace and charm. Mrs. Marcos really put on the charm. I couldn't stand her, she was a terrible woman. This was the time when we were at the White House and everything was going smoothly. It was a beautiful evening in the spring and we were out in the garden...everything was lovely.

Then came the assassination. In fact, on the Desk, having polished off the Marcos state visit, which both the White House and Marcos were very happy over, and having polished off the negotiations for the base agreement in a way that people were quite happy about...because these base agreements always have an effect on other base agreements around the world, so we had to keep that in mind. We kind of looked at each other and said, "What's left to do?"

Marcos had staged this phony election, but he was going to be in power for quite a long time. There was no real hope on the part of anybody that he could be derailed.

And then everything started changing with the assassination. There was the beginning of some real pressures within the Philippines society. Although, as I said, they really felt that

Marcos, who came in as you recall as a reformer and had a sort of Kennedyesque image not only in the Philippines, was the only guy to get them out of their troubles. We did all kinds of contingency papers.

After the Aquino assassination we started distancing ourselves from the administration of Marcos. We wrote some fairly tough human rights reports quite critical of the Marcos government. But at the same time he was the guy in power and there didn't seem to be any alternative.

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Q: What were you getting from the Embassy as the situation unraveled?

STRAUS: That despite everything Marcos was very much still in control. And that the opposition who obviously sought to capitalize on this event was still weak and very much divided and not all that effective. I got the sense in my travel over there, as well as from some of the reporting, that even people in the opposition felt that real reform in the Philippines could come only with the cooperation and under the leadership of Marcos. That was kind of the weird thing that was going on.

Q: Were there any leaders in the opposition that were sort of bandied about?

STRAUS: Oh, sure. One was Raul Manglapus, for example, who was in exile in the US and whom I used to see. Later he became the Foreign Minister for Mrs. Aquino. I guess that what I recall most about Manglapus, when I met him on one or two occasions and discussed changes in the Philippines, was that he was want to say, "Rick, the United States brought democracy to the Philippines. Marcos has taken it away. Consequently it is your responsibility to restore it." I tried to disabuse him of that and said, "If the Philippine people would take some required action to move towards democracy, he would find the United States in support of that."

But there was, to my taste any way, too much of an overwhelming feeling in the Philippines that nothing happened there without the United States having willed it. Not a leaf fell from a tree without usually the CIA having orchestrated that. I found that rather discouraging. I thought it required a fundamental change in our relationship to bring that about, although I didn't see how that was going to happen anytime soon.

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Q: Can we talk about how events develops, particularly as you saw them from the Desk,

and how you felt the Embassy was responding to these events?

STRAUS: Yes. Well, it was clear both politically and economically that the Philippines were in a growing malaise. The one, of course, was feeding on the other. The Philippines, say in the 1960s, in most respects was the leading country in Southeast Asia, and had become by the middle 1980s probably at the bottom of the heap. And that had been through an accumulation of Marcos policies. There was widespread corruption. This is all quite aside from the assassination, which just added another dimension to it.

So, how to get out of this mess? There were all kinds of scenarios that were being written back here to which the Embassy contributed. Mike Armacost was the ambassador at the time and I don't think I have ever seen an ambassador write messages which were as adept in understanding how to get from point A to point B in the bureaucracy. Absolutely superb. Extremely intelligent, goal oriented. He had some excellent meetings with Marcos where he tried to move Marcos to a better position on human rights, which, of course, was a great concern of ours. But it wasn't easy because Marcos' main goal by that point was to remain in power at all cost. And he still had most of the levers of power.

POLAND

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

KEITH C. SMITH
SEED Program
(1987-1992)

Keith C. Smith built a distinguished Foreign Service career spanning Latin America, Europe, and Eastern Europe from 1962 onward. His work included political analysis, Cold War diplomacy, democracy promotion, and security affairs, with postings in Mexico, Ecuador, Venezuela, Hungary, and Portugal. He also served in senior State Department roles focused on NATO, the Falklands War, Northern Ireland, and post-communist democratic and economic development in Eastern Europe.

Topical Focus – U.S. Assistance and the Reinvention of Eastern Europe, SEED

Q: Having got caught up in the whole collapse of the whole system essentially, starting in November of '89.

SMITH: November of '89 was a key period that changed the direction of my career. After spending a year in the Latin American Bureau, the Berlin wall fell and Soviet control over Eastern Europe collapsed. We watched television at home every night as events unfolded in Berlin. It was an emotional time for me and for many others who had lived under communist regimes in East Central Europe. In June of 1990, I was approached by Ambassador Robert Berry, who was putting together a team to work on East European assistance. The group was to work directly under Deputy Secretary of State, Larry Eagleburger. Congress had only shortly before passed the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) program, with an initial appropriation of $300 million to provide U.S. assistance to Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. The objective was to give these countries a hand in converting their communist systems to democratic market economies. We were somewhat naïve in thinking that the relatively small amounts of money we could give them would change things rapidly, but it did help these countries somewhat with the painful transition. The SEED program was only about one-twentieth the size as the Marshall Plan had been. But it was exciting adventure for all of us who were involved in the program. Sometimes, however, it was quite confusing for the proposed beneficiaries.

Q: Well you did this from when to when?

SMITH: From mid- 1990 to mid-1992, I worked under Barry and Deputy Secretary Eagleburger.

Q: I've interviewed Bob Berry and we served in Yugoslavia together at one point, as a vice counsel. You've already explained a bit, but what were you specifically doing?

SMITH: At first, I was given the task of drawing up a long term plan concerning economic and democratic development activities that the U.S. should undertake in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. We tried to differentiate between economic restructuring, democracy building, and education/training. Also, I was asked to oversee much of the activities in Eastern Europe of USAID, our assistance agency. Because USAID had had no prior experience working in Eastern Europe and State had little experience in delivering foreign assistance, it was a challenge for everyone. Our office was charged with setting assistance policy, and USAID with transforming the policy into effective assistance programs in the three countries. Not surprisingly, USAID had its own ideas concerning what should be done. Many USAID people didn't even want the U.S. to be involved in Eastern Europe, because it was not one of the world's most poverty- stricken areas. Some of the USAID people were not comfortable giving money to what they saw as a political program. Those in the USAID leadership, however, were very much on board with the SEED program and they were a pleasure to work with. I learned a lot regarding development issues, and I hope they learned something about Eastern Europe from me.

The SEED program's budget, at least for the first three years, was approximately $350 million. We had to make decisions quite rapidly because the situation in Eastern Europe would not wait and we knew that Congress would not appropriate large amounts for more than a few years. It was particularly interesting to deal with environmental and energy issues and to work with people from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). USAID energy specialists assisted with energy efficiency programs. Eastern Europe had been one of the most energy wasteful regions in the world. Under communism, no one tracked the cost of individual energy consumption. We provided assistance to journalists' associations in Poland and Hungary. We tried to avoid giving balance of payments support to governments, but we did set up enterprise funds, that provided loans to small and medium sized enterprises. We had a $250 million enterprise fund in Poland alone. I think it was very successful. It has now been liquidated and the funds turned over to the Polish American Freedom Forum, who are engaged in a terrific job of outreach to the people of Ukraine and Belarus, and to Russians in the Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad. I visit the Forum in Warsaw from time to time. During the early 1990s, we established several enterprise funds in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Baltic States.

Eagleburger and Bob Barry were convinced that the assistance effort would only be needed for 2-3 years. I was proven right was when I told them that the job could not be done through a three year program. It was going to take several more years to make the changes irreversible. Some of our programs were excellent. Other projects were less successful. One of the continuing policy questions revolved around how much assistance guidance we should take from the countries

themselves. Generally, there was a sense that the new leaders didn't know what they needed, so we would simply inform them about the programs we would support. Looking back, I think we should have listened more to local officials. Nevertheless, I remember going to Poland on one occasion to talk about our assistance program with local officials. I met with three different government ministers and each of them thought that they should be running the assistance program in their country. They had three very distinct ideas of what we should be doing. So it's hard to say that we were totally wrong and they were totally right. It's a very complex issue. Years later, I worked in the Baltic States and had to deal with our assistance programs as chargé and ambassador. Ironically, back in 1992, I helped establish the whole U.S. assistance program in the Baltic States. Living in the region later on gave me an opportunity to see what had worked and what had not. Economic and political development has always fascinated me, and I continue to work on these issues even though I am no longer in government.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

LLOYD W. NEIGHBORS
USIA
Community for Democracies Initiative
Washington D.C.
(1999-2000)

Lloyd W. Neighbors served a wide-ranging career as a U.S. Information Agency and Foreign Service public diplomacy officer, specializing in Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. His postings in Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Brazil, Burma, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere focused on cultural diplomacy, media relations, exchange programs, and U.S. foreign policy communication during major geopolitical transitions including normalization with China, Tiananmen Square, 9/11, and the USIA-State Department merger.

Topical Focus: Community of Democracies First Conference Location Selection - Poland

NEIGHBORS: Halperin realized from the beginning that CD would fail if it were seen as solely an American initiative. So CD's first effort was to recruit a core group of like-minded democratic nations to act as conveners of the first conference. Our first choice was easy: Poland. Ten years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Poland was thriving, a model for other nations seeking to make the transition from authoritarian state to democracy. On other projects Secretary Albright and Halperin had worked well with Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek . Geremek played a key role in the rise to power of Solidarity and the establishment of representative government in Poland. Albright sounded him out about CD, and from the first Geremek was enthusiastic. Soon Poland agreed to host the first CD conference in Warsaw in the summer of 2000. To fill out the

roster of convening nations, we also recruited India, Mali, the Czech Republic, Chile, South Africa, and South Korea.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

MICHAEL G. ANDERSON
Department of State
Consular/Political Officer
Poland
Warsaw, Poland
(1979-1981, 1990-1993)

Mr. Stevenson was born in Berwyn, Illinois and raised in Wheaton, Illinois. He attended the University of Illinois in Champaign and the University of Chicago, taught inner-city kids in Chicago, and spent a year studying in France. He entered the Foreign Service in 1973 and worked in various positions in Italy, Poland, Pakistan, and especially Washington D.C. He also taught at the Coast Guard Academy.

Topical Focus – Political Climate in Post-Soviet Poland

ANDERSON: By the time I got there, in fact, Bernie Opel who was my predecessor, had already started covering the developments of the strikes and so on that were breaking out in Lublin and Gdansk. I think even when I was down in the consular section I had been helping him a little bit to try and pick up whatever we could on what was going on. The summer of 1980 was a period of huge events in Poland. I think a lot of it was lost sight of back here because of our own political situation and so on. Also because of the hostage crisis that had been dominating things in Iran. I remember that vividly. Up until January of 1981 when they were finally released. You know the deterioration of the situation in Poland wasn't sudden. It had been working its way down and by the summer of 1980 we had strikes breaking out over in Lublin and then up in Gdansk especially on the Baltic. This is something that had already happened in 1970 and again in 1976. I think during the 1976 events they had formed this committee called KOR (Komitet Obrony Robotnikow) which was the committee for the defence of the workers. They were involved in some of these areas and that was the work of Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik and those people. Others were Catholic intellectuals being called in to try to help the workers to formulate their demands. One was Tadeusz Mazowiecki who was of the Catholic party. He became Poland's first non-communist prime minister in the post-war era in 1990. Be that as it may, there was an awful lot going on and I was just sort of thrown into it. I did speak better Polish than, I don't think I spoke better Polish than Bernie, but I spoke better Polish than John Vought who came in. I think he didn't speak much Polish at all or read it. Nick Andrews who was our DCM however was a very fluent Polish speaker and reader so he was actually an integral part you might say of the reporting.

Q: How was the Polish government responding to these strikes? What were they doing?

ANDERSON: I suppose it was the combination of the carrot and the stick. They were trying to offer the workers who were on strike a concession. The whole thing started over a raising of the meat prices which is exactly what happened in 1970. Polish workers consumed large quantities of meat, pork I would guess and the price of that meat seems to have been a kind of a sore point and when it was raised in 1970 that set off the strikes that resulted in killing quite a few workers actually. So they didn't want a repeat of 1970. They were very, very conscious of the fact that these were workers and if they came down on them with a military reaction as they had in 1970 it would have drastic repercussions. There was in other words a real, real political price that had to be paid so they were trying to find some way to separate these workers from the radicals, the activists, the KOR people. They're harassing the KOR people; they're arresting them, they're trying to put them and split these people off from the working sort of element without too much success. What you were finding was that people like Walesa and others are emerging now as a kind of revolutionary working class. They have a higher consciousness in a sense and they see these activists like Kuron as being people who are essential to their success and so they are protecting them, they keep them in the shipyard for instance or otherwise protect them from the authority. I think as I say, the problems started when Piotr Jaroszewicz was the prime minister up to February 1980. He was a corrupt guy. Gierek was also corrupt.

Q: When you say corrupt in the Polish sense, what do you mean?

ANDERSON: Well, they all took trips to Western Europe where they had apartments in Paris or other places. They went on shopping trips. They had luxurious hunting lodges in the southern part of Poland. Both Jaroszewicz and Gierek and others. There of course had been total censorship of the press so most people weren't aware of this but of course those who were now were able to get that information out into the public media and what happened is that they started Solidarity, it wasn't quite Solidarity yet. One of the first things that happened is that censorship started to break down. Leaflets became available, flyers run off on illegal photocopy machines or Xerox or old fashioned duplicating machines. These things were then handed out and of course they started to establish places where diplomats and journalists could go and pick up information. So we began to learn an awful lot about the underside of Polish party life. Maybe our intelligence people had known this stuff all along. I don't know. But to the average Pole these revelations about the high life of the party officials contrasted with the poverty of your typical worker and the worsening situation that they had. That I would say was one of the key elements in discrediting the party for most people.

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Q: What was your impression of some of the Solidarity people? Solidarity had not yet become a full pledged organization, had it, while you were there?

ANDERSON: Certainly not by the beginning of say the summer. I suppose in the fall of 1980 they came down to Warsaw. I don't know if it was the fall of 1980 or spring of 1981 and they had to register. This was a big thing. Register their by-laws, their credentials with the court in Warsaw. There was to be a hearing and everything. I mean they had been around but not recognized by the government. Of course their banners were in place and they had a lot of public image and the poster and the Solidarity banner was kind of everywhere.

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ANDERSON: Oh yes. There certainly was a lot of change and the change was going on as we got there. You could see it happening before your eyes. The consumer revolution had struck which is the way I see it. It had ceased to be a political issue and was more of an economic issue at this point I'd say. Although obviously the development, I think it was 1989 already, the Mazowiecki government had come in. They had some kind of communist majority, fake majority in the parliament there, Sejm, as it is called. Then that had been swept away in another election. They had set up this kind of attempt to have a controlled democracy. A controlled election there so it would guarantee that the communist would still retain hold over at least one House of Parliament. In any case, by the time I got there in the summer of 1990 the communists had been pushed now really out of power altogether, except that General Jaruzelski remained as president a while longer, until he was replaced by Lech Walesa in December 1990. Tadeusz Mazowiecki was the prime minister when I arrived there, a Catholic intellectual who had been an advisor to Solidarity during the strikes of 1980 and 81 and then I suppose had been interned at one point and then released and whatever. Bronislaw Geremek was another Catholic intellectual who eventually became foreign minister there and so on. These guys were the moderate voice of reform in a situation where the country was more interested in economic issues I would say. People saw their economic security evaporating, not that it was great to begin with but they did see that there was inflation, people didn't have enough money, a lot of jobs disappeared as a lot of these uneconomical state concerns were closed down. Unemployment was way, way up. I have no idea what the percentage was. Here they were trying to bring about a new regime or a new democratic way of life in Poland at the same time of course that the economic situation had disintegrated.

Q: Poland, I mean all these eastern European countries sort of chose different paths. As I recall Poland had chosen to sort of bite the bullet and make the change to a capitalist economy and to suffer the hard knocks.

ANDERSON: That was the theory. Jeffrey Sachs's "shock therapy" or whatever they called it. The idea being that there is no easy transition from a communist non-market to a market economy. You kind of have to do it all at once which in my opinion is baloney. I don't think there is any truth to that. You see what's going on over in China right now. In fact it just proves what Sachs was saying that in fact they've managed to, okay they're getting rid of their state sector, but they're doing it gradually. What they have managed to do of course is to finance this whole old sector with the vast profits that they are making through cheap labor and exporting their goods to the west. Poland never succeeded in doing that. Of course China's ace in the hole was that it had all this cheap labor and is able to get all this foreign investment. Poland didn't attract foreign investment that way. That was the missing element obviously and it still hasn't really attracted foreign investment in anything like the amounts that they would have liked to. While I was there there was very little foreign investment.

Q: What was your job at the embassy?

ANDERSON: I was doing reporting on political developments internally. I'm trying to think. I also did a lot of running back and forth to the foreign ministry. I sort of had a mixed portfolio. I did some of the new parties. There had been a number of new parties formed, when the Sejm, the Polish parliament, was elected on a free basis and I think they had their free elections like in 1990 shortly after I got there and shortly before, I can't remember. There were maybe 20 different parties. Then the Solidarity Coalition sort of started to split up. I always thought of Solidarity as the germ cell for the future civic or free society of Poland. Of course it included everything from right wing kind of neo-liberal type thinkers all the way over to socialists, Kuron and people like that. There was no coherence to it. All it had in its coherence was they were all anti-communist. They all wanted to get rid of that. Once that regime was gone why then you saw this germ cell sort of split up into all these different organs if you will, all these different pieces. I was following the free marketers. One was the *parti przyacziu piwa*. The "beer lover's party" it was called. They actually elected quite a few people to parliament. They were campaigning on the idea that we need to replace vodka consumption with beer. It's a much more healthy drink. It's going to have much less toxic effect. That was partly a joke but partly it was also serious. I think there was a previous attempt to do this down in Czechoslovakia. That's kind of where they got the idea.

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Q: How did you find dealing with political parties? Was the process that they were learning how to be political parties or were they all over the place or what?

ANDERSON: In a new situation like that where there is no previous experience being politicians. These were all guys who had been, I don't know where a lot of them came from, out of academia, some of them maybe had been sort of trade union types, but even the trade unions were sort of, free trade unions were a new idea. They were inexperienced. There were an awful lot of personality clashes. People were trying to establish a party really of one it seemed like a lot of times. So you had many, many different rivalries going on, former Solidarity types. There was a pair of twin brothers there -- the Kaczynski brothers -- but in any case they were the head of the Centrum it was called. They called their party the center party which it really wasn't but it was a successor to Solidarity and Solidarity had its own. It couldn't make up its mind whether it was a trade union or a political movement or what it was. It had sort of one foot in and one foot out of the political arena identifying or endorsing various candidates. You had a lot of lawyers, people who had come out of the liberal professions, I would say mainly lawyers, but some teachers and professors who got into the thing without too clear a notion as to what their program was but sort of advancing their own particular interest. I used to cover the parliament quite a bit. Go over because we were just a few steps away from the parliament house. There were constant, seem to be, crises of government because the government could not maintain any kind of a parliamentary majority. They kept splintering. So that was an issue. There was another guy who came in there who was kind of a hardliner. I can't remember his name right now but in any case his backing was more kind of I would say anti-western in a way. Lesczek Mocuzulski was this one guy, it was called the KPN, Committee, what did they call it, not committee, in any case his party was almost proto-fascist kind of group you know. We watched him. Then he was replaced by an American Pole who came over there. A guy named Tyminski. He was a complete and utter nutcase but he got a lot of votes too. They had elections there. I think he was running against

Walesa for president or something. When Walesa decided to run for president that was a big issue. Whether he should do that or not because he had been kind of the hero of the resistance to the communists, but a lot of people didn't think of him as being presidential material. He wasn't distinguished enough. Well that was just a challenge to him to sort of say, well darn, I can be president and of course he did get elected president. He did a credible job I guess. What happened of course is that the movement went on sort of without him. Once you're president it was more of a figurehead position although he tried to make it more of a power spot. Things kind of went on without him and he resented that and there was just a lot of bad feeling between him and government. He was trying to run things out of the Belvedere Palace and the government of course had its own program. So you just had the sense that there was no good political structure there. No parties that were really worth the name. Of course no clear idea of a government program that was agreed upon and no constitutional coherence between the role of the president and that of the prime minister. I think the current guy there, Kwasniewski, and he's been there quite awhile and of course he is a former communist and I knew him when I was there. I think he is called president. The prime minister in other words has lost.

Q: More like the French model.

ANDERSON: That seems to be what it's evolved into. But always before the president had been, under the communists, the presidential office had always been a kind of figurehead one. I don't know whether they have done some, they must have passed some constitutional amendments that I'm not aware of. There was a period, if you will, of incoherence there in terms of where the power lay and how it was to be exercised and where we're going. People of course realized that and I think pretty soon they started to turn back towards the old communists or the former communists. Cimoszewicz, I think his name was, was in there for awhile as prime minister or maybe president and now Kwasniewski. I guess in a way it's kind of what Russia has done with Putin. Of course the Russians never did have a non-communist political class that ever achieved any kind of position. They never had a Catholic intellectual or anything. What you find is that building a political class is something that just doesn't happen overnight. It's like saying, "Oh well, gee we should have a whole class of entrepreneurs here that are going to start running all these businesses that the state used to run." Where are they? They don't exist. You don't just say, "Oh well, they're just going to pop up automatically." They don't. In fact you very often get thugs of one sort of another or just people who have no reason to get into those positions. Opportunists I guess you would say. Both political and economic opportunists who get a hold of power and then you have to root them out eventually because they are dragging things the wrong way.

Q: While you were there, were we interested, were they interested in joining NATO?

ANDERSON: Oh yes.

Q: How was that planned?

ANDERSON: How was it planned? Well, I mean the Solidarity groups were very much in favor of it. This was to them of course the guarantee that they would not be invaded by the Russians who they still felt were a threat. I remember many times hearing from my contact Andrzej Kern

who was the deputy president of the Sejm, "Oh we've got about ten years to get our house in order here because then the Russians are going to get back on their feet." He said this in 1990 or 1993 so I don't think he was really right but let's face it once they are back on their feet they're going to try and take back what they lost. They always looked at the history of the Soviet Union or Russia going back to the Tsarist times that it was not going to accept permanently its loss of status and I think our friends in the Baltic states also feel that way and Ukraine certainly feels that way. It's only a question of time until the Russians get their act together and once they do they are going to try and re-assert their control over this area and that's why they felt NATO the sooner the better. The sooner they got inside that NATO kind of defence line, why then they would feel secure.

Q: Were you saying well cool it because this isn't going to happen right away or what were we saying?

ANDERSON: I can't remember making too much of it. We had a lot of visitors. Colin Powell was out when he was head of Joint Chiefs to talk with their defence secretary or defence minister. I remember going to that meeting and Powell reassuring him that we would stand by them. They shouldn't worry. This was before they were in NATO and trying to work out some cooperative arrangements for training purposes and so on. Our own policy towards the former Soviet Union by that point, because in August of 1991 while I was in Poland, why the thing disintegrated, was obviously up in the air too. The Bush administration was shocked by what happened. Let's face it. They didn't know what to do. They were afraid. They didn't want Germany to reunify too quickly. They were afraid that we would have a very difficult time controlling a reunited Germany. In a sense you could say that Bush was sort of rooting for Gorbachev there for awhile and I think Reagan and the Europeans, the West in general. They thought Gorbachev really, oh you know don't rock the boat here Poles because you know you're going to make it even harder for Gorbachev to try and get this thing under control. Obviously by 1991, August of 1991, with the overthrow of Gorbachev and the coming of Yeltsin and all that. Then we're faced with a very different situation. It was out of control. Nobody was in control of what was happening and our policy was, as best as I could tell, basically we're running along behind what was going on.

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Q: By the way, did the creation of Ukraine do anything in Poland, reaction to this, good, bad, indifferent?

ANDERSON: They did, I recall, some of the Solidarity people went down to help sort of steer Ukraine what they thought would be in the more constructive direction. There was no love lost between Ukrainians and Poles. Of course within Ukraine there was a huge difference between the western portion of the country and the more Russian portion of the eastern part of it and the Poles recognized that. On the border between Ukraine and Poland there was also a sense that Ukraine could be a problem for Poland. I mean on one hand Poland could help Ukraine but on the other hand Ukraine could drag Poland down in a sense because Ukraine could say, "Well we want to be part of Europe and we think we should be part of Europe" and of course Poland says "Wait a minute we're first and you guys are like dead weight, you're a big anchor. We don't want

you vetoing or otherwise obstructing our movement to the west dragging us back." So there was this certain sense that Ukraine could be a sort of trap of some sort for them but I don't think that has materialized either.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

AMBASSADOR THOMAS W. SIMONS, JR.
U. S. Ambassador
Poland
Warsaw, Poland
(1990-1993)

Ambassador Simons was born in Minnesota and raised primarily in the countries of his father's Foreign Service assignments and in the Washington, DC area. He received his education at Yale and Harvard Universities and at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. He also pursued studies in Europe. Entering the Foreign Service in 1963, Mr. Simons had several tours of duty at the State Department in Washington, DC and at the White House, dealing primarily with Foreign Trade and East European affairs. His foreign posts include Warsaw, Moscow, Bucharest and London. He served as United States Ambassador to Poland from 1990 to 1993 and as Ambassador to Pakistan from 1996 to 1998. Ambassador Simons was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Topical Focus – Solidarity, Eastern Bloc

Q: In the first place, what were the political considerations within Congress and the Administration about Poland as you were gearing up to go there?

SIMONS: By the time I was gearing up to go there, Poland had a Solidarity government, which was worked out very much with the help of my predecessor, John Davis, who had been first Charge and then Ambassador all through the '80s; a wonderful diplomat. He had actually been instrumental…he was a kind of a transformational ambassador that Secretary Rice could only dream of later on, because he was in the thick of the negotiations that lead to the Solidarity government in the summer of '89. By that time I was gone; I was already on my way to Brown at that point. Then he was there through the first year in which they put in place the most radical economic reform program in post-Communist Eastern Europe, not to speak of the Soviet Union (which was still the Soviet Union). It was a reform program that was worked out with American advice -- for instance Jeffrey Sachs, then at Harvard, was an advisor -- under the aegis of the man who became the Finance Minister although he wasn't then, Leszek Balcerowicz, an economist who had U.S. training too. These were people who understood the market system, and they had strong views of what reform should consist of, and they had the support of the

Solidarity movement.

Now the infantry of the Solidarity movement was in Poland's large factories, large monopoly factories, so you weren't going to get much privatization of those factories early on. So they had to develop a program that took that into account, and they put that program in place by December of 1989. We had put together a fund of a billion dollars -- $200 million was ours and we got $800 million from other contributors -- to stabilize their currency and to allow a certain convertibility of their currency, and people were putting in place assistance programs to help out. It was tough because you had immediate huge inflation, 600 percent inflation, and a tattering of the social safety net, which was really quite dangerous and doubly so because the main support of the new nonCommunist government were the people who were most likely to suffer from it, the workers in these big factories. So a perilous situation. Then too, the Solidarity leadership to which John Davis was so close had been this amazing coalition, almost miraculous in East European terms, of workers and intellectuals: they were the kinds of people that the Communist governments almost everywhere else succeeded in keeping apart, but they came together in Poland, and that was the secret of the Polish success.

ROMANIA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

FREDERICK A. BECKER
Department of State
Romania Desk Officer
Washington D.C.
(1988-1990)

Frederick A. Becker was born in Missouri in 1943. He graduated from Washington College in St. Louis, and Berkeley and Claremont Graduate Schools. After entering the Foreign Service in 1975, his postings abroad included Bucharest, Brasilia, Quito, Panama City, and Managua. He was interviewed in 2004 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Topical Focus – Ceausescu Government, Food Aid, Democratic Transition

Q: Yes, well, I think this is probably a good place to stop and we'll pick this up the next time. We're still talking about the events of really December '89 and early January of '90. Is there anything else we should cover in that immediate period?

BECKER: I would simply add that conditions and policies were beginning to be developed for U.S. support to post-communist governments and societies, and legislation had been passed already to assist the successor regimes in the other countries to facilitate democratic electoral processes, bureaucratic reforms and socio-economic support. I think this all came together in 1989-90 in a package called the SEED legislation. I can't tell you what SEED stood for, but in fact it was very much organized with Poland and Hungary in mind. It was relatively easy to add new recipients to the package, which included electoral support, introduction of the Peace Corps, and large-scale human exchanges at all levels in Eastern Europe. The framework of a postcommunist policy in the administration was already beginning to take shape at the time, not with Romania in mind but with some of the more advanced countries. There was a great deal of discussion about this. When the regime fell, the critical period of violence passed, and the new leadership took shape in the first months of 1990, we found we had a number of tools to draw up on, and it was simply incumbent on us to apply those tools in the best and most creative way possible. We recognized that the situation in Romania was far worse in terms of what needed to be done to effect a turnaround in the country's political and economic development. Romania needed to reconstruct an economy in shambles and reverse a decade of self-isolation by reestablishing effective international linkages, more than any other country in Eastern Europe.

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Q: Well, the American embassy, let's say even if you've got funds, was there any there to go to? Were you seeing a while you were on the desk a collection of authority that was gathering together or what was happening?

BECKER: What happened within about a week, actually before the New Year, was the emergence of a group of semi-senior and formerly senior party officials who proclaimed themselves a provisional government, a government of national unity or a successor government. They tried to reassure the population that there was continuity of government and that the country was not falling into anarchy, but at the same time tried to convince the citizenry that they did not represent the entire Ceausescu regime. The new leaders were already setting themselves apart from the institutions they had been either loyal to and subordinated to prior to December of '89. Every one of those leaders had a certain stature as a senior communist party member at one time or another. It was very difficult to tell how much change, how much forward movement, and how much linkage with the past would take place. There was no Romanian Vaclav Havel who could epitomize and inspire a democratic opposition to communist rule.

Q: You're talking about the leader of the Czech revolution.

BECKER: The Czech revolution, yes. And there was certainly no Lech Walesa.

Q: Poland.

BECKER: Romanian communities in exile were more or less fragmented and there were very few individuals, intellectuals or others, who stood up and spoke out on behalf of the large, disenfranchised Romanian population. Ceausescu's dictatorship was that effective. What Romanians were presented with was a successor of undetermined loyalty, intention and indeed credentials for putting together what we hoped would be a democratic beginning for the country. Our goals were the same in Romania as they were in the rest of Eastern Europe. Our primary objective once there was some reasonable establishment of order, even though there still were isolated instances of violence attributed to paramilitary actions against citizen groups and public officials. We made it very clear that we wanted to see a democratic transition and we were prepared to put resources and political clout behind an early call for national elections. That was one of the main efforts in which I was involved in the last six months of my desk tour, from January to my departure in the summer of '90. Keep in mind that AID had a lot of experience in other parts of the world with elections, but had no experience in Eastern Europe. AID didn't even have a European bureau, and certainly no experts on transitions from failed communism to successful democracy. That mission came with the legislation that lavished all kinds of resources on Eastern Europe. Many of those newly legislated resources went to other agencies besides State. One of the major Senate architects was Robert Dole, and his wife just happened to be Secretary of Labor, so there was a large labor component to the SEED legislation. We also were ramping up the Peace Corps to teach English in Hungary and other parts, basically to put a U.S. stamp on the transition in Eastern Europe. We needed to play catch-up with Romania.

Q: Were there sort of hurdles that Romania had to do that we were explaining before this money and aid would come in, if they got too communist you don't get this or something like that?

BECKER: I don't recall a lot of the details, but it was clear at the time that many in Washington were somewhat hesitant to throw too many marbles into the Romanian basket. We were prepared to provide incentives for change, but wanted to see results in short order to justify further support. In the winter of '89-90, our immediate goal was to provide PL-480 food aid, and I

believe we did make unconditional food and humanitarian aid grants to Romania, as well as other countries, to provide for victims of winter famine or victims of the unrest. But here were other elements of aid that couldn't flow until some preconditions were met. We had an initial problem that there were no real recognizable structures, either in the government or in civil society, with which to engage to help mobilize and carry out effective and sustainable reforms. Our first instinct was to send in massive numbers of advisors, and the Romanians appeared to accept all of them with a lot of good grace, curiosity and an understandable degree of suspicion. Clearly we expressed our hope and expectation that the heavy-handed state apparatus, the virtual total state control over the economy and society, would be dismantled over time. We were prepared to provide expertise to assist in the destatification and decentralization of the economy. First and foremost, we saw early scheduling of democratic elections as perhaps more important in Romania than in any of the other countries, because it would be considered a litmus test of how we would be able to pursue some of our other goals with the new leadership, whose democratic bonafides we couldn't genuinely assess at that moment. We tried to focus attention and resources on holding the first democratic elections in all of Eastern Europe in Romania, before Poland or Hungary, which all had interim post-communist governments with popular if not constitutional legitimacy. We wanted to see a constitutional, elected Romanian government that could lay claim to popular legitimacy.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

RICHARD A. VIRDEN
USIS
Counselor for Public Affairs
Romania
Bucharest, Romania
(1990-1993)

Mr. Virden was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at St. John's College in Collegeville, Minnesota. He joined the Foreign Service of the United States Information Service (USIA) IN 1963 and served variously as Information, Press and Public Affairs Officer, attaining the rank of Deputy Chief of Mission in Brasilia. His foreign posts include Bangkok, Phitsanulik and Chiang Mai in Thailand; Saigon, Vietnam; Belo Horizonte, Sao Paulo and Brasilia in Brazil; and Warsaw, Poland, where he served twice. Mr. Virden also had several senior assignments at USIA Headquarters in Washington, DC. Mr. Virden was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

Topical Focus – Ceausescu Regime, Freedom of the Media

Q: Well, when you arrived there, things, as you say, were in turmoil. Did we have a policy?

VIRDEN: Well, yes we did. In very basic terms, we were trying to promote a democratic outcome. We were doing everything we could to support a responsible democratic movement and put a brake on some of the more totalitarian remnants that were still around then. Remember that the Securitate, the security organ under Ceausescu, had been everywhere and penetrated

throughout the country and into families and so forth. The security forces were a very strong continuing presence there. They didn't just disappear because of the revolution. In fact, one of the tasks I took on was to go out periodically to a still-sinister-feeling old Securitate installation on the outskirts of Bucharest to pick up microfiche copies of archives to mail to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Museum representatives told me the microfiche were an invaluable addition to the historical record of the Holocaust in Romania. I assume Romania was being paid in some fashion for providing these documents, but I was not party to that. Anyway, the security people were still there, as were many of the politicians identified with them. There was constant tension between people like that and some of the strong opposition, young people fighting for democracy, of the very type that you saw this spring in the streets of Cairo. So we were very clearly trying to help those who we thought were working for the right things. We gave them political support, economic help, and used whatever leverage we had to push for reforms. One focus was a battle on a high policy level over whether Romania would get most favored nation trade treatment. They wanted that desperately to lift economic prospects, so that was a lever we could and did use to get them to do such things as open up access to broadcasting and to allow freedom of the press. Television, in particular, had been an important instrument for maintaining Communist Party control. It was a monopoly. It was a main means of communication with much of the public. To me, based on what I saw in Romania and earlier in Poland, television not religion was the true opiate of the people. Someone could find a doctorial thesis in how totalitarian regimes used television, I'm convinced. In my particular part of the embassy, we spent a lot of time pushing, encouraging and otherwise supporting Romanians who were trying to set up independent broadcasting. We also asked the ambassador and Washington to lean on Romania's political leaders to loosen their grip. The story was similar with newspapers.

Q: Well, did you get anywhere?

VIRDEN: Yes, we did. It did gradually open up. For example, there was an independent newspaper called Romania Libera that was really out there in its challenge to the old school hard-liners. Through a foundation set up with U.S. government money, the International Media Fund, we gave them a printing press and printing supplies and got all that stuff admitted into the country. That took an intensive team effort. Television was even harder, because it requires more equipment and other resources; in this case it also required a change in Romanian law, which made broadcasting a state monopoly. Here again, our mission worked at various levels to get reform legislation drafted and passed into law. Eventually we did succeed in that, partly because we made it one of the conditions for granting most favored nation trade status. The resulting end to the state monopoly on broadcasting was an important part of the democratic opening. I also took satisfaction in convincing Romanian Ministry of Communication officials to lease time on state transmitters for Voice of America broadcasts into the disintegrating Yugoslavia. VOA gave me an award for that bit of jiu jitsu.

RUSSIA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

DAVID M. SCHOONOVER
AGRICULTURE MINISTER COUNSELOR
MOSCOW, RUSSIA
(1991)

David M. Schoonover was born and raised in Illinois. He received a bachelor's and master's degree in Agriculture Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He joined the Foreign Service in 1984. He served in Beijing, Moscow and Seoul. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Topical Focus – Political Upheaval and Economic Engagement in Russia

SCHOONOVER: I remember that USDA and Commerce jointly hosted a large group of Soviet food industry officials at a conference in Washington that year. I guess in my own assessment at the time I was feeling that working with agriculture officials in the Soviet Union, and improving our relationships with them would be to our advantage in the Agricultural Office, as well, and it would provide us with contacts. But this is the sort of thing that we were doing that first year, and it included accompanying several teams of U.S. government and private sector officials on travel and visits in the Soviet Union. Later in the year it was decided that we would initiate a credit guarantee program for the Soviet Union for the purchase of agriculture commodities. It had been quite a few years since we had an active credit guarantee program with the Soviet Union. As best I recall, that was about late 1990, toward the end of the year. And so we had quite a lot of interest in that program, and that was about the point in the beginning of '91 when things really started changing. I can't recall exactly when Gorbachev became President as opposed to General Secretary. I believe it was March 1990. But it was during this period of '90, '91 that Gorbachev was no longer just the General Secretary of the Communist Party but also held the position of President, which had been created for him. The republics began asserting themselves much more during this period. The nationalistic feelings of people were quite obvious already in the spring of '90 in Estonia, when I made a trip there. As early as the beginning of 1991 Lithuania had demonstrations in Vilnius, including the incident when Soviet military put down the demonstrations at the TV tower in Vilnius. A lot was going on, not only in Lithuania and the Baltics, but in other republics, too. Yeltsin was beginning to rise to the forefront.

Q: He was mayor, wasn't he, of Moscow?

SCHOONOVER: He had been Mayor, earlier, and then his position among the Soviet leadership had slipped. Then the elections for Presidency of the Russian Republic took place in June of ’91, and Yeltsin became the Russian President. A lot of political ferment and changes were going on during this period, and the republics were beginning to individually assert their independence, and Gorbachev was resisting. There was a lot of discussion about working out new charters for the relationship between the republics and the union. ’91 was a very turbulent year, of course, in the political relationship between Gorbachev and the “Center”, and the individual republics. I remember one trip I made to Georgia to participate in a conference either late in ’90 or early in ’91. Outside the conference site, a huge number of Georgians were demonstrating for independence and filling the main street of Tbilisi. For me, ‘91 was a fascinating, but extremely busy year.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ERIC CHETWYND

Research Triangle Institute (RTI) & USAID
Director
Municipal Finance and Management Project (MFM)
Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Vladivostok, Russia
(1992–1996)

Eric Chetwynd, Jr. was born in Massachusetts in 1936. After studying Biology at Northeastern University for one year, he served three years in the Army before returning to finish his undergraduate degree and focusing on Economics. He earned a Masters Degree in South and Southeast Studies from American University and later received a Ph.D. in Economics from Duke University. Chetwynd joined USAID in 1962 through the Asia Overseas Intern Program. He worked in Indonesia and Korea. He later served as Deputy Director and then Director of successor offices in the Central Bureau until his retirement in 1992. Post-retirement, he directed the USAID-sponsored Municipal Finance and Management Project for three years, focusing on democratic governance reform in Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asia. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on May 7, 1999.

Topical Focus – Democratic governance, and free market economic systems in Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia

CHETWYND: The first year after retiring I did a lot of traveling. My wife took the year off from her law practice and we decided to see what retirement was really like. It was good. However, at

the end of that year, I was asked by RTI if I would be the Director of a Municipal Finance and Management Project (MFM), which was a $25 million project with technical assistance to Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia. I wound up working intensively the next three years in a part of the world that I had never thought I would see. I remember the first trip to Russia. Ron Johnson, the Vice President of RTI, Ted Priftis, the USAID project manager and I found ourselves standing in front of the onion dome of St. Basils on Red Square and we just sort of looked at each other and said, "Can you believe that we are actually here?" It just seemed unreal. That was a project that drew on a lot of my past experience in municipal development and management. It was a three year contract and, like I said, it was very intense. We had offices in nine cities in this region. Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod and Vladivostok in Russia, Kharkov, Lvov and Ternopil in Ukraine, Atyrau in Kazakhstan and Karakul in Kyrgyzstan.

Q: With personnel assigned to all these areas?

CHETWYND: Yes. We had local and American staff in all nine offices.

Q: What was the project supposed to do?

CHETWYND: The project was supposed to assist the cities in coming up with a system of financial management and municipal management that was more consistent with a democratic system of governance and a free market economic system. We did a lot of computer systems work in these cities. We think of the Russians as being so advanced technologically, and yet they were really operating almost in the dark ages when it comes to management. One of the reasons for that is that municipal management was really a very low priority under the old system. Most of the decisions were made at the national level. The communist party was very much involved in decision making up and down the line. The local government was not responsive to the local citizens, as such. The city was managed from the center through local representatives of central ministries and were overseen by the communist party, which had a parallel organization at all levels of government.

Q: Sounds like an impossible thing to reform.

CHETWYND: It was tough, because these people came with a great deal of baggage from the past. As I sometimes told consultants on their way to the field, when you're working with these folks and trying to relate to them, think of what it would be like if they had won the Cold War and somebody had come in and told us, "Sorry folks, the democratic system, the free market system is not the viable system for the next millennium and we're going to have to make a transition to a command economy and a communist system of governance." Even if we accepted that, or maybe even if we welcomed it, how difficult it would be for us to grasp the concepts, because all of our lives we had been taught a different way. All of the synapses in our brain

would be wired the wrong way. Just think of it in that way when you are trying to get your ideas across with these people. In fact, I enjoyed working with the Russians. I found that there were enough Russians open to change to make it worthwhile. There were also enough Russians who were opposed to or finding it painful to change to make it very difficult.

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Q: In what areas that you were trying to bring about change and in which did they seem to be the most responsive ?

CHETWYND: They loved the new hardware and software and they were very eager to come up to speed in that department.

Q: What did they use it for?

CHETWYND: They used it for the new systems of management that we were giving them. For example in Nizhny Novgorod, we installed the same system of financial management as we use, for example, in Chicago, Los Angeles and Dallas. It's a system that has a lot of transparency, has a lot of audit trails and accountability. It has double entry bookkeeping (which was new to them) and all kinds of things that they were in no way accustomed to using and to which they were sometimes resistant. I mean I can appreciate the difficulty that they are having today negotiating with them to give up on their time tested principles and MOs.

One example of this we encountered while installing this new financial management system in Nizhny Novgorod. It involved their taking a financial management software program from American Management Systems (AMS) that was licensed to AMS. They had to sign the license agreement and this was something that was just not part of their culture. They did not understand using but not owning the software. We were giving them the stuff, why couldn't they have access to the code, change it, sell it, do anything that they wanted to do with it. So after three months of inaction, they sent back the license agreement totally changed. They had even changed the format for it from full page to three columns. They had completely rewritten it...completely! And you can imagine the reaction of the legal office of American Management Systems. You can't tinker even a little bit with a license agreement. .

I knew it wasn't going to work, so I invited the two key Russians in the mix to come here and negotiate face to face with AMS in their headquarters. They came here and after a solid week of negotiations we were nowhere. So I said okay, forget about this, take the weekend off, don't think about it. We're going to come back on Monday, I'm going to extend your stay here and we're not going to leave the AMS building until we drink champagne. So, Monday we showed up and to make a long story short, I called home and said that I wasn't coming home to supper

that night. Then I called home and said I'm not coming home at all tonight. I didn't come home the next day and I didn't come home the next night. It wasn't until 1:00 AM on the third day of negotiating, never having left that room, never having slept and bringing in fast food, and having exhausted the …, that we drank Champaign and signed the license agreement. During this time there were calls back and forth to Russia.

Q: They're really tough negotiators.

CHETWYND: They are tough negotiators. Basically we Americans come into a negotiation with the sense that we are going to have some tradeoffs. They come into a negotiation with a posture. We make a concession, they repeat their posture. We make another concession, they repeat their posture. And so on that process goes, until in the end you've gone as far as you can go. And it's only at that point, and only when you signal that you've reached that point by doing something bizarre, that they come around and make the final concession. I've talked to a woman lawyer working for the space program who only succeeded in getting a sign on after she burst out crying. Our much loved Chief of Party in Nizhny Novgorod once threatened to quit the country over just such an issue and he went through all the motions of doing just that when at the last moment they sent to the train station and begged him to come back and agreed to his point. . In my case, I simply said that we were not going to leave the building until we drank Champaign. In the end they said I just wore them down.

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Q: You didn't even start out with a concept of this kind of relationship in which it was not just negotiations; it was also a different cultural phenomenon.

CHETWYND: They had some valid points, for example, the standard license agreement will reference some commonly accepted state code as the basis for arbitration. In this case New York State is the one that AMS uses because it is a very commonly accepted code in this country. The Russians said, "This doesn't make any sense at all. What are you going to do, send the state police out here if something goes wrong?" So, in the end we went with the Geneva Convention arbitration system and they were satisfied. We made a few concessions like this and in the end that project went very well. AID got into a dissemination phase where we spread these MFM activities out to a number of different cities. My successor worked with at least twelve different cities in Russia and got it to the national level in Kyrgyzstan and to adoption by the Association of Mayors in the Ukraine. A lot of national level legislation is still going on today as a result of this project. It was very successful.

Q: What were some of the other components? You talked about financial management systems, computer systems, were there other components of reform?

CHETWYND: Yes, we did different things. For example in Moscow we came up with a reform of the ambulance service there. In Vladivostok and in cities in the Ukraine we helped them establish economic development offices and regional economic development authorities.

Q: How did you decide? Were these something that they wanted help with?

CHETWYND: We would work with the municipal administration, with the mayors and so on, in an attempt to come up with priorities. They would usually have a wish list of things. The USAID Missions also had their ideas of what the priorities should be. We worked very closely with the mayors and with the Missions and with our contractor resources to come up with priority areas. We had certain mandates within the contract -- municipal finance, municipal management and municipal development. I know that's pretty broad, but would look for those areas of overlap between what the city and the USAID wanted and what the project would allow. For example, in Kharkov, Ukraine, one of our key activities was a reform of the personnel management system of the city. This included standardized job descriptions, competitive hiring procedures, how you set the salaries of city employees and employee evaluation system.

Q: How did they deal with the decentralization of authority? Was that an issue?

CHETWYND: That was an issue in all of the cities. In all of the cities they were fighting for more authority.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ERIC CHETWYND
USAID
Director
Office of Economic and Institutional Development
Washington, D.C.
(1987-1992)

Eric Chetwynd, Jr. was born in Massachusetts in 1936. After studying Biology at Northeastern University for one year, he served three years in the Army before returning to finish his undergraduate degree and focusing on Economics. He earned a Masters Degree in South and Southeast Studies from American University and later received a Ph.D. in Economics from Duke University. Chetwynd joined USAID in 1962 through the Asia Overseas Intern Program. He worked in Indonesia and Korea. He later served as Deputy Director and then Director of successor offices in the Central Bureau until his retirement in 1992. Post-retirement, he directed the USAID-sponsored Municipal Finance and

Management Project for three years, focusing on democratic governance reform in Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asia. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on May 7, 1999.

Topical Focus – Decentralization and Democratic Transitions in the former Soviet Union

Q: In many ways the Office was a pioneering effort in a lot of areas. Some got lost, but others got picked up and it evolved into much larger scale efforts. Would that be a fair statement?

CHETWYND: That's right. A lot of them were, for example, the program on policy reform, became central to the economic growth activities of the new Bureau. A lot of the work we were doing in natural resources became part of the environmental and natural resources development and management thrust of the new Bureau combining the physical with the social and economic. The work we did on decentralization became a major theme of the Agency's democratization portfolio, including municipal finance and management. We had several projects that were directly involved with the democratic and economic transition going on in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries. These projects included Transitions to Democracy, International Foundation for Electoral Systems and Decentralization: Finance and Management.

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Q: And the decentralization movement? Is that part of your time?

CHETWYND: Yes, in fact we introduced a lot of decentralization and local government programs in the late 1980s and early '90s. And these, I think, put us in a better position than we might have been to respond to the needs of Russia and Eastern Europe for their transition experience. I think we were hindered in this work to some extent in large regions of the world, like for example in Latin America where it just was not in the nature of things for us to be able to work at the local level effectively. Everything was so centralized until relatively recently when the democracy movement has obviously created a sea change in Latin America.

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Q: And then what happened, considering at that time I guess, there were the newly independent states . Did that impinge on your work while you were there?

CHETWYND: Yes. And thank you for raising that. In the late 1980s we knew that we were going to have to provide technical assistance to the former Soviet Union. So we tried to develop a portfolio of programs that would prepare us or this challenge. We (our office with our supervisory unit the Human Resources Directorate in the Bureau – remember Ruth Zagorin who headed that unit?) set up a working group with the National Academy of Scientists. The group was a panel of distinguished experts in comparative political systems, comparative government, comparative economic systems, public administration, law, foreign affairs, etc. to help us sort through this question of how countries undertake a transition to democracy. How do you make the transition to a free market economy and democratic society in this part of the world that was so burdened by and steeped in the communist system? The panelists were very thoughtful, they

gave a lot of time, thought and energy to this question and in the end I'll never forget what the panel co-chair, Charles Tilley, New School for Social Research, advised us in his concluding comments. Paraphrased, here is what he said: "Look. No one has ever done this before. We can tell you what the end state should look like and we know all about the systems that these countries are experiencing and are transitioning from, but no one has ever made the transition in this direction. We have studied the transition in the other direction that is from private and democratic to the communist totalitarianism system of governance and economy." So basically they couldn't tell us. They said, "OK, we know you're going to do this thing but in doing so please do no harm." They really did not have a good sense of how to go about this transition but they did agree on one point. Promotion of civil society organizations such as NGOs creates the fundamental infrastructure for a democratic society. They thought this even more fundamental than respect for human rights and minority rights, opposition rights, citizen participation, limits on the power of central government and an independent and protected judiciary (rule of law) – all of which they thought were important. They also cautioned us that this transition would be long term and not to expect short term results.

We did develop a whole series of programs to prepare the Agency for this work with the former Soviet Union and satellites on transitions. We had one project called Transitions to Democracy which was to support analysis and assessment of democratic needs on a country by country basis. Under this project, teams actually went into countries to do democratic sector assessments. We had one called the International Foundation for Electoral Systems which would go in to help countries to set up and manage and carry out their elections. We had one called Decentralization of Finance and Management which was working on policy reform and institutional reform and development. We also had programs in the economic area. We had a program with the Institute for Policy Reform for improving policy capability. We had a program called Implementing Policy Change which worked in all countries but which was useful in these countries. We had a program also called Decentralization: Finance and Management that as I explained earlier was geared to helping countries with decentralization of public services.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

BARBARA TURNER
USAID
NIS Program Task Force
Russia
Moscow, Russia
(1994)

Barbara Turner grew up in northern Virginia before joining USAID in 1966 while finishing her BA in Public Administration through Upper Iowa University. She later obtained her Master's degree in Health Sciences at Johns Hopkins University. During her career, she pioneered programming in Egypt and in the nations emerging from the Soviet Union among many other accomplishments. Turner retired from USAID in 2005 and became President of University Research Company. Barbara Turner was interviewed by Ann Van Dusen in 2017.

Topical Focus – USAID Russian Election Assistance and Democracy Programming

TURNER: It was a step too far into their way of life, I think.

Also, we developed programs to support a free election process, the democratic process. And this was really a time when Brian Atwood was the new USAID Administrator about 1994 and introducing a wide range of democracy activities in many countries. We were welcomed with those programs in most of the soviet states at first, especially with the opposition parties, and we were helping put a lot of educational messages on TV and radio but it clearly had an American democracy twist. I don't mean it said we're Americans telling you what to do but it was an American style that everyone knew the Americans paid for this political ad on TV encouraging people to vote. We did not support individual parties or candidates. But, it was sensitive and I don't think that went over well with some Russian leaders. NDI and IRI did a lot of training, honestly, just how to run a campaign and create a platform, how to set up a ballot There were some simple, simple things to us but could have sounded like telling them what to do. And of course, some of the elections didn't come out the way they wanted and I'm pretty sure the US got blamed for interfering in some way because we had a presence there that was significant.

One other area the US had a strong influence over was the development of advocacy groups and the NGOs. When we arrived- when the Soviet Union collapsed there was no such thing as an NGO. Private citizens could not even assemble, not even in your own condo, in your own building were you allowed to assemble. So, there was no such thing as advocacy groups, and we helped draft laws to permit them and train groups to organize and with two or three years, there were 10,000 NGOs throughout the NIS. I think the governments saw those as a challenge to the government, which in many ways they were, and I think they blamed the Americans for being involved and accelerate the growth of the NGOs faster than the government could control them.

Q: From the very beginning they tried to put constraints?

TURNER: From the very beginning. They couldn't understand letting people assemble and have a different opinion than the government; that was not seen too well. So, that was a struggle. But while we might have helped some of those NGOs we certainly didn't establish 10,000 NGOs; they came from the grassroots. Those were the people that were meeting in secret before and came out of the closet and established themselves as part of the reform era. And most persist until today.

The other thing that I think in Russia, AID policy and international economic policy got very confused and mixed up. So, you remember the ruble completely crashed and if that happens in Africa it doesn't influence the world all that much but if it happens in Russia it influences us a lot and so there was a lot of heavy handedness, I think, related to fiscal policies and to economic reform that had to happen at the top level, particularly from State and Treasury and from international organizations. And not just American government; I mean, they were getting advice from a lot of countries and the IMF, etc. So, I think maybe AID got blamed for some of that that was perceived as heavy-handed.

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TURNER: Steel mills were huge businesses. There were shipyards. I don't think we even made a stab at Gazprom. Maybe the higher levels did but we didn't see that as a goal. We looked to see if we could get utilities that would and we did do a utility partnership with some utilities in the U.S. but we couldn't ever get them to move to independence and using it in a management sense. So, those were real constraints.

We also, I think I mentioned earlier got more into the democracy programs, which I think- I do think they had an impact. I do think in particular the rule of law programs introduced a lot of change in Russia and the NIS. Even simple things bench books to guide judges. NIS countries used to put the defendants in cages in the courtroom and that changed in most places.

We didn't do it by ourselves; we got the American Bar Association together with our Russian legal association and did those kinds of things. So, those things are critically important. I think that we as Americans think that a small little technical assistance program like that for a few million dollars will change the enormous, multi trillion-dollar economy that's been doing the same thing since the czars. It's not going to happen. And in '95, I guess, the oligarchs came back in and wanted to halt some of those things or not move that way, although I think their commercial law system is still in place today and they have much stronger women's rights, small businesses bloom all over the place. There are things, environmental groups are allowed to meet and work so there are all kinds of things that did change and that we had a hand in so I think we as Americans can feel pretty good about that.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

CAROL A. PEASLEY
USAID
Mission Director
Russia
Moscow, Russia
(1999-2003)

Topical Focus – USAID Support of Democracy in Russia

Q: Did Russia need American aid, compared to some places where –

PEASLEY: Yes, although certainly a very different kind of need than in Malawi or another poor country. The program in Russia was different. From the outset, our purpose was to support Russia's transition to a free market democracy. The early days of the program were very much focused on economic restructuring and privatization. Although the program was much smaller by September 1999, our focus was still on the democratic and economic transition of the country. Another purpose, of course, was to develop relationships and partnerships between our two countries, whether between technical experts or communities.

…

PEASLEY: One of those political causes was the Moscow School of Political Studies. Several Russian civil society leaders, including Dr. Elena Nemirovskaya, had created it in 1992 with initial support from the Council of Europe. It was a school, but without any physical infrastructure. They organized two-week residential seminars at various facilities around the country. They would bring together leaders from local government, local parliament, national parliament, business, journalism, and civil society for discussion and debate. Elena was an incredibly dynamic force with a huge network; she would bring in all kinds of Russian and foreign speakers. USAID and various European donors helped to bring in these external resources. We provided most U.S. speakers through our grant to the International Republican Institute. I attended a number of the Moscow School seminar sessions, including once in St. Petersburg where I had been invited to speak about federalism. I arrived in time to hear a U.S. speaker – Grover Norquist, the conservative anti-tax advocate – speaking. I had never heard of him before (laughs) and was a bit surprised by some of his rhetoric. I remember the next day telling the group that I didn't agree with a lot of what he'd said, but that USAID was nonetheless happy to provide all opinions for discussion (laughs). Anyway, Elena brought together speakers with all different political stripes; her main intention was to provoke discussion and to demonstrate that there is nothing wrong with a diversity of viewpoints. Khodorkovsky was a strong supporter of the Moscow School of Political Studies and often spoke at seminars. I suspect this was one of the things that got him into political trouble with the Kremlin.

Q: Did the school survive?

PEASLEY: Yes; the School still exists, although I believe I heard its name is now the Moscow School of Civic Education. I believe they still receive some European support, so I suspect they are grappling with the new law that requires any Russian organization that receives foreign money to register as a foreign agent. I do hope it is still able to bring together diverse views from the full range of actors – local and national government, parliamentarians, business people, journalists, and civil society activists.

Q: What happened with the Open Russia Society? The organization that you were talking about before you talked about the Moscow School, the one that you signed the agreement with, right?

PEASLEY: I believe the foundation bit the dust within a couple years after my departure. Khodorkovsky and Yukos funded it, and that would have been impossible after the

The Kremlin took over the Yukos assets. But, I have heard that Khodorkovsky, after his release from prison, tried to revive the "Open Russia" name through some kind of internet-based community for advocacy. I don't know if that has been successful or not. In talking about foundations, I should probably also mention the Eurasia Foundation that was created shortly after the U.S. went into the former Soviet Union in 1992. It was a public-private partnership modeled after the Asia Foundation. Its early funding was all from the U.S. Government, primarily through USAID, but it also received support from private sources. In Russia, they received funds from private Russian countries to help develop community service activities – and, as we in USAID moved to develop some public-private partnership activities in 2002-3, staff from the Eurasia Foundation gave us some helpful advice. Around this same time, the Eurasia Foundation leaders in Washington were moving to "localize" each of their country offices. They converted them into truly national offices with local boards, national directors, and diversified funding. About the time I departed Moscow in October 2003, the New Eurasia Foundation was operating in Russia as a Russian organization affiliated with the Eurasia Foundation. Similar local foundations emerged throughout the region. Each continued to do the Eurasia Foundation's core work: civil society building, small business development, and democracy strengthening. I know that the New Eurasia Foundation continued to operate after my departure, but I am not sure if that is still the case.
It is in fact these kinds of civil society organizations that are the major legacy of USAID in Russia. Many of them do continue to exist, and they still I think have the potential to play a stronger role in the country's future. Let me cite a couple of them.

PEASLEY: One was the Institute of Urban Economics that evolved out of one of USAID's early contracts with the Washington, DC-based Urban Institute to develop new housing policies. As you know, during the Soviet period, most housing was publicly owned; many were communal apartment buildings and the Government of Russia wanted help in privatizing the housing and in developing a new housing policy framework. The Urban Institute, under the leadership of Ray Struyk, hired a fantastic group of Russians to work with the American housing experts. They had a rapid impact on housing policy, including the drafting and passage of legislation and development of a mortgage finance framework. But, as important as these housing sector results were, the greatest impact of the project was an unplanned one. Ray Sturyk and his Urban Institute colleagues quickly recognized the quality of their Russian staff and they decided to add a new objective: to create the Russian equivalent of the Urban Institute. They thus created the local Institute of Urban Economics (IUE). The project was evaluated shortly after I arrived, and when the evaluation team debriefed they spoke effusively about the Institute of Urban Economics and recommended that we begin to support them directly. So, all of our future grants in the housing sector were directly with the Institute of Urban Economics. It, in turn, maintained a relationship with the Urban Institute, so there were still exchanges of

ideas, but a strong Russian think tank on urban development issues had been created. The IUE continues to play a strong role in Russia, advising local municipal governments as well as the national government. Its director, Nadezhda Kosareva, is widely respected – and often sought out as World Bank-funded consultant in other countries. She was also invited to participate in a high-level Russian commission on local government in 2002 (Kozak Commission), although she was kicked off for pushing too hard for local authority and local elections. Once she was asked to leave the commission, we suspected what the results would be. The eventual reforms did indeed call for more vertical control from the Kremlin. But, there is at least some good news. The IUE continues its good work and its voice is still there.

PEASLEY: We also helped create the Center for Fiscal Policy. It was an outgrowth of the original
Harvard work on intergovernmental fiscal relations. When the HIID contract was terminated, that fiscal policy work was moved over to a contract or grant with Georgia State University. As the Georgia State contract was coming to an end, we decided that the strong Russian team could and should continue its important work. When the team agreed to move forward, we initially contracted with Deloitte to work with them to take all of the needed legal steps to create a new organization. After a year or so, the Deloitte contract ended and we then entered into direct contracts with the new Center for Fiscal Policy. It also continues to play an important research and planning role in Russia, advising on intergovernmental fiscal relationships. They have been contracted by the federal government of Russia, by local governments, and by the World Bank for work in other countries. So, like the IUE, the Center for Fiscal Policy is an important policy-oriented think tank in the country.

PEASLEY: Let me also briefly mention another former USAID partner, Junior Achievement Russia, that is part of the Junior Achievement International family, but also an independent local organization with which we directly contracted. It has done a huge amount in terms of promoting entrepreneurship among people. I attended many Junior Achievement events while I was there, and it was quite inspirational to see the enthusiasm of the kids and the little enterprises they created. The father of Junior Achievement in Russia was a famous Russian physicist who was deeply committed to introducing young people to the idea of entrepreneurship. During fall of 1999, I was on a panel with him and an 18-year old Junior Achievement graduate. In my remarks, I referred to young "Nikolai" as a "future entrepreneur." Mr. Velikhov quickly corrected me: "He's not a future entrepreneur. He is already an entrepreneur." The young man, Nikolai, was a freshman at the University of Kazan, and he had started his own website design company. When I next saw him a year or so later, he had dropped out of university; his company was growing so quickly that he couldn't stay in school. You can imagine my surprise when I looked at a list of Russian

cabinet members a year or so ago and saw that Nikolai is now the Minister of Communications and Mass Media in the Putin cabinet. I hope he still thinks fondly of Junior Achievement and his very frequent contact with USAID and the American Embassy!

PEASLEY: When I am saddened by the state of U.S.-Russian relations, I try to remember some of the fantastic Russian organizations that we supported and even helped build. Knowing the quality of their leaders, I can garner up some hope for the future.

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PEASLEY: Let me just think for a second. I certainly should talk a bit more about democracy promotion activities that went beyond the civil society development that helped NGOs provide critically important social services, as well as enhance their roles as activists and advocates. During my tenure, as USAID's economic restructuring work declined, we began to move more resources into democracy initiatives, including greater support for human rights groups. I recall discussions within the mission on whether and how to expand our work in this area. Given the mounting issues associated with the conflict in the southern Caucasus, we made an explicit decision to be a bit "edgier" and to expand support for human rights groups and electoral observation work.

PEASLEY: We were also providing electoral support through grants with the American political party institutes and the International Foundation for Electoral Support. It was, in fact, through IFES that the head of USAID's Democracy Office, Susan Reichle, and I served as election observers in fall 1999 for a local election in the St. Petersburg area. We similarly were observers in the March 2000 national election of President Putin; in that case, we served as members of the Organization of Economic Security and Cooperation delegation. Both experiences were fascinating – and they also had their amusing moments as we watched entire families crowd into voting booths. No one seemed concerned about privacy. I was impressed by one aspect of the Russian voting system – that was the mobile ballot box. People would register in advance to have the mobile ballot boxes come to them. Then, a poll worker and observers from the political parties (and external observers like I was) would traipse around the neighborhood with a ballot box, going to homes and helping the elderly or infirm to vote. I believe we also went to a hospital with the mobile box. I suppose this could lead to abuses, but I was impressed by the effort to facilitate voting by everyone. Our grants to the American political party institutes were also important. For example, IRI, the International Republican Institute, focused considerable attention on women and it helped to create a something akin to the U.S. League of Women Voters for women in Russia. It soon began to play a role nationwide.

Q: Any relationship with our League of Women Voters?

PEASLEY: I think that IRI did facilitate a link to the U.S. League, but am not absolutely certain. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) was also instrumental in supporting creation of a new Russian election observation organization, "Golos" or "Voice." Golos organized local communities to observe elections, and they inevitably came into conflict with the powers that be, identifying electoral irregularities in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. When USAID was tossed out of Russia a year or two ago, Golos was often cited as one of the reasons. Being "edgier" in our program was the right thing to do, but it probably did also lead to greater Russian government discomfort.
While USAID was increasingly supporting Russian groups that pushed for transparency, including the independent media, human rights groups, and electoral oversight, we also supported strong partnerships between American and Russian organizations and individuals. Partnership was a key program theme. That included a program with the American International Health Alliance that began by supporting partnerships between American and Russian hospitals. The work quickly expanded into community-to-community partnerships around public health. The American partners were from across the U.S., including such diverse locales as La Crosse, Wisconsin; Los Alamos, New Mexico, Bemidji, Minnesota, and Houston, Texas. The Russian partner communities were also spread widely, although most were in Regional Initiative sites. They dealt with a variety of public health issues such as women's reproductive health, emergency and disaster medicine, environmental medicine, hospital administration, mental health, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. They also built strong partnerships and relationships that continued even after the USAID funding ended.

PEASLEY: Other partnership programs included the Citizen Democracy Corps, an organization that was similar to the International Executive Service Corps, but focused in the former Soviet Union. Most of the volunteers who came to Russia were entrepreneurs working with budding Russian business people. The Farmer-to-Farmer program similarly provided agricultural volunteers; I certainly will never forget the goat farmer from Arkansas that I met in the outskirts of Samara who was helping a Russian woman farmer develop a new dairy industry. The Financial Services Volunteer Corps was another important partnership program that brought financial expert volunteers to Russia; some came from the Federal Reserve; some from commercial banks; some from regulatory agencies; and some from big law firms. I especially liked this program because it was practitioners working with practitioners. For example, people from our Federal Reserve worked closely with the Russian Central Bank to adapt Russia's payment system to the new market-based economic system and to develop a deposit insurance scheme. FSVC developed extraordinarily close working relationships with key financial sector officials.

One indication of this was the Russian Central Bank's invitation to the head of FSVC, Andy Spindler, to join a donor-government working group on financial sector reform. I believe he was the only non-donor expatriate on that working group. Over many years, FSVC worked closely with Andrei Kozlov, one of the vice-chairmen of the Russian Central Bank and a real hero in the sector. Andrei headed up anti-corruption efforts at the Central Bank and was killed in 2006; I believe that the Russian courts ultimately found guilty people from a bank that Andrei had identified for money laundering.

PEASLEY: Perhaps most importantly, these kinds of partnership programs developed relationships that went far beyond the USAID funded activities. All generated on-going informal consultation that extended beyond USAID grant terms of reference. I saw this most clearly with FSVC because I did some part-time consulting with them after I retired from USAID. I observed occasions when Russian Central Bank officers would call to get some informal – that is unpaid – advice from some of the distinguished FSVC board members who were legal experts or held prominent positions in Wall Street institutions. Trust and real partnership developed over time – and I suspect that contact still continues among some of those "partners" from the early days of the USAID program in Russia, whether entrepreneurs, physicians, farmers, or economists.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

DESAIX "TERRY" MYERS
USAID
Mission Director
russia
Moscow, Russia
(2003-2007)

Desaix "Terry" Myers was born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Pasadena, California before attending UC Berkeley and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Myers joined USAID as an intern in 1968 and went on to serve across Asia and Africa, specifically in Pakistan, Indonesia, Senegal, India, Russia, and others before retiring from USAID in 2010. He then became a professor at the National Defense University, retiring in 2016. Desaix "Terry" Myers was interviewed by Alexander Shakow in 2017.

Topical Focus – USAID Funding Russian Democracy Programs

Q: If it were technical stuff, that would be OK. But anything that smacked of being political—?

MYERS: Exactly. They got understandably nervous about media and human rights work. And they became increasingly nervous after the Color Revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan between 2003 and 2005.

We could see that times were going to be challenging. USAID had signed a memorandum of understanding in September 2003 with Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Open Russia Foundation for collaboration on health, media and education projects. It looked promising. Khodorkovsky was setting up something like a Soros's Open Society Institute in Russia. His own Open Society. We could co-sponsor projects.

About a month after I became Mission Director, as he got off his airplane to attend a meeting of NGO and donors, including Chris Brown, then head of our democracy/governance office, Khodorkovsky was arrested. He was thrown in jail. And that was the end of his "open society" and the beginning of his ten years in prison.

We got word that the government was looking at some of our programs. In fact, one of my earliest field trips was to Samara to visit the NDI offices to see why one of its local employees had been detained by the police. I met with the federal prosecutor who had accused him of teaching English on the side without a license. They were beginning to monitor democracy programs more closely. Alex Sokolowski, a USAID democracy specialist in Washington, in Moscow on a TDY, set up a meeting for us with Sergei Markov, a Russian political scientist who sometimes speaks for the Kremlin but had worked with Alex at NDI in the 90s. Markov told us that after Ukraine's Orange Revolution, the Russians were increasingly skeptical about the work of NDI and IRI and that our programs were in jeopardy. One of our democracy NGOs had a computer stolen; others reported harassment.

In fact, by quirk of our own US government bureaucratic politics, USAID had only partial control over the work of the democracy NGOs. NDI and IRI received funding not only from us, but from State Department's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL); and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) gave grants to Russian NGOs directly from Washington as well.

Q: Was there a clear division of—

MYERS: No, there was not. There were overlaps between Embassy-run programs and AID-run programs and programs run by the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington. So, some Russian democracy NGOs had funding from three different sources. Division of labor and coordination of programs were largely personality driven. In Moscow, we worked closely with DRL staff in the Embassy on funding of the democracy programs with NRI and NDI and with human rights organizations. Collaboration was excellent. It was less close with NED which was quite protective of its programs and grantees and thought it important that they had their own unique relationships.

Q: And— But theoretically, had approval from the Russian government.

MYERS: Theoretically, although NED, working from Washington, was more on its own. We maintained that our work with political parties, training on polling and platform development, for example, was open to all comers, and in some cases, United Russia, the government's party, actively participated in our training programs.

Q: I'm assuming that, at this time, those have been closed down by the government?

MYERS: The Russians closed USAID down in 2012 and has subsequently banned NED, NDI and IRI as "undesirable" organizations. Their offices in Russia have been closed, and Russians receiving money from them are liable to prosecution under Russia's "foreign agents" laws.

But despite concern about our work with democracy and human rights NGOs, the government was not a complete monolith, and there were areas in which we had support and relatively good relationships with our counterparts. I mentioned our work with the Ministry of Defense on HIV/AIDS where they ended up funding a group that we had started.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

WILLIAM HAMMINK
USAID
Director of DG Office
Russia
Moscow, Russia
(1996-1999)

William Hammink studied at the University of Minnesota for both his undergraduate and masters' degrees before entering USAID as an International Development Intern in 1981. He served in many different positions in several countries, including Swaziland, Senegal, Russia, Madagascar, the West Bank and Gaza, Ethiopia, Sudan, and India. He was interviewed by John Pielemeier in February 2018.

Topical Focus –Support and Pushback for USAID DRG Programs by the Russian Government

HAMMINK: Anyway, after Madagascar, I was recruited to bid on a job in USAID Russia, which I was excited about. It was as Director of the Office of Democracy and Governance.

Q: All right!

HAMMINK: This was the first time I was involved in a technical office.

Q: So you were sitting in Madagascar, you were still a Program Officer or Project Design Officer?

HAMMINK: I was both. I was in management too, because I was head of the office. A Program and Project Development Office.

The Russia assignment was another example of trying something new. Of course, I'd worked, as I mentioned, on helping get DG programs going for the Africa Bureau. Thus, I had some

technical knowledge that I had picked up and learned from that period. But it was a lot of learning when I got to Russia, because at the time, Russia had one of the largest DG programs in the world. It was about $30 million a year.

Q: Now what year would that have been?

HAMMINK: My family and I moved to Moscow in 1996 and stayed for three years until 1999. Again, fascinating period of history. Truly, history in the making with the end of the cold war and the opening of what was a very closed society.

Q: How long had USAID been in Russia?

HAMMINK: USAID came back to Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union, I believe in 1991 or 1992. And in the early '90s, we had a billion-dollar assistance program. Some were loan guarantees. But USAID had also set up very large enterprise funds. USAID also had the regular development programs related to health, private sector development and support for democracy and governance. Our relationship at the time was such that the U.S. Government even set up a Peace Corps program.

Yeah, there was a close partnership for several years. And then Peace Corps backed out. As you know, USAID got kicked out in mid-2000s.

But when I was there—or when I got there anyway—there were excellent relations between Russian organizations and USAID. The people of Russia were interested in learning from America and developing good partnerships. And the government was also open. This was when (former Russian President Boris Nikolayevich) Yeltsin was President (of the Russian Federation).

Then later—I think it was 1998—when the U.S. bombed Yugoslavia, that changed a lot in terms of Russian official and non-official views of the American presence in Russia. You know, once the bombing in former Yugoslavia started, then even driving around became tricky and a few times people would throw sticks at our car.

Q: Really?

HAMMINK: Yes.

But it was fascinating to see the Soviet-style approach to everything. Like, even selling groceries morphed into a more Western approach with cash registers and the like. And you know, even

service in restaurants moved to one of serving the clients instead of the feeling that the clients are lucky to even be there.

But it was also fascinating because Moscow is a major European city with incredible history and culture. And if you walked around almost any corner in Moscow, you'd see a beautiful 200-year-old church or building or park, something that is both beautiful and has a long history.

Q: Were you given some Russian training?

HAMMINK: Yes, I was given Russian language training, because very few people spoke English and the script is Cyrillic of course.

Q: How many months did you have?

HAMMINK: You know, we didn't even get a month of language training. My language training was very basic but was better than nothing. When we arrived in Moscow, the mission set aside half a day, every day, over a month period for me to study Russian.

That just didn't work very well. I could not speak or understand very well, but I could get around and read the signs. And so, my Russian was very basic.

But we had some exciting and successful USAID democracy and governance programs. We supported world renowned human rights NGOs, like the Sakharov Center. I met Sakharov's widow (Yelena Georgievna Bonner), who was there. An incredible woman, brave.

Q: Explain that a little more. What was the Sakharov Center?

HAMMINK: The Sakharov Center was a non-profit organization based in Moscow supporting human rights, human rights activism, outreach and legal protections. It was named after Andrei Sakharov, one of the most famous human rights activists under the Soviet Union. USAID provided a lot of support for an independent judiciary, including training judges. We provided a lot of support for civil society in different parts of the country, along with small grants. We provided a lot of support for independent media through a U.S. group called Internews that did a great job.

We provided a lot of support for parliamentary and presidential elections during my time in Russia. In fact, I arrived there in— I think it was summer of 1996 -- just a week before the first Russian federation presidential election when Boris Yeltsin was elected as Russian president for the first time.

And so, the USAID DG program was broad and multi-faceted. By the time I left in 1999—this is an interesting story—thanks to the Russian people themselves, there were an estimated 50,000 community and civil society organizations across the Russian Federation, whereas in 1990 there were none. There were over 120 different independent media organizations—print and broadcasting. There was a movement toward jury trials, toward the independence of the judiciary.

And probably within a decade or so after President Putin took over, they were all gone, I'm told. So, you know, all of the democratic gains and democratic institutions were rolled back.

Q: When you were building that program, you were working with people in the government or only people outside?

HAMMINK: Both. For example, people in the judiciary were very interested to learn more about how the U.S. judiciary carried out its role as an independent third branch of government. They thought it through and they decided how they wanted to use what they learned within the Russian context.

The university-to-university linkages, which we also supported, as well as scholarships, was run out of my office. There was huge interest in institutional linkages and individual scholarships to study in the U.S. Because the Soviet Union had been such a closed society for so many decades, Russian citizens from across the country, even rural farmers under our farmer to farmer program, wanted to learn about the U.S. This was especially true on the academic side, through university to university linkages, and as I mentioned for the Russian judiciary broadly speaking as well. We were excited by the fact that we could support Russian and American organizations and institutions of all kinds to build relationships and share knowledge.

That was exciting and again part of history in the making.

Q: Did you find opposition as well that was directed—before they started beating their sticks on your car? I mean, in terms of the programs themselves?

HAMMINK: We had good support from almost all levels of the government, the nongovernmental and the private sectors during my first few years in Russia. The last year or 18 months we saw increased scrutiny from the tax police and others, especially related to the Russian advocacy NGOs that we supported. I suspect that the financial crisis in 1998 also made people a bit more skeptical about the U.S. and the west in general. Also, in some places like in Siberia and in the far east, Russian organizations were not used to working with USAID and some of our accounting rules were hard to follow.

Q: So you had a lot of exchanges as well?

HAMMINK: Yes, a lot of exchanges: business to business, university to university, institutions and the like. I even accompanied a Russian Supreme Court Justice on a visit to the U.S. Supreme Court here in Washington, including a visit to the office of one of the U.S. Supreme Court justices. The Supreme Court justice's offices are quite impressive. But the discussions were even more impressive at the time.

Q: Tell us a little more about who you worked with in the mission there.

HAMMINK: Sure. The Mission Director at the time was Janet Ballantyne. And of course, Janet is very well known in USAID and, sadly, she passed away recently after an incredible career in helping people around the world. It was a real privilege to work with Janet for three years.

The Deputy (Mission Director) was Roger Simmons at first and then Mark Ward. I enjoyed working with them as well. We also had a great senior staff of other office directors, like Gene George. You know, a lot of these folks later went on to become Mission Directors. And Steve Giddings, whom I know from the USAID Alumni Association.

We had a great team and a very supportive ambassador, Ambassador Tom Pickering, one of the most experienced ambassadors in the world at the time. I remember that once I accompanied the head of one of our political party support organizations to a meeting with Ambassador Pickering. And with no notes whatsoever, he spoke for an hour about the political situation. He was incredibly articulate and thoughtful, the most impressive I've ever heard in anybody or any ambassador. Ambassador Pickering was very impressive. That was helpful to see, wow, we had some great diplomats there.

Q: Did you travel around the whole region?

HAMMINK: I did. I didn't travel as much as others, but I got out to Siberia a few times and went up north. And I went out to St. Petersburg a couple of times. We were also allowed, at the time, to travel personally. So, my family and I would often travel to St. Petersburg on the overnight train. It was wonderful. We stayed with Russian families while we were there.

Q: How did you do that?

HAMMINK: Well, this was before the Internet, of course, and Airbnb (Airbnb, Inc.). We found out about Russian families who would rent out a spare room just through word-of-mouth from people in the embassy and implementing partners and NGOs. Also, just around Moscow there's so much to see. We would often drive to Suzdal, a city with fabulous old orthodox churches that were hundreds of years old. I don't know if you've ever been there.

So unfortunately, some years later the Russian government kicked out USAID.

Q: You were there when they—

HAMMINK: No, other USAID colleagues had to face that situation.

Q: But when you left, there was no hint that that was coming?

HAMMINK: Not at the time, but soon thereafter. Soon thereafter, after I left and Putin was elected president, the Russian government pressured and closed independent media outlets and were hassling Russian civil society partners. And there was some discussion on the U.S. side, "Why are we spending all this money for development in Russia? They can take care of themselves."

So then, the Mission Director at the time had to say, OK, where did it make sense to focus. I believe USAID then focused on development areas such as HIV/AIDS, where the U.S. has something to share and the need was clear in Russia. USAID was looking for areas of mutual interest.

But in 1999, I was assigned as the Deputy Mission Director in West Bank-Gaza. So, my family and I moved to Tel Aviv from Moscow, and—

Q: Let me ask you one more question before we leave Russia. I'm sorry.

Q: The political-economic reform program, the Jeffrey Sachs privatization program the U.S. government and, I think, USAID pushed quite strongly. How was that fairing when you were there? How did people see the privatization program—the attempt to privatize Russian state assets and companies.

HAMMINK: At the time, my colleagues and my counterparts in Russian NGOs who were watchdog NGOs and/or human rights organizations were very concerned, because it seemed like that whole approach was "giving away the store" to a few people who are now—many of them are oligarchs. It was felt that the process was not transparent and it wasn't democratic. It wasn't equitable.

You know, I still remember when I was there, the Russian government basically decided to privatize the housing stock in Moscow. Maybe other cities too; I'm not sure. And it happened overnight. They basically gave title to the apartments to those who were living in them. And overnight almost, there was a real estate market established, and real estate agencies started selling properties back and forth.

They were starting from where the government owned everything, and they wanted to move quickly. So, some of the lack of transparency was inevitable. Some of it was not. At least with our Russian democracy-governance counterparts, they were very concerned.

And I was there, of course, when this whole issue came up with HIID, which was Harvard (University Center for) Institute for International Development that Jeff Sachs ran. And some people went to jail, I believe, and had to pay significant fines. So (sighing) there was that going on. But you know, I haven't read a lot of the history books about that period. And I think it'd be interesting if I did read what people thought about these privatization schemes and the society opening.

It was a challenging period, that's for sure. But also, an exciting period.

Q: Although you were able to travel around, did you get to the point where you were followed, or that your phones were tapped? Did that sort of thing happen?

HAMMINK: Ha, that's a great question! Just after we arrived, we were in an apartment in an area called Stary Arbat. And then we moved to, after that, another place further out of town. But within a month after we arrived, our phone would ring at 2 a.m., and I'd go answer it, and they would hang up. You would see signs that people were in our apartment, like the chairs had these covers, and you could see they were turned around. And nobody had been in the apartment. So, they left signs, and they also made it known they were listening on the phone. Because sometimes, when we were talking on the phone, you could hear somebody else would be talking. (chuckles)

And so everyone knew that they were listening and watching. But my approach was that there was nothing I was trying to hide. Nothing in my work was any secret, including everything we did on the DG side. We wanted to be totally open. You know, our FSNs too, we didn't know where they came from. But it all worked out. You just had to not take that too seriously.

Q: And the bigger programs were the National Republican Institute? And the National Democratic Institute?

HAMMINK: Yeah, there was support for the independent media. There was support for civil society. Support for independent judiciary from several organizations. And then I mentioned, the support for the electoral process and the political process—political party support. That was open to everybody, including the Communist Party, because we had to be fair and open and provide that kind of training for everybody.

Q: And who were USAID's partners in this?

HAMMINK: NDI, IRI, IFES on that side. Internews, I mentioned, on the support for media side. The civil society side, I remember Save the Children and other U.S. NGOs.
Major human rights organizations. I don't remember the names now. There was a group called IREX that managed all our operational or institutional partnership program. International Research and Exchanges - IREX. We had some major partners, most of whom are still around, of course. But not in Russia.

Q: Right, not in Russia. Did you ever meet Yeltsin or Putin?

HAMMINK: No, not at my level.

Q: So after how many years did you say, three and a half?

HAMMINK: Three years. We were three years in Moscow and it went by fast.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ELISABETH KVITASHVILI
USAID
Position Unclear
Moscow, Russia
(1993)

Elisabeth Kvitashvili was born in September 1955 in Washington DC. She received her bachelor's at North Carolina and her masters at the University of London. She worked at USAID before converting to the Foreign Service in 1983. Her career included positions in Afghanistan, Ukraine, and the former Soviet Union. She was interviewed on December 5, 2016 by John Pielemeier.

Topical Focus – U. S. Support for Democratization and Russian Relations

Q: So what is the change of focus?

KVITASHVILI: The previous limited "assistance" to Russia and Armenia had focused on humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations With the launch of new missions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union there was a desire to cement democracy and introduce a free market system in these formerly communist countries. Our activities would support the introduction of market reforms that would bring about a western style economy with an emphasis on private sector-led growth. We implemented a program that led to banking reforms. The privatization of state-owned enterprises and land became an almost singular focus. Harvard's Jeff Sachs and his group of "young turks" essentially guided a small group of reform-minded Russians on how to implement reforms to open up the economy. The emphasis on democracy promotion and strengthening civil society led us to focus on the creation of new political parties,

and elections training with support from NDI, IRI and IFES. A young NDI staffer posted to Russia eventually became US Ambassador-Mike McFaul. His wife worked as a PSC in the Mission. In AID/Washington, the new Democracy Center was created, and the Agency had a new cadre of people focused on how to bring about democratic reforms. In Russia we focused on building political parties, educating people on how democratic practices worked, what it meant to operate in a democratic atmosphere; we helped foster civil society organizations to become active participants in this democratic reform process. But civil society did not really exist in the former Soviet Union. People didn't participate in voluntary activities due to the past where people were "volunteered" as part of the Soviet way of life. Volunteerism had a negative connotation. An important point to remember is the AID officers who early on served in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, all of their experience was in the developing world. As we learned very early in Russia and I will just speak to Russia, our Russian counterparts rightly told us they were not "third world" they were a modern country that saw things differently than we did. They had trained professionals. They told us "just give us ideas on how to get where we want to go; don't tell us what to do. We know what to do. What we want is to see options and models." So very quickly we began to see this level of discomfort among some of our counterparts in Russia who were very highly educated but who did not know the Western models and in many cases were extremely resentful. They loathed the term "development". We had to rethink our approach in how we dealt with counterparts, avoid seeming overly paternalistic We couldn't use the phrases, development assistance as this term was demeaning. We came up with "Technical Cooperation" which was acceptable to the Russians. Technical Cooperation demonstrated we were peers, we were equals, we were not anywhere superior to them. We had to be careful to avoid saying "this is how we did it in" Pakistan or Egypt or worse yet in Africa. The Russians would reject such comparisons saying "we are much more sophisticated; we have our systems, you just need to help us transform them to fit into a Western world." My nanny by the way was a Ph.D. nuclear physicist…..

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

LOUISE TAYLOR
Department of State
Policy Officer
Russia
Moscow, Russia
(1996-1998)

Ms. Taylor was born and raised in Illinois and educated at Wellesley College, George Washington University and Boston University. After joining the Foreign Service of USIA, Ms. Taylor served in Washington and abroad in the field of Cultural and Information. Her foreign posts include Moscow, Kabul, Tel Aviv and Rabat. She also served in Washington as USIA Desk Officer for Afghanistan/Pakistan and for South Asia and as Policy Officer for Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States. Ms. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Topical Focus – Russian NGOs, Balkans

TAYLOR: There are some places where the NGOs have succeeded really well. Helping small businesses become more effective, helping women's groups become a voice for change or a voice for political action, helping even universities become more modernized and streamlined. But this all happened so fast in the '90s that what we did to assist the former Soviet Union countries to remain on a path toward eventual democratization and opening up and liberalization of their systems was a new ballgame for everybody. It's almost like the new ballgame we're in now. In a sense, it was the blind leading the blind.

Q: When you think about it, the country had never had a democracy until about 10 years before.

TAYLOR: And it is very chaotic and very confused and very colorful and always interesting and absorbing. But the political game of the day was the Balkans

Q: Now let's go to the Balkans. What were we doing public diplomacy wise in the Balkans?

TAYLOR: I wanted to finish an earlier thought. I do think that the enormous political pressure emanating from the White House caused us to focus on the Balkans not exclusively but far more than I would have liked. During that very critical period of time, the entire administration was not paying enough attention to Russia. Certainly we in USIA with our programs We had money. We had the FSA. That money went to the former Soviet Union. But I don't think we were sitting around the table brainstorming about the former Soviet Union to the degree that we should have been. We were already feeling a reduction in staff and personnel. So was the State Department. The enormous political pressure coming from the White House to do something about the Balkans, to fix it, to make it so that the news wasn't so bad in the New York Times every day about how the place was just going down the drain, took a lot of energy. I think that some of our best thinking went into what to do about Bosnia and Herzegovina as opposed to what to do about the robber barons who were taking over major institutions in the former Soviet Union. I felt I was this little bleating voice every day saying, "But wait a minute. There is this major opportunity we've got in Moscow and we're letting it slip through our fingers. We're not taking enough care and we're not paying enough attention because we're doing these other things.So, what did public diplomacy do in the Balkans? We really did a lot. A lot of money from George Soros was floating around in the Balkans.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

Elizabeth Kvitashvili
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Project Development Officer
Mission to Russia
Moscow, Russia
(1992-1995)

Elizabeth Kvitashvili was born in Washington DC in 1955. She was educated at the Institute of Political Science in Paris and School of Oriental and African Studies in London. She initially joined the civil service before transferring to the foreign service. She set up USAID programs

across the Eastern Hemisphere, as well as serving in multiple bureaus in Washington. Mrs. Kvitashvili was interviewed on December 5, 2016 by John Pielemeier.

Topical Focus – Start-Up Policies and Programming for Elections and Democracy in Russia

Q: So what is the change of focus?

KVITASHVILI: The previous limited "assistance" to Russia and Armenia had focused on humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations. With the launch of new missions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, there was a desire to cement democracy and introduce a free market system in these formerly communist countries. [Superfluous information redacted] The emphasis on democracy promotion and strengthening civil society led us to focus on the creation of new political parties, and elections training with support from NDI [National Democratic Institute], IRI [International Republican Institute] and IFES [International Foundation for Electoral Systems]. A young NDI staffer posted to Russia eventually became US Ambassador— Mike McFaul. His wife worked as a PSC [Personal Services Contractors] in the Mission. In AID/Washington, the new Democracy Center was created, and the Agency had a new cadre of people focused on how to bring about democratic reforms. In Russia we focused on building political parties, educating people on how democratic practices worked, what it meant to operate in a democratic atmosphere; we helped foster civil society organizations to become active participants in this democratic reform process. But civil society did not really exist in the former Soviet Union. People didn't participate in voluntary activities due to the past where people were "volunteered" as part of the Soviet way of life. Volunteerism had a negative connotation. [Superfluous information redacted]

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[Superfluous information redacted]. That being said our portfolio, and here I will just speak to Russia, was a relatively nontraditional portfolio for AID. We were doing things like privatization of state-owned enterprises, land reform programs which the Agency hadn't done in decades— we implemented a coal mining project. We were doing political party development through NDI and IRI. We were doing election reform. [Superfluous information redacted]

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[Superfluous information redacted] The Clinton Administration expectations going into Russia was that we would go in, we would do our thing— we were given a billion dollars to work with in 1994— we would be successful and we would be able to leave within ten years, if not less. The Russians were smart. We could show them what to do and walk away. The privatization went very quickly. It would be successful. We would introduce democracy. We would have elections. They would get it and we would walk away. There was an enormous amount of hubris. There was an enormous amount of wishful thinking that we could graduate our programs very quickly. The first strategy that we did in Russia, I think this was 1993 or 1994. The expectation was that by 1997 we would begin to wind down and by 2000 we should be out of Russia— so literally eight years. But really, we were talking about generational changes, and we were giddy with our initial successes, and lost sight of the big picture. People had grown up with certain

systems, with certain ways of doing business, that you just can't change overnight. As we know, change is hard. Neither the Russians, nor we, realized how much change was required, and how much people would suffer in order to go through this change. And I mean suffer. [Superfluous information redacted] We began to see the growth of a very tiny wealthy class of elite businessmen, and a growing class of increasingly impoverished Russians who couldn't understand how all the economic reforms that were being pushed by the west— all these democratic reforms that were being advocated by the west— why their lives were getting worse. Corruption was getting worse, and yet under democracy, corruption was supposed to disappear. Disillusion was setting in. We needed to move ahead very quickly with these programs and show results. In fact, we were showing results, but these results were not going to last very long. The streets were full of beggars, many impoverished pensioners and young mothers.

GERALD F. HYMAN
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
Soviet Union
(1989)

Gerald F. Hyman was born in Chicago in 1942. Hyman has a B.A. in philosophy and a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Chicago and a J.D. from the University of Virginia. He is a senior associate with the Office of the President at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as well as a member of the Advisory Council to the Center for International Media Assistance of the National Endowment for Democracy. He conducted democracy and governance assessments for USAID in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Serbia, South Africa, South Sudan, and Ukraine. Gerald F. Hyman was interviewed by Ann Van Dusen on November 16, 2016.

Topical Focus – Democracy and Governance Programs in the Soviet Union

Q: Maybe you could talk a little bit about how you even thought about doing democracy and governance programs in the former Soviet Union once it had collapsed.

HYMAN: We, perhaps incorrectly, almost surely incorrectly, essentially took the same structures that we had created, those four areas (elections, rule of law, civil society, governance), and applied them to the former Soviet Union. I never took a trip into the former Soviet Union like I have in the Balkans and continue to in the Balkans. I did, let me think; I went to Moscow I think briefly. I went to Kiev once briefly. But I never did the kind of on the ground reconnaissance that I did in the Balkans. And in the Balkans it was not just in the former Yugoslavia. It was also in Bulgaria and Romania. And as I mentioned to you, I kept going back to those places whereas I didn't go back to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was not in the Carol Adelman sphere. Remember I was mentioning to you there were some disagreements, I would say, between Carol Adelman and Roskins. So Roskins created a different operation for the Soviet Union and that was with Malcolm Butler and Barbara Turner and never the twain should meet after that. So,

Barbara was the DAA equivalent or whatever, I've forgotten what the structure was exactly, but the Carol Adelman side never was part of the planning for that. We simply gave over in a quiet way to our colleagues who were part of the NIS. It was called there for a while. Remember, they fumbled around about what we're going to call this. First it was the former Soviet states and then it was the new independent states and so on. But since I was with Carol Adelman and she was not in that operation they never asked my opinion about it, except at the lowest levels. So, the people that did the democracy and governance work in the former Soviet Union, were who I had worked with previously, but they were sort of lower level than I was in the Europe bureau. I've forgotten how the structure was in the NIS operation because I wasn't part of it.

RWANDA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ELIZABETH SPIRO CLARK
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
Rwanda
(1993)

Elizabeth Spiro Clark was born in New York City, New York in 1937. Before joining the Foreign Service, she practiced operatic singing in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and London, United Kingdom. In 1980, she joined the Foreign Service and her postings included Iceland, South Africa, Norway. After her career in the Foreign Service, she joined the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs and Bureau of Democracy from 1993 to 1998. Elizabeth Spiro Clark was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 12, 2011.

Topical Focus – Bureau of Democracy Work in Rwanda

Q: Where did you go after this in 1993?

CLARK: I left there in ’93 and went to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, DRL.

I have to say from this moment on my career was being planned by my desire to stay in the United States because I got married in ’93 to Ambassador Warren Clark. He retired in ’96. I knew I didn’t want to be assigned overseas again. I was making a lot of decisions on personal, not professional, grounds.

I had got recruited for what would have been a terrific job as DCM in Estonia. So I got some nice job offers but didn’t take them because I wanted to come back to the States. And I also had written about human rights before I entered the Foreign Service and had a book that I co-edited on international financial institutions and human rights. I wrote a chapter in that book. I also wrote a rather important article also on human rights in ’77 -- it got attention from some notables like Arthur Schlesinger Jr., but this is before I entered the Foreign Service. So I felt I was returning to human rights by wanting to go to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. And so I then got very involved as deputy office director for our human rights reports, I got very involved on issues like Haiti or Srebrenica. I wish I could say the involvement was effective. I remember one of my colleagues saying in the case of Nigeria, “Betsy actually wants to stop this from happening, not complain about it afterwards,” which was quite true. But I’m afraid in the State Department you find yourself complaining afterwards.

Q: How about Rwanda?

CLARK: With Rwanda there again I always felt I was putting forward ideas which the bureau assistant secretary would say were good ideas but then nothing happened to them. In the case of the Rwandan war, for example, the idea of a safe haven, carving out a geographical area that's right up against the border of another country. You create a safe haven. Maybe you have a no fly zone. Maybe you bring troops in. The reason that didn't work was because they thought that the French were playing other games. What happened in the Congo, which we also got involved in trying to save, was instructive. You probably remember that there was huge assistance going into the refugee camps. However the aid was funneled through the camp leaders, the Hutu, who were the "genocidaires" -- the ones who had run the killings in Rwanda. USAID didn't want to take any direction from the government -- our government -- because they thought the government had dirty hands, while they were "squeaky clean". Therefore they didn't want to take any direction from the State Department, but what they were doing was assisting these leaders. The aid was not getting to the people it was supposed to go to. The same thing happened in Haiti.

Q: You're talking about NGO groups.

CLARK: Yes, aid groups. There were some astronomical numbers. I got involved in that issue. I did something I'm still very proud of even though it actually didn't make it through the bureaucracy. The powers that be were putting together a directive that would lay out comprehensive guidelines that would govern when the U.S. military could intervene or not intervene. I can get the number of that document. I was, unfortunately, a little too late in the game brought in on what our bureau was saying in those negotiations. I was brought in because I had proposed in a memo to my assistant secretary that a new category should be created for something I labeled a "human rights crisis". Shattuck liked the concept and I was allowed to chair some meetings in the State Department with representatives from relevant bureaus on the proposal. A "human rights crisis" was different from a humanitarian crisis. We were very used to talking about humanitarian crises. Starving people in Somalia tends to be that kind of crisis. But a "human rights crisis" would have to be so labeled by the UN Security Council. There would have to be international agreement on what constitutes such a crisis. At that point the U.S. military could be deployed to deal with the crisis, say, for example, Libya. We have moved in that direction although we aren't calling it that. But I was gratified that my assistant secretary thought that was a good idea. The trouble was that DRL didn't carry much weight in the State Department. I was very naïve. I remember asking at some meeting of bureau office directors with Shattuck, "why aren't we talking about Bosnia?" Nobody knows. This happens in the State Department all the time. Some issues are too important for the bureau that might seem to be the relevant bureau, so they are taken up and out and you are left talking about peripheral stuff.

SAUDI ARABIA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

PETER O. SELLAR
Special Deputy for Joint Commissions
Office of Middle East Affairs
USAID
Saudi Arabia
(1975–1976)

Peter O. Sellar was born in Connecticut and grew up in New Jersey. He graduated from Harvard University with a degree in American History and Literature and later completed a master's degree at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. After joining USAID in 1963 as a Management Intern, he served in a wide range of positions over a 30-year career, including assignments in Guinea, Liberia, and Washington. His Washington postings included senior roles in the Africa Bureau, the Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation, the Near East Bureau, and the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, where he worked on the Central America Initiative and helped develop USAID's Democracy Program. He retired in 1993 after serving as Senior Program Officer in the Office of Democratic Initiatives. Following his USAID career, he consulted on democracy and governance programs in Guyana and Nepal and authored a paper on USAID's first decade of democracy promotion. Throughout his career, he focused on program planning, democracy promotion, governance, and development policy. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on January 21, 1999.

Topical Focus – U.S.-Saudi Joint Commission, Reimbursable Aid, and Large-Scale Development Initiatives in the Wake of Camp David

Q: Okay. So, you left that position then in 19..?

SELLAR: 1975. I was basically there for four years. It was time for me to move on, but in fact, it took one of these agency-wide events to make that happen, where they did a reclassification of all positions.

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Q: So, what happened?

SELLAR: I'm a little fuzzy on that. I think they did the reclassification, and, then, they had a RIF. As a result of these two things, I was reassigned by the Personnel Office to a different job, which was in the Office of Middle East Affairs as it was called then. The title of the job was Special Deputy for Joint Commissions. I really benefitted from these RIFs. I got bumped into

better jobs than the ones I'd been in, for part of my career, though that wasn't true at the end. This job was coordinating U.S. government participation in seven different Joint Commissions that had been established with Middle Eastern countries to broaden and deepen our relationships. This was an outgrowth of the Camp David accords, as a part of which special commissions were established with Egypt and Israel, and the desire of a lot of other Middle Eastern countries to have it demonstrated that we thought they were important too. It also happened in the wake of the tremendous oil discoveries in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries.

Q: There was a Joint Commission for each country?

SELLAR: Yes. There were seven of them all together, all Middle Eastern countries.

Q: Which countries do you remember?

SELLAR: Saudi Arabia, Jordan, I think Tunisia, Oman. Everybody wanted one. I can't remember specifically, but I think the others were mostly the oil states, as well.

Q: I see. Linked to the oil?

SELLAR: Yes, it was, and to help

Q: Did it include Israel and Egypt?

SELLAR: Well, the Israel and Egypt Commissions existed already. So, I guess if we add them, then we're pretty close to seven. I don't think we had one with Syria, although I could be wrong. The areas of activities included technology, education, manpower training, cultural exchanges, agricultural development, trade and industry, and general economic and financial relationships.

Q: What was the makeup of the commission?

SELLAR: Well, it consisted of representatives from both sides, namely the U.S. government on one side and the Commission country on the other side. The makeup depended a great deal on what areas of joint interest there were to work on.

Q: Development focus?

SELLAR: Well, in some cases, not in all cases. In some cases there was more on developing trade and industry. But they were developmental in many cases. In some cases, Egypt for example, it was really a classic development program and the biggest one in the world, except it was run with Economic Support Funds (ESF), originally called Security Supporting Assistance funds. Egypt was pretty much purely developmental. Saudi Arabia was interesting, because they were attempting to jumpstart their country, jump it out of whatever century it was in (we used to say of Yemen that it was moving headlong out of the 12th century). Saudi Arabia was probably further along than that, but they needed development assistance. They had the money to pay for everything. Strangely enough, that Commission wound up being run by the Treasury Department. I'm not quite sure why that happened.

Q: It was a reimbursable aid program. Was that under the Joint Commission?

SELLAR: In the case of Saudi Arabia it was, yes. I'm sure there were some reimbursable aid programs that took place other than in Joint Commission countries, but Saudi Arabia was really the first major instance where that happened, I think.

Q: Was the Commission's function to select programs: what areas and how?

SELLAR: Yes, and then to actually help them procure the kinds of assistance they needed help with procuring.

Q: Who represented the U.S. on the Commission? What kind of people?

SELLAR: You'd have people from the Treasury; you'd have the AID person; you'd have a State Department person; you'd have a Commerce Department person; and then when you got into particular sectors, like agriculture, you'd have an AID agricultural person or a USDA person. It really was an AID operation, except that the Saudis were telling us what they wanted, because they were paying for it, and they were paying overhead, as well. So, anything they wanted to do

Q: Was it all officials from the U.S. government? Were there private sector representatives?

SELLAR: There was a private sector component. In many cases you would have lots of working groups under the official commission itself. I'm sure there were working groups that involved the private sector, as well as government, because they were building plants and getting into large agribusiness schemes. This wasn't being run by the Saudis. The scope of the program was huge.

Q: What does that mean?

SELLAR: It means that, in 1975, one activity cost as much as a billion dollars. That was not the kind of money that AID was used to dealing with on a project. In fact, I can remember a meeting that I went to with our engineers who were grappling with something that the Saudis wanted done, and they had worked out a tentative cost estimate. The meeting was with Bob Nooter, who at that point was head of the Middle East Bureau. The engineers were sort of openmouthed about the size and cost of this. Nooter, a cool customer, said, "Hey, it's just a question of adding zeros." In fact, the initiation of that program saved an entire large group of engineers that had been working on Vietnam from being put out on the streets.

Q: AID engineers were doing the work?

SELLAR: And a number of contract engineers. But, a lot of direct AID people were involved who otherwise would have been surplus after Vietnam.

Q: Who managed the Saudi Commission?

SELLAR: The Treasury Department.

Q: Why was that?

SELLAR: I think because of the very large financial scope of the relationship. Different agencies had the lead role in different Commissions, just depending on what the main focus and objectives of the Commission were. AID was the head of the Egypt Commission, while the State Department was the head of some, where it was kind of a mixed bag of things that were wanted. Commerce may have been in charge of some of them.

Q: I see. Was there an overall coordination mechanism for the Commissions?

SELLAR: There was. That's what my job was, as far as AID was concerned, to keep up with what was going on, and register AID inputs where appropriate.

Q: In all the Commissions?

SELLAR: Yes. And interact, interface with the other agencies. You know, points of view are not always identical between Treasury Department and AID, and State and AID, or Commerce and AID.

Q: But, the ones other than Saudi Arabia were funded by AID funds, rather than reimbursing AID?

SELLAR: It was both. Egypt, of course, was fully funded by AID, but there were others where, I think there was a mixture. I was only in the job for six months. It was very political.

Q: What kind of issues were you mainly having to deal with?

SELLAR: Well, it's hard for me to remember. Here's where I'd have to look at some of my efficiency reports. I don't think there were any major issues that couldn't get hashed out within the coordinating framework that we had. There were issues of turf in some cases, you know, as to who ought to be running this or that Commission. There were issues as to whether or not to establish a Commission with a country, because many of them wanted them. The State Department was happy to have everybody have one. We were more conservative about that at AID, because we saw that leading to aid programs in countries that we didn't want to go into.

Q: Did you think it was a good idea? Did it work?

SELLAR: I think so. I have never seen any overall evaluation of the Joint Commission activity, but I know a lot of stuff got built and funded, and a lot of people got trained and so on in Saudi Arabia. Agriculture was very expensive, because they have these circular irrigation cranes, basically growing vegetables in the desert. I don't know how economic that was. But, certainly there was a tremendous amount of activity. Of course, the Egypt program. I don't know how to characterize that.

Q: Have the Commissions continued?

SELLAR: I think they tended to wither away. I don't know whether they formally still exist or not. I really can't say, because I was there for six months and then assigned once again to another job when there was a RIF. So I never looked back.

Q: These were essentially a political response to a political relationship that derived from the Egyptian/Israel accords?

SELLAR: Yes, political and economic and financial. I next went into the Office of Central American Affairs.

SENEGAL

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

SUSAN FINE
USAID
Program Officer
Senegal
Dakar, Senegal
(2000-2004)

Susan Fine was born in New York City and attended Colby College before joining the Peace Corps and receiving her master's degree from the Harvard Kennedy School. She joined USAID as an intern in 1992 and served in several different positions thereafter in Uganda, South Africa, Senegal, Washington, and Sudan. Mrs. Fine retired from USAID in September 2019. Susan Fine was interviewed by Carol Peasley in 2022.

Topical Focus – Decentralization and Local Government Programming in Senegal

Q: That's an important lesson that people need to follow. It sounds as if it was very well managed.

And to go on to the substance, you were the head of the program office. Was there a country strategy in place or were you in the process of developing a new strategy? Where were you in terms of that?

FINE: There was a strategy when I got there, but then during my second year, we did develop a new one.

Oh, by the way, I will say, 9/11 happened just maybe six weeks or so after we had arrived in Dakar. The USAID office was still downtown, right by the port, and I remember, you know, hearing about some terrible thing that was happening—that had happened in the United States, some plane crash. And going down—the public affairs office of the embassy was in the same building that USAID was in, but the rest of the embassy was across town. But I went down to the public affairs office, they had a TV with feed from the U.S., and I remember watching what we all watched, the planes flying into the World Trade Center and, yeah, like everybody who experienced that, it was a memory that I will never forget. And of course, because we were in a Muslim majority country, we pretty quickly started thinking about the ramifications. And so, that wasn't the only impetus for developing a new strategy, but it was certainly an important part of the context as we started developing a new strategy. And there was a sense that Senegal was an important African partner for the United States and—oh, the other thing that had happened just as we arrived is that they had had a peaceful transfer of leadership. Abdoulaye Wade was elected right around the time that we arrived and so, it was seen as a country that was progressing as a democracy. So, from a foreign policy standpoint, Senegal was kind of on the rise as a partner for the United States.

The other thing that was going on around that time were negotiations to try and bring the conflict in the Casamance region to an end. They did not conclude during that time. However, there was a reduction in the number of attacks. There were some groups that were interested in engaging in peacebuilding activities. Wade's government was at least publicly trying to resolve the conflict in the Casamance and one of the things that we did was design a peacebuilding program in the Casamance. No donors had been working in the Casamance for about ten years because of the insecurity and USAID was the first organization to start funding activities there. We funded, as I recall, two local organizations that were doing community-level peacebuilding, confidence building activities, and so, those were some of the things that were going on and provided the context for the USAID program at that time.

Q: Something you gave me mentioned the strategy was looking at a more integrated approach to the role of local governance across sectors. Could you talk a little bit about what that meant?

FINE: Mm-hm, yeah. Absolutely. So, one of the things that the mission did, and I think Don may have started this, was what he called synergy meetings where we'd bring together the chiefs of party for all the different projects to talk a little bit about what they were doing. I think each time one of them would give a presentation about some aspect of their project. The technical offices would also participate in these meetings as well as the implementing partners. And what started happening is people started seeing how there were connections between the private enterprise program and the education program, or the health program and the local government program because the local government is responsible for providing some kinds of support to health clinics and to schools.

And so, the whole staff and our implementing partners started seeing how there were these connections between what they were doing and, obviously because of the way we received the funding and the way we tend to program, we often do it on this sectoral basis, but it creates these sometimes artificial distinctions, and so it was really valuable to see how there were connections and in a number of instances the different implementing partners would then get together and say, "Oh, I can—." I remember one example was the education program, they had a program with a girls' school where they were doing some kind of technical skills, not just reading and writing and math but technical skills, so that the girls could develop jobs. But they weren't teaching them any business skills. And so, there was a small business activity and it was working in the same region, and so they said, "Well, hey. We'll go to the school and we'll offer these girls some training in entrepreneurship skills." So, you know, it was a very simple example, but there were things like that.

And so, during that process one of the important things that we saw was how critical local government was. And Senegal was going through a decentralization process at this time. They had put in a decentralization policy, but they were really just in the beginning stages of operationalizing that policy and trying to devolve more responsibility to local government and a little bit of funding, a very tiny amount of funding. But there was a realization that the local government can actually have a very positive impact on support for girls' education, helping to ensure that the local clinic functions well, on addressing some community issues like natural resource management and things like that.

So, we designed a local government program to support local government and it was explicitly designed not only to develop capacity of local governments and encourage transparency and citizen engagement, but also to have linkages to the other sectors. I don't know at that time whether we actually succeeded. I don't think we actually put funding from other sectors into the program, but there was at least a connection in the implementation phase. And I became an evangelist, I think, for synergy and for constantly striving to recognize the connections between our programs and subsequently —the next time when I was back in Senegal as the mission director we actually succeeded in designing a local government program that had funding from other sectors, but that was down the road.

Q: (Laughs) Okay. What's interesting is that I've now done several interviews and more and more missions are increasingly looking at local governance and decentralization as priorities. It's interesting. It's gaining momentum.

FINE: Yeah, right. And I think it's an area where you can have a lot of impact without a lot of money.

SERBIA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

VICTOR D. COMRAS
Department of State
Serbia Sanctions Program
Serbia
Belgrade, Serbia
(1998-1999)

Victor D. Comras was born in New York State in 1943. Comras graduated from Georgetown University in 1964, the University of Florida Law School in 1966, and promptly joined the Foreign Service. While in the Foreign Service, Comras served overseas in Zaire, Nigeria, South Africa, France, Canada, and Macedonia. He also worked on the Law of the Sea negotiations. Comras was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Topical Focus – U. S. and Post-War Serbian Regime Change

COMRAS:...The Clinton Administration had finally decided that Milosevic had to go. President Clinton made it clear that the U.S. and its allies would not assist or deal with the Milosevic government and that we would work through peaceful means to foster democratic regime change. So what about the sanctions? The first inclination among the U.S. and other Contact group members was that now that the war is over, sanctions were no longer necessary. I disagreed. I thought that sanctions were needed even now - as a main impetus for peaceful regime change. I wrote a memo arguing that targeted sanctions were critical to our accomplishing democratic change in Serbia. Secretary Albright agreed with my position and directed that we continue our sanctions work.

By that time most of Europe had dropped blanket sanctions on Serbia. The situation in Iraq at that time had already led to sanctions being discredited as too blunt an instrument with too much humanitarian fallout. There was concern that we might cause considerable suffering in Serbia if we maintained too broad a sanctions package. So, if we were going to have sanctions against Yugoslavia for regime change, they would have to be very targeted or smart sanctions.

We had to develop a program that we could sell to our European friends - again we did not have a UN Security Council resolution to work with - that would assist our efforts to getting the Serbia people to dump Milosevic.

The program that was developed was a multifaceted program worked out between the U.S. and the European Union. The objective was to strengthen the Democratic Opposition in Serbia while weakening the Milosevic regime. We would target the regime and its political, military, and bureaucratic support structure as well as its political and financial supporters.

We were going to go after Slobo's money, the money that supported his regime. We included in the target circle those we could identify as providing the political, economic, financial foundations of the regime as well as those supporting the repressive structure Milosevic had created to retain power. We defined a group of about 25 major individuals and companies that were the main sources of revenue and support. Their names were placed on a black list and trade and transactions with them were prohibited. Any of their assets found in a cooperating European country would also be frozen. Their names were also reflected in a blacklist issued by the EU which prohibited trade with them. These measures had a strong impact on Slobo and his financial support. It was beginning to cost more than it was worth to be a friend of Slobo.

Q: Talk about the Europeans. The French and the Germans and the Russians often have varying interests. How much were you able to... Were there some elements of these ones that I mentioned or others that had to be dragged kicking and screaming?

COMRAS: There was a consensus among the critical group - the French, the Germans, the British, and the Americans - on how to move toward regime change. However, there were some differences over where to place the greatest emphasis Some supported a greater effort on working with the democratic opposition. They were somewhat more reticent when it came to tightening sanctions measures against the regime, or withholding assistance for infrastructure projects - for example the reconstruction of bridges over the Danube. But all in all there was agreement on a common approach that contained both aspects - assistance for the democratic opposition and sanctions against the regime. There were a number of times when we had to get Madeline Albright to intercede at the highest levels to keep the program together, particularly on the sanctions side. It was easier on the democratic opposition assistance side.

The key to retaining broad European Union support for the sanctions against Milosevic was to target them carefully. Exceptions also had to be made to take humanitarian considerations into account. These exceptions involved such issues as providing limited oil to individual towns through carefully managed assistance programs. We tried to give credit to democratic opposition groups so as to increase their influence and credibility.

One of the biggest, and most controversial issues was whether or not to assist Serbia in rebuilding Danube bridges. This was the greatest test of our "no assistance" policy. My instructions were to try and hold back a number of European governments who were more willing to assist the Serbs in rebuilding the Danube bridges. I also had to deal with complaints from the Bulgarians, Romanians and Hungarians that the bridge damage was disrupting so much commerce on the Danube that it had created serious economic problems for them. There was also growing concern that obstructions in the river could cause ecological damage to the river and might hold back the winter ice flow which could result in serious winter flooding. Nonetheless, because of the strong determination of President Clinton and Secretary Albright to the "no assistance" policy, we were able to hold back providing assistance to Serbia for the bridges. I have to say Serbia was their own worst enemy in this regard. They tried to blackmail the other European countries using the Danube by closing the river through Serbia to international traffic.

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I suggested that we work in London to establish a mechanism that could monitor the flow of goods across borders into Yugoslavia. These monitors would be able to distinguish between UN approved shipments, and those passing in violations of the sanctions. They would verify documentation and cargoes, as well as the trucks and material being sent into Serbia. This information would be passed back to national authorities to determine if such shipments had been approved. The monitors would establish paper trail proof that could be used by regulatory and enforcement agencies against the companies or individuals responsible. The application of severe penalties would then serve to dissuade such trade. And, even if it did not halt it altogether, would drive the price up considerably.

I suggested also that we work to gain agreement to establish a system of international customs monitors in the countries bordering Serbia that would provide the vital information necessary to make this system work. I also made a number of other suggestions as to how we should organize such an international sanctions monitoring system. Many of these ideas had stemmed from discussions I had had with my own office staff concerning how sanctions might be made more effective. I guess I spoke pretty eloquently. I guess I was having one of those good reflective moments. Anyway, Eagleburger looked at me - he didn't even know who I was - and he stopped for a minute and said nothing. Then he pointed to me and said, "I agree with him. I agree with what he just said." Then he turned to me and said, "You, What's your name? I'm putting you in charge of the sanctions here. I want you to negotiate just what you said. Keep me apprized moment by moment, day by day. Every afternoon, I want a full report." That's what he said. And that's what I did. I was able to gain agreement at the London Conference for a new system of controls and for the creation on a new organization that took on the name. Sanctions Assistance Mission. (also known as SAMS).

The Sanctions Assistant Missions were composed of an international corps of customs officers assigned by various countries. At one point we had some 20 countries providing customs officers for the program. They grew in both composition and complexity over the next several years. It gave us full transparency around the borders of Serbia on the borders with Serbia of what was moving in and out. Working with customs officials in the bordering countries, and through a communications center established in Brussels, this information was passed to countries of origin and countries of destination. There was also a secure link with the United Nations to validate approved shipment licenses. A special team was established to monitor trade along the Danube. The sanctions on Serbia became the most successful trade sanctions in history.

Of course, all of this didn't happen overnight, but the new system was set in motion by agreement at the London Conference. In retrospect, that may have been the most useful result to come out of the London Conference.

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My work during the war was directed particularly at cutting off the oil flow to Serbia and keeping Serbia from obtaining other needed replacement resources that might prolong the war. When the fighting ended, I was charged with putting in place a somewhat broader set of targeted sanctions aimed at fostering getting regime change.

We came up with a set of targeted sanctions that was directed at the Slobodan Milosevic Regime, but not at the people of Serbia. We targeted Milosevic and his cronies. We were able to identify the critical companies and individuals that ought to be blacklisted and whose bank accounts should be frozen. We gained EU-wide agreement to prohibit any dealings with these companies or individuals. These measures placed greater economic stress on the Milosevic regime which was already in great financial difficulty due to the previous round of sanctions, the Kosovo war, and the general economic downturn in the region. Slobodan lost his ability to refloat his economy. His party lost the financial capital it needed to support fealty to the regime or to finance political campaigns or buy influence. The Slobodan regime, which had been a crony regime of great profit to those who supported Milosevic, was beginning to go bankrupt. It no longer was profitable to support Milosevic. In fact, Milosevic had become a much greater financial liability than an asset. There was no money to be made anymore from being a regime supporter. Rather, the regime was seeking to draw out money from those that had supported it to bring it back, to carry out the things that it needed to do. The Milosevic regime also lacked the funds necessary to cover state or party functionary salaries. It was working at such a deficit that it was losing its ability to rule.

Milosevic decided to call for earlier elections to give him a freer hand to deal with these issues. He over-estimated his ability to garner the money and support he needed from his cronies to dominate the political process. But the combination of targeted sanctions and other pressures on the regime had seriously undercut the regime's financial underpinnings and had made the regime vulnerable to a political upset. At the same time the we had helped unite and strengthen the political opposition. The situation was ripe for an overthrow of the Milosevic regime.

Q: What was your position in this?

COMRAS: I was responsible for developing and winning compliance with the sanctions imposed on the regime. I had the job of selling this approach to our European friends and monitoring and cajoling their compliance. Working with my own small team, we had developed a list of Yugoslav companies and entities that were specifically targeted by the sanctions. We also had to pressure countries not to undercut our "no assistance" policies regarding Serbian infrastructure reconstruction. I used to say that our group constituted "the nag factor."

I also had an important role to play in explaining and justifying our policies domestically and internationally. I went on speaking tours throughout Europe. This included meeting with journalists, participating in conferences, talking with government officials and with business groups.

Q: How well were you supported in getting your information by the Economic Bureau, the CIA, other sources?

COMRAS: We received excellent support from the intelligence community and other government agencies. My team included people from the Defense Department, the Treasury Department, and CIA. We worked closely with Customs.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

SUSAN KOSINSKI FRITZ
USAID
Director for Democracy Programming
Serbia and Montenegro
Belgrade, Servia
(2010-2014)

Susan Kosinski Fritz studied at Rutgers University and American University before entering USAID as a Presidential Management Intern in 1989. She served in many different positions in several countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. She was interviewed by Carol Peasley in May 2024.

Topical Focus – USAID Democracy Programming in Serbia and Montenegro

Q: Okay. So, given the time, can you talk about Montenegro first and then we'll come back to talk about Serbia?

FRITZ: That sounds great.

Q: Because the Montenegro program also started later didn't it?

FRITZ: This is one of the things I wanted to circle back to. You had asked in the last interview whether it was hard to work in Serbia and I was talking about the staff. I forgot to mention that several of the staff in the mission had worked for OTI. OTI had a program in Serbia, but we didn't have a mission. OTI was working out of Hungary and supporting activities within Serbia from Hungary. When NATO bombed Serbia during the Kosovo conflict, those Serbian staff working for OTI (along with embassy local staff) moved to Budapest where they continued to work for OTI (and the embassy, respectively). So today we still have people within the mission who worked for OTI before Milosević was ousted and who were committed to democracy and change in Serbia. And, you know, it's always easy to work with people like that. Fortunately the mission hired some of the OTI people and not only our staff, but some of our partners hired OTI staff as well. So there was a good starting basis when the mission opened.

Q: What had OTI been doing during that period?

FRITZ: I don't know everything, but I know they had a big information program, which supported an independent radio station called B92. It's since been sold and it's no longer what it was. But B92 in those days was both independent and anti-Milosević. And so OTI was helping B92 to expand its reach around the country and to get its information out all around the country. The transition in Serbia started with democratic elections which resulted in the opposition winning municipal elections. Eventually, Milosević was overthrown. But from what I remember OTI was mostly in the information space. I'm sure they were doing a lot more than that, but that

was probably the most important thing that they were doing was getting unbiased information out.

Going back to your original question, at the time Montenegro was still part of Serbia. It did not secede until 2006. So OTI programming included Montenegro. And then when the mission opened, it included programming in both Serbia and Montenegro which continued to be managed by the mission in Belgrade after they became two different countries. We had an office and a small staff in Podgorica, Montenegro as well.

So in my Washington briefings before I went out to take up my post in Belgrade in the summer of 2010, I learned that Montenegro's budget for 2012 had been zeroed out. I had to go out to the mission and tell our Podgorica staff that we were closing in two years. I understand it was a rash decision by Raj Shah, administrator at the time. There was no looking at the data, the close-out criteria, or anything.

Unfortunately, we had two procurements underway, one an omnibus DG project and one EG. This was in August and we were finalizing two five-year multimillion dollar contracts. We signed the contracts because we had to obligate the money but then immediately had to amend them to make them two-year contracts, because we only had enough money for two years. And I had to shut the program and close down the office.

Q: Wasn't this unusual to do on such a short timeframe? Most of these closeouts were on a five-year scaling down period. Was this because of sudden budget shortages within the Bureau?

FRITZ: No, I think that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) was requiring USAID to graduate assistance in several countries. Raj Shah came to E&E, which was not his favorite region. I think he didn't understand that the work we were doing was also a form of development, but maybe different than in some of the poorer parts of the world. He asked E&E to name a country that could graduate. During discussions Montenegro came up and apparently it stuck. Nobody thought it was going to stick, but it did. And the budget was zeroed out just like that. And it wasn't based on anything from a DG perspective. They had not had an alternation in power. Still today, they have governance issues, problems with political parties and the political system. So it was a rash decision and it was taken without any forethought.

Both the program and OE budgets for Montenegro were zeroed out. Our OE budget was provided by country, so much for Serbia and so much for Montenegro and they were not transferable to one another. We closed in 2013 because we had to spend the money down, we had to close out the project, we had to close the office. There were things we had to do, but we needed the money to do it, including a closing ceremony in 2013. But we had no OE for Montenegro in 2013. It was really hard to manage the closeout because there had been no forethought or planning. It made it so much more difficult. The Bureau did yeoman's work in sweeping up money from odd places here and there to allocate to us for a closeout ceremony and to offer our foreign service nationals some training, some help in preparing resumes and getting them ready for life after USAID. So that was not the way to do things. We lost so much in doing it that way.

My former deputy from Kazakhstan went over to work for INL in the State Department. INL came in and started making grants to all of our DG sub-partners in Montenegro after we left. In a way it was good because they were able to pick up where we left off but if the goal was to close the U.S. government assistance program, that's not what happened. It was USAID that closed. And we encouraged INL to build the capacity to make grants, basically replacing us.

Q: No, very counterproductive move. Did the ambassador squawk a lot about this premature closure? I'm just curious how State reacted.

FRITZ: She wasn't happy. Nobody was happy. Moreover, the State Department Coordinator's Office did not agree with the decision to close out Montenegro, so they did everything in their power to continue assistance through other means. Nobody was happy.

Q: I have forgotten to ask you questions about the coordinator's office. The E&E Bureau worked closely with them, including heads of the office like Bill Taylor and Tom Adams.

FRITZ: And Larry Napper before that. I think Bill may have been just the NIS Coordinator. Anyway, yes we had had the coordinator's office and by that time, it had grown much bigger than it was in the early days. In the beginning they had maybe a total of five people. Now they have parallel staff to the E&E Bureau. I would say in Kosovo, they were not much of an issue. We kept them informed of what we were doing, but we were pretty lockstep with the embassy. It wasn't an issue in Serbia because we worked well with the DCM. We teed everything up for him to make decisions. But, as I said, in Montenegro they weren't happy with the closeout decision. Nobody was happy with it. Maybe Raj Shah was happy, who knows?

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Q: Today is June 13, 2024, and this is interview number three with Susan Fritz. When we finished up last time, you had been assigned as Mission Director for Serbia and Montenegro, and we covered the Montenegro portion of that work early on. If you have any final thoughts about Montenegro, please offer them, but otherwise let's go on to Serbia.

FRITZ: Yeah, let's do Serbia. So, Serbia was not in a much better place in that it was a challenging assignment because I came in at the high point of the budget. The Mission had received about $50 million a year when I arrived. By the time I left four years later, it was about $18 million.

Q: When did the program start? Was it right after Milosević left?

FRITZ: Yeah, yeah, the mission came in after Milosević departed. And so it was much later than the rest of the Balkans, but as I mentioned earlier, OTI came in before the mission was established. And before Yugoslavia broke up, there was a small USAID Representative office in Belgrade headed up by Mike Zak, though I don't know how much funding there was and what the programming was like.

After Milosević, the main program was a grassroots community development program across the country. And there were something like five implementing partners, each one geographically separate from the others. And they were doing community development work, small grants to basically involve people in democratic processes at the local level. The program was called Community Revitalization Through Democratic Action (CRTA). And it was a lot of money -- I want to say something like $40 million which was a lot of money for the country's size. So it blanketed the country with a lot of small projects that were supposed to build goodwill after we were seen as leading NATO to bomb Serbia. So it was really important. The masterminds behind that program were very smart because by the time I came in, anytime I traveled, people talked about their experience, our partners and beneficiaries, people involved with us or maybe just people that I just came across. They remembered when USAID built a small bridge, a road or a green market with stalls and refrigeration -- just small projects that engaged citizens to decide on which projects would be done. We provided the money to finance what they prioritized as citizens. Everywhere I went I saw plaques with USAID logos all over the country. And that was a good way, I think, to start in a country like that where we were seen as the aggressors.

Q: Okay, so by the time you were there, the relationships with the U.S. and USAID was seen in a favorable light.

FRITZ: Yeah, I was pleasantly surprised that because we delivered and because we were fast – even though we don't have that reputation within the U.S. government – compared to other donors, we were the "go-to" donor and we were well-respected. Our Serbian government interlocutors appreciated us and came to us and asked us for assistance, which I really didn't expect. And civil society, too, and some other partners that we had been working with for a long time, yes, but it surprised me that we had such a good working relationship with the government. And as I came to appreciate more after I left, our ability to work in the country was so much easier compared to Ukraine, where the registration process for USAID projects takes months. In Serbia, we just updated our list of partners, sent it to the government each year. It was very easy to engage and we were very well-respected. It was easy for all donors; it wasn't just us. But as a lead donor that can deliver, that bought us a lot of respect and goodwill.

Q: Okay, great. I interrupted you to get that background, but you were talking about the budget being at its high watermark when you arrived.

FRITZ: Yes. So, we had $50 million. That was cut in half within two years and then reduced even further, so we had to quickly reduce the portfolio, downsize programming. And then, we didn't have clear direction from Washington as to where the Mission was going. And if you remember how the decision to close Montenegro came about, you can imagine there was a lot of concern that we could be next, or any mission in E&E could be next, particularly in the Balkans.

Q: And this was budgetary reasons, or was there something with regard to the relationship with Serbia?

FRITZ: It was purely budget. Well, I would say purely budget, and there was a push from the USAID administrator at the time to close missions. And I think because we weren't doing traditional development, we were ripe for the picking, if you will. And if you travel to Eastern

Europe, if you travel to the Balkans, you say, oh, why is there an assistance program here? But quite honestly, a lot of the most important work we were doing was on the democracy front. And so there was a really good reason for us to be there. And you look now, there's been so much backsliding in all the countries in the Balkans. I think the budget cuts were short-sighted. They've come back up since then. But we had to plan for the eventual closeout because we were maybe scarred from the Montenegro decision. And so we started doing some scenario planning and the budget was so uncertain as well. We said, "Okay, if we get this much, this is what we would do if we get less or more, or we're zeroed out in two years from now, this is how we close out the Mission." And we actually put those plans together.

Q: I did look online and found that it was around this time that the European Union put Serbia on its candidate list for EU membership. And it seems odd that we would be cutting the program at the same time that they were beginning to discuss accession to the EU. Was that considered by Washington at all? You would have thought we might've wanted to accelerate the program then to help.

FRITZ: Well, that's one way of looking at it, Carol. But I think decision makers in Washington saw it as, "Oh, we can pull out because the Europeans are here." We argued that the European Union is not a development agency. They have a lot of money that they make available but they make the acceding country get their systems in place before they release those funds. Usually the first program they establish is for agriculture support and those funds go through host government systems that have to be certified. There's an assumption that the countries will be able to manage the assistance. Quite honestly, we knew differently. We knew that you needed to build up the capacity before you do that, but that's not how the European Union operates. I think they're better now, but in the early days, it was just a lot of money out there, but without the absorptive capacity. What we've seen over and over again, and I saw it very distinctly in Serbia, was that we could develop the capacity for these countries and these institutions to then absorb the European Union funds, particularly host government institutions.

Because we had been working with civil society and media for a long time, they had the capacity. When I went back to Serbia on a six-month PSC after I retired, some of our local partners were getting direct funding, so the localization process did happen. We started that process when I was in Serbia. I don't know if you remember that Raj Shah wanted us to put, I think it was 50% of our funds through local partners. The way we had approached it from Serbia was that we put the administrator's directive aside and did as much as we thought could be absorbed responsibly. In the end it added up to 50%, but not because we said we will do 50%. We did it smartly.

In terms of Government to Government (G2G) assistance, we worked with a regional development agency to provide economic development assistance to small and medium enterprises. We started by getting them ready and certified to be able to absorb funds and manage them. We had a really great FM office and our controller worked with the NGOs that we had supported through U.S. implementing partners, whether they were media related or civil society more broadly to prepare them for receiving funds directly. Again, when I came back, I learned that we have granted even more funds directly to local organizations. So that process has progressed, but we started it back then and it was successful.

I think one of the challenges of localization is that when we move from funding programs through big U.S. organizations with higher overhead costs, to directly funding the same activities through local organizations, we're not going to spend the same amount of money for the same program. We were nervous about overdoing it, giving them too much money. It wasn't only a concern about digesting the money, managing the resources and implementing the programs, but also not creating a large organization with lots of staff that can't be sustained after USAID funding ends. I think that's a risk that we need to pay attention to in localization.

Q: A very important point. You were doing this scenario planning. You had a lot of different issues that you were trying to grapple with, localization being one of them, as well as selecting the priority sectors and work. But just on localization, when you went back later, have these local organizations become more sustainable over time? Do they have multiple resources that they're tapping into?

FRITZ: Yeah, definitely. They have become more sustainable. One is an election-related organization that monitors elections, including electoral laws, and they advocate for more democratic approaches to elections. They are called the Center for Research, Transparency, and Accountability (CRTA). They now receive direct USAID funding. When I came back to Serbia, I met with them and they were very appreciative of not only the funding, but also all the organizational capacity building we provided. They commented on how helpful it was to go through the USAID certification process to be able to receive funds directly, even if it was painful at times. They said handholding and support from the controller's office really helped them. But the funding side is more challenging particularly for DG organizations. Where is that funding going to come from?

Q: To go back again for a moment to the work the controller's office was doing, was there a special unit within the controller's office that focused on doing these? Because that's what they had in the Russia mission, an internal audit unit that did that.

FRITZ: No, we used our financial analysts who were part of the controller's office. We had two really strong financial analysts and they were the leads on it and they were excellent.

Q: Okay, that's the same as Russia; they were financial analysts in the controller's office.

FRITZ: We didn't staff up for localization. And here's the thing. Because we didn't know which direction we were going in terms of funding increasing, decreasing, or saying the same, localization actually helped our mission in two ways. One was as our funding was going down, it addressed the issue that I was talking about earlier about not giving too much money to nascent local organizations, but also within the staff, we were trying to build skills for direct assistance, for consulting, for mentoring, things like that, skills that they could use outside of USAID if they if the mission closed. So we thought through some of that in a way that furthered our mission, but also thought ahead about how we can help these folks get jobs if we were to close.

Q: Okay, that's super. So as you were doing this scenario planning and basically re-looking at the strategy for the mission, did you have to prepare something for Washington or were you just doing this on your own?

FRITZ: We were just doing it on our own. We decided that we needed to, and it was a really helpful thing. It was reassuring to staff that we were thinking through the options. We had an excellent senior team and we brought in Bill Granger, a retired, very experienced EXO. Bill was really helpful in teasing out from us what that could look like programmatically and financially and so forth and, and put together the plan for us. It was really reassuring to us and staff that we had something that we thought through, what made sense so that we weren't doing everything on the fly. Going back to Montenegro, nothing had been thought through so that we wanted to avoid that. It was a really good way of thinking ahead and getting ready for whatever might hit us.

Q: And so how did you define the priorities?

FRITZ: Well, again, the biggest need was the DG side, the biggest gaps if you looked at the Freedom House Nations in Transit gaps were on the DG side. Economically, Serbia was doing much better than politically, so we prioritized DG. But we felt like we couldn't do DG programming alone, that that wouldn't sell in Serbia, so we did keep some economic development work through the central regional development agency that we assisted. We had had large agriculture and competitiveness programs. We had a lot of money going into both of those programs that we phased out. And we had had a local economic development program previously and worked with some of the local offices of the regional development agency. So we decided to focus on economic development, but by directly funding the national regional development agency that worked with the regional development offices around Serbia. We still had a hand in economic development, but more at the local level.

On the democracy side, one of the areas we prioritized was judicial reform because we had been working in the area for a long time. Also, the EU was just getting its feet wet with developing programs in the judicial sector. Here is a good example of collaboration. And so we had had a successful, actually quite a nice program with the misdemeanor courts, which was the level of the judicial system that most citizens came in contact with. We were doing things like automating the case assignment system, cleaning up and scanning all of the paper files, and making the intake system more transparent and welcoming. We actually had a good judicial strengthening program before that, but when the EU came in, we were working with these misdemeanor courts which are all over the country. So the EU saw that program and said, “Gee, that needs to be done with all the courts in the country.” They had money so they asked us to design their program for them. We hired an expert to work with our DG staff to design the program. I would say we were half successful. My EU counterpart was all in, but I wouldn't say the EU bureaucracy was all in.

USAID works with multi-year, three- to five-year contracts or grants. We incrementally fund those contracts or grants. That's not how the EU works. When they design a program, it's only for two years maximum and all the money is obligated up front. And then it takes them forever to actually spend the money. Or by the time they get the program up and running, it's been so many years that they have to redesign it before they can start implementing it. So what we were

proposing was very different than the EU bureaucracy was used to. We designed a $20-$25 million program to work with all the other courts around the country. It was nearly a "copy-paste" of what we were already doing with the misdemeanor courts so it wasn't anything very risky or unique, untried. It's something we've done all over the Balkans.

The head of the EU in Serbia wanted to push the envelope. He had an ulterior motive. He was managing way more money than us with about half the staff. If he could change the way they did things, it would be enormously helpful to him. The maximum length of program they could do was, I think, four and a half years, so that's what we did. We proposed a four and a half-year program. However, when it hit the EU bureaucracy, they said, "No, it can't be that long." I remember distinctly my EU counterpart brought in representatives of all the EU member states to review the program that was being proposed. I was shocked to see nobody wanted to see a four-year program, they didn't want to see that much money. So it wasn't only the bureaucracy that rejected it. I think in the end it was like $12 million over two years. It didn't end up being what it could have been, but it was a good way of us working together. And I don't know what happened, but I'm hopeful that they were able to follow on that two-year program with another one so that it ended up with maybe a four- or five-year program to complete what needed to be done. It was an attempt to collaborate in a real way with another very important donor. And it was worth the effort for us to try. It didn't end up as good as I wanted it to be, but it's interesting.

Q: Did they actually think that you could do capacity building more quickly, or was it just that they didn't want to make commitments longer term? Is it more of a financial thing or a naivete about how you do capacity building?

FRITZ: I don't think it is related to the timing of capacity building. I think it was just a very different approach, not wanting to make financial commitments that far ahead. And they don't incrementally fund projects so maybe a concern about tying up resources. Maybe they do now, but back then it wasn't in their toolbox.

Q: Okay. Those are important points, but actually really fascinating that you all worked that closely with the EU and that they asked you to design a program for them.

FRITZ: Yeah. And I think some member states didn't like that, actually. That was another piece of it – I didn't get warm and fuzzy vibes from them. That's my own interpretation.

Q: You've referred to some policy reform work that you all did related to the World Bank's "Doing Business Report" that you did some work on labor law and construction permitting. Can you talk a bit about that and how you started?

FRITZ: We had an economic policy reform project that was focused on the business enabling environment, so we did continue that work when we downsized because there was still a big need for reform in that area. The contractor, which started about the same time that I arrived in Serbia, came in with their work plan which was not pushing the envelope at all. I pushed back asking them "What are the biggest constraints to doing business?" They pointed to construction permitting and labor law, which were not part of their work plan. They said that it's too hard, high risk, low probability of success. Thinking that we may have only four or five years left in

Serbia, or maybe not even that much time, I thought (and asked them), “Do we really want to make a difference or do we want to just work at the margins?” I told them that I had their back and that we at least needed to try to tackle these two reforms. If they didn’t advance by year two, we would pull back. But we had to try to really make a difference in these key areas that could change the business enabling environment. And so they did, and they did a great job.

The contractor started with a lot of analytical work. We got to the point where we needed to identify champions in the government. It was different for each reform. On labor law, we had to be very careful because it was so politically sensitive. Advising a country that it needs to raise its retirement age because its pension system is not sustainable is sensitive. Telling them that they need to close the gap on all the reasons that people can retire early – all that needed to be tightened up, but USAID couldn't come in and do that. We could do the analysis. We could say this is what the European Union standard is, or what many European Union countries of your size do. We could bring people together. So we quietly brought the labor unions together with the government and businesses for tripartite discussions. It wasn't a public thing. I wasn't really involved. It was our implementing partner quietly analyzing and then organizing and informing these discussions so that they could come to an agreement on whatever was politically feasible. So that's the way that process worked for the reform of the labor law.

We had a dinosaur as the Minister for Infrastructure. Construction was a hugely corrupt sector, but there was a lot of potential. At the time, you didn’t see any construction going on. And for a country that came out of a war and so many years of neglect from the communist system, it was falling behind on infrastructure compared to other countries in the region. Construction could be the engine of growth for a country like Serbia. That's the analysis we did, but we couldn't get anywhere with the Minister who was just stringing us along. So I went to the ambassador and said, “We really need to get to the prime minister and have him help us on this. If we don't have the political will, we need to pull back because we're going nowhere right now. We're wasting a lot of money.” He brought me to one of his regular meetings that he had with the prime minister. I made the pitch and he said, “Yes, it will be done.” And it was. The parliament passed a new construction permitting law. Now there's a lot of construction going on in Serbia. On the down side, there is also a lot of corruption in the sector so it didn't pan out the way I think we would have liked to have seen but it was an engine of growth. Certainly, it's achieved that.

Q: Right and I do think that's a sector that probably has corruption in every country.

FRITZ: Yeah, probably. I may be naive, but yeah, you're right.

Q: So, in the first example on labor law, the team did a lot of analysis and brought different interest groups together for dialogue. Champions evolved out of that and then led the process for change. So, it was two completely different techniques that were used, but both successful.

FRITZ: Yeah. And I give so much credit to our implementing partner. Joe Lowther, the chief of party, was phenomenal, just so smart and a great leader and was able to navigate two very different types of reforms successfully. I give a lot of credit to Joe and his team, his deputy chief of party was really great too. So they really did this in a way that I credit them.

Q: Was an evaluation ever done of the program? Because it sounds like a really very interesting case study.

FRITZ: So I don't know that an evaluation was done. Joe shared with me after I left Serbia a nice write-up of the success story but I think that was the contractor pulling that together. I don't think USAID did that. I'm sure we touted our successes, but you know, on the labor law, I think we had to be careful too. We didn't want to take credit for something that's fraught with criticisms on all sides. But it was good that it happened. I think that's one of those cases where USAID can quietly stand in the background and take credit internally, but not really tout it.

Q: Right, but I think there's some important internal lessons from how you all did it, particularly in doing it in a very quiet way and allowing people to debate those issues internally without a lot of public attention. In your CV, you mention evaluation in the mission. Did you all do some special efforts on that front as part of your contingency planning, not knowing what the future would be?

FRITZ: No, we did an evaluation of our elections programming. Honestly, my memory is terrible, so I can't point to much other than to say that it was a time in the agency where we were starting to improve our internal capacity for evaluation and to develop tools. Missions were being encouraged to do more evaluations and we were being given the tools to do them better. I think we were just part of that process. When I arrived in Serbia, we had done an evaluation of our agriculture program, which was a really good program. The evaluation came back very negative and I didn't feel like it was fair or that there was a lot to back up some of the opinions that were expressed in that evaluation. I would just say that when we went into the next evaluation, we were very careful from our side to do it better, to draft a better scope of work. We learned on the first one that we asked too many questions, so for the next one we reduced them. Now that's common guidance in the agency, but in those days, we were winging it. That's one of the things we did for the elections evaluation and shared that tip with Washington. Raj Shah touted our evaluation in his annual report that year. But that's about all I can remember from the process.

Q: Right, those are important lessons. Your CV also talks about offices located in Belgrade, Niš, Novi Pazar. Were these OTI offices or were these different USAID offices? Or project implementation offices? Were there any direct hires assigned outside of Belgrade?

FRITZ: So these were offices set up to monitor the first program, the country-wide community development program. I think we had four or five offices around the country. So we had one up in the north in Vojvodina. And then these three in south Serbia. When our funding went down, we decided to focus our economic programming in the more depressed regions in the southeast and southwest. Ethnic Albanians populate the southeast and ethnic Bosniaks populate the southwest. Both of those ethnic groups and regions were being ignored by the central government. They are very difficult to get to, especially Novi Pazar. And the infrastructure is just awful. We were concerned about instability if you have dissatisfied, disaffected ethnic minorities in an economically disadvantaged region in a country that has a history of ethnically driven wars.

When I first got to Serbia we had the Niš Office south of Belgrade, another one in Vranje in South Serbia, the ethnic Albanian region, and one in Novi Pazar, which is in the Sanđak region where Bosniaks live. As our programs moved further and further south, we closed our Niš office because it isn't that far from Belgrade. But the other two offices were in places that are very hard to get to, so we kept them open as long as possible. We closed them by the end of my time, which was a hard thing to do because of the terrain of the country, the focus of the program, and for a lot of other reasons. We had eyes and ears on the ground, which the embassy also really appreciated. Anytime anybody from the embassy went down to these regions, the FSNs staffing each of the offices were the go-to because they knew what was going on in the regions. So they informally supported other parts of the embassy.

Q: Okay; so they were staffed with FSNs and were formal offices doing program management and oversight?

FRITZ: Oh yeah.

Q: It's interesting because USAID doesn't often have those kinds of subunits although I suspect there's great value to them.

FRITZ: Well, I tried to open up a field office in eastern Ukraine for almost two years and I know it was worked on for another year after I left and then Russia's all-out war started. It's impossible to do now with the embassy infrastructure and, you know, the security requirements, you couldn't do that today, but we were lucky that it was done at a time when you could. They were a legacy that we really benefited from. I was heavily involved in trying to open up that field office in Kramatorsk in eastern Ukraine. I spent a lot of time on that and it just inched forward. And I had the ambassador's support. We had $120 million in new programming in eastern Ukraine which was a six-hour train ride from Kyiv, which was the reason we needed this field office, to better monitor our programming. It was taking too much time and then the war happened. It is much harder to do today.

Q: Okay. You've mentioned the ambassador some, but I wonder if you could talk a bit more about relationships between USAID and the embassy more generally in Serbia.

FRITZ: It was good. The relationship was very good. I think in smaller posts, it may be easier, but no, it was very good. We had a good working relationship with the political section, the economic section, well, it was PolEcon together because it was so small. Public Affairs as well -- they were one of the only other agencies that were implementing assistance programs. We also had INL and the Department of Justice (DOJ), that was a little bit harder. It was a little bit harder to coordinate with DOJ. But yeah, we worked well with the embassy, the ambassador. Both ambassadors, I think appreciated USAID for what we brought to the table. And during the summer of my third year I was the acting DCM between DCMs and that gave me a good opportunity to see some of the other work of the rest of the embassy in a way that I don't normally see it. So yeah it worked really well but we had ambassadors that respected what we did and so that helps.

Q: I assume they were career ambassadors as well. Did you have VIP visitors to Serbia while you were there? Any secretaries of state or others?

FRITZ: No, there was always the Kosovo dialogue going on. So, there were always people from State coming in for that, but that never really involved us. It was more on the political side so we didn't get involved. That was the big issue and continues to be.

Q: Yes; we had talked about this a bit before, whether going directly from Kosovo to Serbia created any challenges for you. I think you indicated that you managed it, but I'm just sort of curious.

FRITZ: No, you know, it's interesting. Just comparing the two, there used to be, or probably still is, a weekly DVC between Embassy Belgrade and Embassy Pristina. The idea behind it was to get everyone on the same page and to have a U.S. position, rather than taking the sides of the countries in which you are stationed – which I think is easy to do when you're working in this part of the world. What's interesting is that USAID was so heavily involved in Kosovo because we had a lot of money and we had our fingers in everything. Any big issue, whether it was energy or anything else – issues that were important to the embassy and important to the United States, we were involved. So we were an important part of that country team and that DVC. On the other hand, USAID was not usually included as a DVC participant from Belgrade. Sometimes we were included but we didn't have much of a role because the work that we were doing did not have a lot to do with the Dialogue between the two countries or even contribute to the Dialogue, even indirectly. There was just nothing. For example, I told you about how we were helping to stand up the new municipalities in Kosovo. That was a big deal for both country teams. We weren't doing anything like that in Serbia. So it was just a very different relationship between USAID and State and just the nature of our program, the nature of the country. Again, we participated, we were part of it, but it was in more of a listening mode than anything else.

Q: And were there any DG programs related to conflict resolution or, you know, Search for Common Ground or any groups like that working in Serbia?

FRITZ: No, no, not at the time.

Q: That's interesting. I'm going to ask a question and you may not want to answer it so we can just delete it from the transcript when it comes. But you had mentioned last week that you were an introvert and that it took time to learn how to play the external role. And I'm wondering if you have any thoughts about that transition that new mission directors have to make. Any advice you might have? I ask because I had seen in the past Myers-Briggs profiles for USAID mission directors. And there were a surprising number of introverts who became USAID mission directors. Any thoughts on that subject?

FRITZ: I think part of my challenge as well was the fact that I was a DG officer in closed spaces, so you don't do a lot of events in those kinds of environments, right? As I was coming up through the ranks, I think I did one event, it was a community development event in Central Asia when we did the conflict mitigation program in the Ferghana Valley. So I didn't get a lot of experience there. And then I went to this regional job where it wasn't my role to do any of that.

Then I went to Kosovo where I was the inside manager, not the outside manager. I didn't have a lot of opportunities moving up in my career. So my advice to an introvert would be to seek out those opportunities or jobs that give you that. Or even if your job doesn't have those types of components, talk to your supervisor about creating those opportunities. When we had these big community development programs, a lot of times we were looking for people to represent us to go out and cut the ribbon, to "spread the wealth." We let anyone do the ribbon cutting for us – embassy political officers, economic, anybody who wanted to get out and see the country, see our projects, see our work, because there were too many for us to have the mission director do all of them. So make it a conscious effort to take advantage of those opportunities and to push for them as well because sometimes they won't come up. If I could do it over, I would build that into my own professional development plan to seek out those opportunities and to push for them and be conscious of making that happen as I was moving up through the agency. The training that USAID did at the Federal Executive Institute (FEI) was enormously helpful. They did the specific training, I don't know if you did it, but there's the one where they videotape you and then everybody critiques you.

Q: Yeah, no, I never did that, but I've heard people say that it was very valuable.

FRITZ: So that was helpful. I learned the things that I shouldn't do, like play with my papers that were in my hand. But also, I couldn't tell how I was coming off, and I actually received positive feedback. Even though I was a mess inside, I seemed confident when I was speaking. So it was helpful both ways, because I needed a little bit of that confidence boost. But then I learned these other little things that I was doing that were distracting. So that was a good training that I would encourage. Even if you can't do the FEI training, missions sometimes bring in training—that would be another thing to push for in your mission. And practice makes perfect—the more you do it, the easier it becomes. The other thing that I realized, too, for myself was if I got a speech two days before, if I had two nights to practice it, I was so much better than if I only had one night to practice it. So that it just came across much more naturally. It was just a whole lot better.

Q: Okay. That's all good advice. Did you have any other training? Was there any kind of training to go into senior management either for deputy director or mission director? I think they're doing some of that now, but when you were there, was there any kind of special training?

FRITZ: No, no, there wasn't. The FEI senior course was seen as preparation for mission directors so that's what I did.

Q: Okay. You were there for four years, and you said when you arrived, you were surprised at the pro-USAID and-American attitudes. Did that remain throughout the time you were there, or did it change?

FRITZ: I would say that the pro-USAID attitudes were quiet and behind the scenes. There were definitely parts of Serbia that were not pro-American. But the good working relationship with the Serbian government remained throughout the time I was there. I was shocked to see how things had changed by the time I came back in 2021. I left in 2014, so seven years later. It was consistent throughout the four years I was there. When I came back in 2021 it had done a 180. The prime minister then is now the president, Vučić, and the prime minister now is a woman who worked under several USAID programs, Ana Brnabić. So she knows USAID, she knows us.

She was always a good partner. I don't know what happened to her, but when I came back, she was saying some pretty awful things about USAID, that we were undermining the government, that we were trying to undermine her, all kinds of things that were false. We weren't doing anything like that. And I was shocked, but also hurt because I knew her personally. I knew Ana and I know that she knows we don't do that. That's not part of what we're doing in Serbia. So it was a shock to me, but nobody in the mission or the ambassador seemed to be too upset because it apparently has become par for the course. The United States is a punching bag. The kick in the head was that she came to our 25th anniversary event and talked about how USAID changed her life. And just a week and a half before, she was saying these awful things publicly about us. So it was just a really bizarre thing. I don't know.

Q: Did you have a chance to talk to her?

FRITZ: No, I didn't. I wanted to, but it wasn't appropriate. You know, you don't want to get out in front of the embassy on some of these things. And she's the prime minister now.

If she was out of the prime minister's office, I would have said, "Let's go have coffee." People had told me that she had changed a lot in the intervening years, so I guess that was just evidence. So it's changed a lot. And the government has become more authoritarian. I think it's become more challenging for the U.S.-Serbian relationship. So that plays into it.

Q: But USAID remains there, right?

FRITZ: Yeah. USAID remains there. The budget's gone up somewhat, so it's more stable. We're in a much better place as a mission. And yeah, things are okay.

Q: And they're primarily working on DG-related stuff, I would imagine.

FRITZ: Yes, to the extent they can.

Q: Some EG.

FRITZ: Yeah, there's some EG programming, competitiveness and innovation work going on in the EG sector, but more money in DG.

Q: Okay. So, you were there for four years and then you were looking for an onward assignment? So, how did that process go?

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ANN B. SIDES
Chief of Mission (Charge D'Affaires)
Belgrade, Yugoslavia
(2001-2004)

Ann B. Sides joined the Foreign Service in 1983. Coinciding with her work in Yugoslavia, she served in Niger, Algeria, Senegal, and Ireland. This interview was conducted on October 8th, 2010.

SIDES:...I went back to the office and my FSN's were standing around shocked and pale, and they said that Prime Minister Djindjic had just been shot to death two blocks away at the entrance to a Serbian government building. It was an organized crime hit, because Djindjic was trying to shut down the criminal organizations that had flourished under the Milosevic era. A sniper shot him from the window of a nearby high rise. Djindjic's death led to a lot of public anger against organized crime figures, who had been really flaunting their wealth and power and their seeming impunity. A number of conspirators and the shooter himself were convicted of the crime. Some of the others were killed by the special police. They were connected to a notorious figure called "Legia" who ran a gang in a Belgrade suburb, Zemun.

SEYCHELLES

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

RICHARD W. CARLSON
Department of State
Ambassador to the Seychelles
Seychelles
(1991-1992)

Richard Carlson was born and raised in Boston and enlisted in the Navy in 1958 before attending the University of Mississippi with the NROTC program. He worked in journalism and banking prior to joining USIA as Public Liaison Director. He became Director of Voice of America in 1986 and transitioned to Ambassador of Seychelles in 1991. Ambassador Richard W. Carlson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1988.

Topical Focus – State Department Democracy & Free Press Programming in Seychelles

Q: The fact that you were the American Ambassador there in a place where everybody was spying on everybody else they must have wondered why you were there and who you were?

CARLSON: I think this is basically true. The State Department was quite supportive of the idea of my pushing President Rene towards a multi-party democracy. The timing was perfect in the fall of 1992. All the changes that were taking place in Africa were of great interest to the Seychelles government. Their friends in the Eastern bloc had all fallen. The Soviet Union was in disarray. The former USSR ambassador had become the Russian ambassador. When I got there he was totally confused. I got to know him quite well. He was a protégé of Shevardnadze's, the Foreign Minister.

Q: He left to become the President of Georgia at the present time.

CARLSON: Yes, and the ambassador, whose name was Kilselov, had followed a very aggressive intelligence officer named Orlov who had been disliked and who had run a very aggressive, anti-US campaign. He did all kinds of provocative things behind the scenes to screw up relationship between the US and the Seychelles. Kilselov was a professional diplomat and this was his first ambassadorship. He had the rug pulled out from under him. He couldn't even get a return cable. There was no foreign policy. I used to go fishing with him a lot.

The State Department very much liked the idea of our pushing, in a little place like this, for a free press which they didn't have. They had no opposition press at all. It wasn't allowed. There was a law that prevented anyone from criticizing the President. Now the President, this is a London School of Economics graduate who used to speak kind of First Amendment talk until he got to be the President, then it all went out the window.
So when I went over I stopped in Great Britain and met with the State Department

counterparts at White Hall and then had a meeting with people from the Quai d'Orsay on the subject. The French, British and Americans, and ultimately the Germans...there is no German ambassador accredited to the Seychelles is resident in Nairobi...formed a combined effort to push the President and the administration of the Seychelles into a liberalized press policy and a multi-party election. And we succeeded.

Q: These are easy terms, "we pushed," what do you mean?

CARLSON: I took the lead in this, but the British High Commissioner and the French Ambassador were very important to this...we all had conversations about it and some of it was probably reported to the President given the security apparatus of the Seychellois government and the fact that we had meetings at unsecured places. We took a fairly aggressive verbal position in representing our respective governments, that the time had arrived where the President must seriously consider the events in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Africa and the changes that were taking place and accommodate himself to those changes. And that the US government which supplies aid to...well it rents the tracking station and there is always an interest in increasing the rent of the tracking station and always an interest on the part of the US government to keep the rent down. There were AID funds in a limited fashion and really quite small funds considering. There is a high standard of living in the Seychelles much which is contributable to foreign aid, although they don't like to say that. It's a $5,000 per capita income there. So $20,000 for a family of four is quite a high standard of living. Most of that is out of foreign aid; some from tourism, but most from foreign aid.

The President was sensitive to this and in a series of sessions with him about the political realities of life and the resolve of the US government not to tell people how to run their own government, not to tell them what form of government they ought to have within a....

[side 2 of tape 3]

....there was no interest in the part of the US government in telling the President of Seychelles what form the government of the Seychelles should take in a finite way. That is not our role. But the idea that the people of the Seychelles ought to play a role in how the government is determined was something we strongly believe in. So do the British, and so do the French. It was the first time that this kind of pressure had been brought to bare in a concerted way where four strong countries were telling the President in effect that now was the time to do this.

Q: With the Soviet Union no longer in existence and all, this pretty well stopped any sort of counter offers.

CARLSON: Yes, that is right. We were appealing to the President's pragmatism, if nothing else. The President said he was a very strong socialist, but like most people he was really interested in power, and like most people in power he was interested in the perpetuation of the power. This is what I believe. It was probably more attractive to him to talk about doing good through power because you can get away with a lot if you do

that. If you talk socialism you can somehow skip over a few human rights violations here and there if they are not too egregious. Human rights violations were serious in my opinion. Of course, judged against actions in Africa they were nothing. Realistically people were not being strung up by their armpits on hooks. There were people killed in the Seychelles. Some were killed because of the government. But there were a small handful of them. That doesn't excuse it in the slightest, but there was no wholesale terror. But there was oppression of people.

Q: Well, a 3000 body guard…

CARLSON: That was terrible. Let me amend that. There were 3000 under arms. Part of them were militia. Nobody is allowed even to have a spear gun. Any weapon is outlawed. So the army and the navy were about 1800 and then there were another 1000 party members who were armed and had uniforms and were trained. They weren't full time military.

The President was mostly interested...I think his socialism was more of a public relations device. He would have been more interested in the welfare of the people if he had truly believed in it. He was much more interested in personal power.

We approved him in September, October, November and on December 5 he held a news conference announcing freedom of the press in the country. He didn't say that certain diplomats had been bugging him so he was going to do this. He, in fact, made it seem like this was something he had had under independent consideration for some time. In point of fact, the previous July he had stated in his July 6, a big holiday there, speech that he had no intention of going to a multi-party system, that one party was all that was required and that that was perfect for the Seychelles. They didn't need a conflicting newspaper. All it did was to cause chaos. The government controlled press was perfectly satisfactory.

There had always been an underground paper, but if you were caught with it you ran the risk of going to prison. I think the President was finally smart enough to realize that the underground paper savaged the President regularly. In the most unbelievable ways. They would print lists of his girlfriends and their addresses, and when he was there, etc.

As soon as the President allowed an opposition press, the opposition papers became immediately very responsible. They stopped doing that to the President. They realized their responsibilities. In effect he got a better...they became much less...everybody read the "Black Tortoise," which was the name of the underground paper, because it was so scandalous. But as soon as they got legitimatized they became like the New York Times of the Seychelles.

They have had a constitutional convention, the President was nominated...this was after I left. They still have had not total electoral freedom, but they have moved a long way from where they were last fall.

SIERRA LEONE

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

MARY A. WRIGHT
Department of State
Deputy Chief of Mission
Sierra Leone
Freetown, Sierra Leone
(1996-1998)

Mary A. Wright was born in Oklahoma in 1946. After graduating from the University of Arkansas in 1968 she began a career in the military which lasted nearly a decade. Her Foreign Service career began in 1987 and has included posts in Nicaragua, Grenada, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned from the Foreign Service in 2003 due to personal disagreement with American policies. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 11, 2003.

Topical Focus – Post-1996 Multi-Party Election Tensions in Sierra Leone

Q: When you went there in '96 what was the situation? Could you talk a little bit about Sierra Leone at that time?

WRIGHT: Sierra Leone had for decades been ruled by Shieka Stevens– I think they called him a kleptocrat – one of the dictators of West Africa that had stole the country blind. Anyway, Stevens had been deposed in a coup by junior army officers in the early '90s. These junior officers ruled the country for about four years – and I mean really junior; they were in their mid-twenties. The head of state of Sierra Leone was a twenty-five-year-old named Valentine Strasser. During this time though, rebel activities started first against the dictator and then against the military junta. The international community put pressure on the military junta, these junior fellows, to turn over power, to permit an election, so that there would no longer be a military junta. These guys were tempted with offers of scholarships in Europe and the United States. At some point they succumbed to the pressure of the international community and allowed elections to take place. The security environment in Sierra Leone meant the elections only happened in about forty-five percent of the territory in Sierra Leone. The rest of the territory was under siege by the Revolutionary United Front which was a group of Sierra Leonean and Liberians funded by Charles Taylor of Liberia, Muammar Qadhafi of Libya, and Blaise Campare of Guinea Bissau. Despite the election not being able to be held throughout the country, the election took place.

Q: What year was this?

WRIGHT: That was in early 1996 before I arrived there. The person that won the election was Tejan Kabbah, who was a retired United Nations official. He had served thirty years with the UN and his last job was as the head of the political division of all the United Nations. He was a very senior UN diplomat, very well respected, who had come back to Sierra Leone hoping to just to retire to his home country. He said he never intended to go into Sierra Leonean politics but got Shanghaied into it. After his election in 1996, there was a quiet period of about four or five months when international figures attempted to broker a peace with the rebel group.

Q: Had you arrived by this time?

WRIGHT: Just as I arrived the Revolutionary United Front really started strong, strong operations against the government forces. At this time there were some very interesting 82 things going on. In 1994 the military junta hired South African mercenaries to assist their poorly trained and poorly equipped military with logistical and armed helicopter support. This mercenary group was called "Executive Outcomes", quite a name for mercenaries. Executive Outcomes had worked in several other countries and had a colorful background.

Q: These are basically white mercenaries, right?

WRIGHT: Yes, they were white mercenaries that were highly trained and very experienced. They brought in helicopters and started making some progress against the rebel forces, pushing them back into the outer areas of Sierra Leone. As that was happening, and the international community was developing aid programs for Sierra Leone. There was an elected government now and areas in the country that were secure enough that help could be brought for education and health and infrastructure development. That help also consisted of payments to the national treasury through the IMF (International Monetary Fund) to help the national budget. But as the role of Executive Outcomes became larger and larger and the amount of money that the national government was paying to the mercenary group grew larger, over a period of months the IMF started questioning whether the IMF's money was being used to pay for mercenaries. Of course using IMF money to pay mercenaries is prohibited. It turned out that some of the IMF money was being used to pay the Executive Outcome contract because there was not enough revenue generated by the government of Sierra Leone. Pressure was put on the Kabbah government to insure that IMF funds were not being used for payments to Executive Outcomes, or payments to the Sierra Leone military itself. Kabbah said, "I don't have enough nation-generated revenues and if you force me stop using IMF funds, then I'm going to have to make cutbacks in the military." We all knew that the military's numbers were quite inflated. The military claimed they had 30,000 soldiers on active duty. Their payroll reflected they were paying 30,000 and were providing food to 30,000 families. We knew that the military's numbers weren't right, that there were some scams going on within the military, and that the military itself was taking money for

soldiers that didn't exist. Sierra Leone had a ghost army. We put pressure on the Kabbah government to reduce the size of the military and to come up with the right numbers in terms of pay and to not support a ghost army. Kabbah came back to us, "That's easy for you to say, but I'm the new guy in Sierra Leone. I've been away for thirty years, returned and then was elected as president of this country. I've got a military that is used to getting paid for 30,000 people. It's going to be really, really tough for me to reduce the size of the military in my first months in office, but I'll try." The military of course didn't like the reduction in their money making scheme. It was a real dilemma for Kabbah on how hard he could push the military to acknowledge that indeed there weren't as many soldiers on the rolls as they claimed. Predictably there was dissension within the military and rumors of possible coup attempts against Kabbah. One coup attempt was made in August, 1996. Army Major Johnny Paul Koroma actually charged and convicted of leading this coup attempt. He and his group were put in the 83 Pademba Road prison in downtown Freetown, about one-half mile from the Government House. In '96 the government also reduced the amount that it was paying Executive Outcomes, meaning EO could do a fewer number of military operations against the RUF. They were just getting paid less and so they did less. In May '97 all of this resulted in the RUF making great advances onto Freetown and controlling greater and greater parts of the country. The RUF were committing extremely brutal atrocities to the folks out in the countryside – all sorts of terrible brutalities like people being burned alive inside buildings and thatched huts and a certain amount of chopping off of arms and legs.

Q: Yes, it came very much to everybody's notice.

WRIGHT: Yes, the atrocities were known to the international community. But the most terrible atrocities occurred in 1998 but they started in 1997.

Q: What was the purpose of this?

WRIGHT: It was to intimidate the local population to not support the Kabbah government. It was pure, brutal terror racked on a population. It was also a recruiting mechanism – forced recruitment of children into the RUF. The RUF would force young kids to kill their parents, then take the kids with them and over a period of a year and a half or two years, indoctrinate them into the ways of the RUF. Later on, as we were able to bring some of the children out of the RUF clutches and place them into NGO-run child-soldier camps. Kids 6, 7 and 8 years old carried weapons and killed. Some of the stories that these young kids told were just horrendous, as stories of child soldiers from other parts of the world are too.

U. S. Ambassador
Sierra Leone
(2004–2007)

Ambassador Hull was born in New York and raised in Massachusetts. He was educated at Dickinson College and Columbia University. After service in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, Mr. Hull joined the United States Information Service Foreign Service, serving both in Washington, DC and abroad. His foreign posts include Kinshasa, Brazzaville, Pretoria, Ouagadougou, Mogadishu, Prague, Lagos and Addis Ababa, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. In 2004 he was named United States Ambassador to Sierra Leone, where he served until 2007. Ambassador Hull was interviewed by Daniel F. Whitman in 2010.

Topical Focus – USAID Support for Elections in Sierra Leone

HULL: The United Nations was critically important to the democratization, to the success of the elections in Sierra Leone. So I worked very closely with the UN. We met regularly, first the SRSG and later the ERSG with myself. We coordinated with the British, the French, the Germans, the Chinese, the Nigerians and so forth. So we had a very compatible group of Ambassadors who could sit around and find common direction even if we all couldn't contribute in the same way. For example, in most countries, when you have an election situation, an election basket is created into which countries can make donations but the United States can never do so, because of our own aid restrictions. Nevertheless we could coordinate by agreement with the others saying we are going to do this before the elections. For example, in Sierra Leone we were able to use USAID funds to support the training and implementation of indigenous election observers in the country, while another donor funded through the UN basket, international observers for the election. So we worked with the others to make sure that things functioned smoothly. But it took all of us together as a team to achieve success. I think each of us individually could take satisfaction from the success that was achieved in Sierra Leone in terms of very genuinely free and fair elections. The critical moment came when the election commission was in limbo. Prior to the local elections in 2004, just before I arrived the election commissioners were fired; new ones were put into office, but they really lacked direction and they needed leadership. And they needed a Chairman of the National Elections Commission. I, and I am sure some of the other ambassadors under President Kabbah, I said to President Kabbah, "You need a person of integrity who is apolitical in this position or you will not have a credible election in this country, and by the way it would be best if you would appoint a woman, because women are not seen as a political threat to any of the male leaders of this country and therefore can be more acceptable to everyone." In point of fact , very shortly thereafter, he did what I was hinting at, to appoint Christiana Thorpe as the National Electoral Commissioner. She was a former nun, a no-nonsense woman who had been very prominent in education in the country, had directed a civil society NGO for education that coordinated with teachers throughout the country. So again another good example of somebody from civil society coming in and making a contribution. She came in and she fired everybody in the electoral commission so that all that was left were the other four commissioners and herself. The other four commissioners, the men were pretty useless. But what she did was she started hiring people and going out and finding uncorrupted people to staff the National Electoral Commission to make it

truly independent and largely proceeded to ignore her fellow commissioners except when they were exceeding the bounds of what their positions were politically.

Q: But she is directly in charge of them.

HULL: Oh well theoretically yes, but some of them had political connections and so forth, but they were marginalized. She hired some people away from the Embassy, some of our good FSNs. But we could hardly object since we were supporting the Electoral Commission. I must say with support from the UN, from the British, from the Americans and others, support from NGOs like Search for Common Ground, they did a superb job of preparing this election. When Christiana Thorpe was in a position where it appeared the government would not support her or the government would drag its feet to delay the election or whatever, the rest of us would step in and wag our fingers at the powers that be and say no you can't do this if you are going to have credible elections. We are very fortunate that President Kabbah had a career in the UN development program, the UNDP, so he understood the international importance of respecting internationally accepted standards for elections. So as they went forward, when push came to shove, the President always came down on the side of what would be the acceptable international standard for an election. He might not have liked it, but he swallowed hard and did it. Sierra Leone's credibility was on the line, and when they ultimately did have the election it was very credible. They had to have a run-off election which took place after I had departed the country. There was of course a temptation. This came after I left, but my parting words to the President and to others were you must respect the process and accept the results. After I left it took continued international pressure to make sure it happened and it did. I think the United States could take some credit and satisfaction for the type of election that was held. I think we have had a number of other elections in Africa such as in Ghana where we can be satisfied that you are beginning to see some reform in elections. But whether or not it is sustainable or whether it was a unique circumstance in Sierra Leone remains to be seen in future elections because you will not have the same international attention, the same international assistance, the same National Electoral Commissioner probably, and you just won't have that focus. So who knows what happens the next time around, but if it is sustainable, it would be wonderful. I would also point out something interesting. This applies to elections in Liberia and Sierra Leone which in Freetown we had funded by the Department of State, the military depot, a peace keeping depot where we kept vehicles and communications equipment and other such non-lethal materials which could be used to support peace keeping missions anywhere in Africa. But one of the ways we used this was to lend the vehicles to Electoral Commissions so they could get around the country and pick up ballot boxes and what have you. We did it in Liberia. The vehicles came back. Sometimes their engines had been traded out for crummy ones and their tires had been traded out for bald ones, but nevertheless we made the contribution to the election in Liberia. Then we in Sierra Leone likewise. It was the rainy season. Helicopters could not get around. The UN did not have the military helicopters; it was a peace building mission. Our vehicles were used around the country to deliver election materials and collect election materials. So even when we didn't have a lot of money to put into elections, we could contribute in a material way.

AMBASSADOR JOHNNY YOUNG
U. S. Ambassador
Sierra Leone
(1989–1992)

Ambassador Young was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Pennsylvania and Delaware. He was educated at Temple University and entered the Foreign Service in 1967. Before being named Ambassador, Mr. Young served in a number of embassies in the administrative field, including Madagascar, Guinea, Kenya, Qatar, Barbados, Jordan and the Netherlands. In 1989 he was named US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, where he served until 1992. He subsequently served as US Ambassador to Togo (1994-1997), Bahrain (1997-2001) and Slovenia (2001-2004). Ambassador Young was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Topical Focus – U.S. Support for Democratization in Sierra Leone

Q: In a way, Sierra Leone was somewhat similar to the relationship that we had with Liberia, wasn't it, to England?

YOUNG: No, not quite. There are some similarities. What happened was following the international ban on slavery, a place was needed basically for people to be sent when they were picked up on the seas and freed.

Q: They were very active on picking up slaves and taking them back to Africa.

YOUNG: Right, so they took them to Freetown. They had this land that they governed and ran in Sierra Leone, so they took them to Freetown. In Freetown these people were from Portuguese speaking places, French speaking places. Here you had all of these different mixtures, so what happened is that to understand each other and to communicate they created a language of their own. They created Creole and Creole is a mixture of English, Yoruba, Portuguese, French. It is a mixture of all of those put together in Sierra Leone and it's the only place where you have it. They have this Creole which helped the people to communicate with each other. That's how that came. The name free town, that's how they got the name Freetown also.

Q: Let's talk about what was on your plate when you got there.

YOUNG: Number one democratization, economic reform, and political reform. This is what we wanted to push the government to do. To reform itself, to become more democratic. Now, at that time the Berlin Wall had just fallen.

Q: November of?

YOUNG: October of 1989. It had just fallen. The full impact of that wasn't appreciated at that point. We knew that the ramifications were going to be felt around the world, but we didn't know the extent. It was really in 1990 with the end of the Soviet Union that you had a tremendous impact on Africa because when that happened we completely changed our interest in the continent. Russia changed its interest in the continent. The competition between the two subsided and we basically cut the knot and put it adrift. I thought that was a major, major mistake. A major mistake. The country didn't have money. It didn't have food. It didn't have the means for development and we weren't interested. At that point '89 to '90 we said it's a whole new paradigm, a new world, new reality and we're 99 going to only focus on countries that are democratic now. So, I asked the question, how were these countries to become democratic overnight? They had no history of democracy per se.

Q: Well, supposedly Sierra Leone had been independent for 30 or 40 years?

YOUNG: '61.

Q: So, in a way do you feel, I mean it's a little bit presumptuous for us to go and say we want you to be a democracy.

YOUNG: True, but that's what we were saying at that point, particularly after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union because then that was the end of the competition. It wasn't a question of well, this African country is on our side and that one's on our side and what have you. It was just a whole new ballgame. It really made things worse for Africa. I don't think it made things better for Africa. Now, we began to talk about focused countries and all kinds of things like that. One of the focused countries was Zimbabwe. That shows you how, well, I don't want to get into that.

Q: We're talking about at this point under Mugabe or Zimbabwe is an absolute disaster.

YOUNG: Well, of course it's a disaster. But I'm just saying we thought it was going to be a model that we could show the rest of Africa at the time and it didn't work out that way at all. Some of the other ones that we had picked out as models didn't quite work. Zaire I mean and some others didn't work out as well. We got to Freetown in November of 1989. Most of November was taken up with introductions in learning the lay of the land, the issues and that sort of thing.

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Q: DCM where?

YOUNG: In Freetown. We had worked so hard on Liberia. It was almost to the detriment of our bilateral relationship. There was so little that we could do with it in terms of any kind of support from Washington, we just did the best we could. We had our self-help projects and things like that. We tried to give some support to civil society -- projects that would encourage democracy, the press, and little community groups to help themselves with various little projects to improve health and sanitation and water. That was very useful. We had a very active Peace Corps program and that worked very nicely. Our efforts really were on Liberia and my deputy and I looked at each other one morning and said, wow, it's at last quiet. We were feeling very good. Then we got a report in I think it was March of 1991. We heard that rebels had crossed over into Sierra Leone from Liberia. Initially we said, oh my God, but we didn't think that it would really get worse. 108 We thought that the government forces would be able to put it down and that would be the end of it. Well, that wasn't the end of it because the government forces were so badly equipped. Although they were not too badly trained, they just didn't have equipment. The rebels that came over were much better equipped, very disciplined and undisciplined both, and they began to make inroads into Sierra Leone.

Q: Were these Charles Taylor types?

YOUNG: Definitely. I left out a key development that occurred prior to this point and I'd like to go back to that. The economic community of West Africa, ECOWAS, became involved in trying to bring about peace to Liberia and trying to bring an end to the problem there. They had put together a peace force. It was stationed in Sierra Leone and it agreed to go into Liberia and try to bring about peace. They would try to do it militarily. These forces were made up of Guineans and Nigerians and I don't recall some of the other groups from Africa, but they were headed by a Nigerian and subsequently a Guinean. It was basically between the Nigerians and the Guineans as to who headed up this group and they went in. They were based in Sierra Leone and they went in and they stopped Charles Taylor's forces from advancing further into Monrovia. Taylor was just about at the presidential palace, almost had the prize in his hands when this economic community of West African forces went in and stopped him. He was furious, absolutely furious. He made it known that he resented President Momoh's allowing these forces to come into Liberia and to basically have stopped him. He said that he was going to overthrow the government of Sierra Leone and he was going to get back at them. He made that public, it was clear, that was at that time. Anyhow, ECOWAS went in and ECOWAS kept him from assuming power. That's to be kept in mind because later on his forces do exactly what he said he wanted them to do at that point

SINGAPORE

N/A

SLOVENIA

N/A

SOMALIA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

SUSAN FINE
USAID
Director
Office of East African Affairs
Washington, D. C.
(2011–2013)

Susan Fine was born in New York City and attended Colby College before joining the Peace Corps and receiving her master's degree from the Harvard Kennedy School. She joined USAID as an intern in 1992 and served in several different positions thereafter in Uganda, South Africa, Senegal, Washington, and Sudan. Mrs. Fine retired from USAID in September of 2019. Susan Fine was interviewed by Carol Peasley in 2022.

Topical Focus – USAID Somalia Development Programming

Q: Can I ask a question about Somalia? How were we supporting the work there? There weren't any people resident in Somalia, were there?

FINE: No, not at that time. No. The Somalia program was being run out of the East Africa regional mission, in Nairobi, which at that time was still separate from the Kenya mission. The East Africa mission ran several non-presence country programs, Somalia, Burundi, maybe Djibouti, there might have been one other one. Somalia was definitely too insecure to have somebody on the ground. However, it's interesting that you brought it up. There was—the international community had kind of an operating base, if you will, at the Mogadishu airport and so, it was a secure kind of international compound, the UN agencies were there and various bilaterals would mostly fly people in and they'd stay for a week and then they'd come out. So, the people from the East Africa mission, some of them would go up, they'd fly to Mogadishu, be there for a few days, meet with—you know, the implementing partners would come into the compound, so they didn't—they weren't able to go out. So we did have a Somalia program, and interestingly, although there was this terrible famine happening in Somalia, also there were some interesting political developments. The Somalis were kind of getting their act together and had elected, through some sort of—it wasn't really a formal parliament, but they had some—what did they call it? I don't remember the name, but they had some sort of interim parliamentary-like structure and they elected an interim president, and there was a lot of enthusiasm on the part of the U.S. government to support this guy and to help Somalia get its act together. And so we were supporting the constitution writing process. We had some technical assistance that was being provided for that. We did have people going in and out and meeting with implementing partners, mostly in democracy governance. I mean, we didn't really have traditional development programming there at that time. However, there was a lot of concern about monitoring and evaluation, but monitoring in particular because you couldn't go out, right?

The mission had a third party monitoring contract and there was a lot of interest on Capitol Hill in what we were trying to do in Somalia and so, and of course, we would inevitably get the question, "Well, how do you know that, how do you know these projects are actually happening because you can't go out and see them?" And so, we would explain how we used third party monitoring, which I think was still—this was 2011, 2011-2012, so obviously the agency had learned from experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, but the third party monitoring kind of concepts, I think, were still starting to filter out to other parts of the agency.

And then, the U.S. started getting pressure and we, USAID, started getting pressure from the State Department to assign a person to Mogadishu and I actually went, while I was in that position as the director, I did a trip out to Nairobi and then, I actually went to Mogadishu for a day, in part to just see what it looked like and to better understand the security situation. Also, I was representing the U.S. at a donor meeting that was happening at the Mogadishu airport. But anyway, that was another agenda, the agency was coming under pressure to assign someone permanently. I think that didn't happen right away. I think what we started doing was having someone go in, like for two weeks and then go out, and then somebody else would go for two weeks and then go out.

SOMALILAND

N/A

SOUTH AFRICA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

WILLIAM STACY RHODES
USAID
Mission Director
South Africa
Pretoria, South Africa
(1998-2001)

William Stacy Rhodes was born in Tucson, Arizona and received degrees from Occidental College and Johns Hopkins University. He was a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia before attending U.C. Berkeley Law School. His USAID career began in 1977, and he held several positions across Latin America, Haiti, Morocco, Nepal, Guatemala, and South Africa. Mr. Rhodes retired from USAID in 2001 and worked for several NGOs, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and served as Chief of Staff of the Peace Corps until 2014. William Stacy Rhodes was interviewed by John Pielemeier in 2016.

Topical Focus – USAID Election and Democracy Programming in South Africa

RHODES: The new law and policy required a new assistance program, and USAID sent its first director and a small staff to South Africa to reside and work in-country for the first time. Tim Bork was the first director and he had a very pro-active staff who not only greatly expanded its scholarship and training programs, but made many more and larger grants to black-led and civil society organizations. One later evaluation of the program described it as a highly unusual effort to hasten the demise of an existing regime, similar to what we now term a 'regime change' initiative, by overt and growing support for a new and expanded democracy. Extraordinary to have a USAID program that was directly opposed to the continuation of the government and its policies in the country in which it is operating. I doubt there have ever been other cases like that, at least not to this extreme.

The CAAA limited direct U.S. assistance only to black populations and community organizations. But violence and acts of 'guerilla warfare' in the country were increasing, as the ANC and other organizations were rapidly moving away from what had originally began as a non-violent approach. I think the hope was that more direct U.S. support for black organizations and leaders, and a clear U.S. policy against apartheid, would help move the process into an accelerated transition period toward full democracy, reducing the violence. Perhaps it did in some modest ways, but far more important than U.S. assistance was the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in early 1990, after 27 years in confinement. The U.S., along with a very large number of other governments and international organizations, had been strongly urging South Africa to take this step for years, and his release was greeted by vast and massive celebrations across the country. More than a quarter century after his initial imprisonment, Mandela emerged as the clear leader of South Africa's majority black population. It was really something to behold. While National Party leader F.W. de Klerk remained as President of the

country for another 3-plus years, ‘the writing was on the wall’. This transition period in the early ‘90s until the first true democratic election involving the entire population in South Africa in 1994 was challenging and difficult for many difficult for many, and Ambassador Lyman’s book offers far more detail than I can on the U.S. diplomatic and assistance efforts that led to the completion of the transition.

As I mentioned, it was very unusual, if not unique, for USAID to operate a program that was overtly opposed to the existing government, essentially supporting a near term “regime-change”. Probably one of the most interesting and dramatic pieces of USAID’s history anywhere in the world. Before President Clinton was elected in 1992, near the end of the administration of George H.W. Bush, Leslie ‘Cap’ Dean was appointed to go to South Africa in 1992, replacing Dennis Barrett, who had served after Tim Bork initiated the program. Bork and Barrett had used the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act as the guiding policy for an active but relatively modest-sized USAID program. Under President Clinton, in 1993, the USAID program was greatly expanded to support the systems needed to carry out a successful set of national elections in 1994. USAID enhanced programs to support the preparation of voting materials, voter education materials, training of political parties – the kinds of things that were increasingly becoming more common elsewhere through USAID’s expanding democracy and governance programs. A much-heightened role for USAIDs democracy programs took place in the lead-up to the ’94 elections, to help assure they would be ‘free and open’, and achieve and international ‘legitimacy’.

As almost everyone knows, the Presidential election was won overwhelmingly by Nelson Mandela, who became the first ever truly democratically-elected leader of South Africa. This now seems almost ancient history, but it was a world-wide event in many respects. Its success in assuring a transition from a repressive all-white apartheid regime to a government controlled by the former “terrorist organization”, the African National Congress, was due in great part to the wisdom of Nelson Mandela -- combined with the remarkable willingness of former President F.W. de Klerk -- to include de Klerk as one of his two vice-presidents in the new democratic government. The other V.P. was ANC leader Thabo Mbeki, in many respects the principal ‘policy guru’ of the ANC, later to become Mandela’ successor as President. They started as co-vice presidents under the new Mandela regime in 1994, symbolizing racial reconciliation and the peaceful transition. F.W. de Klerk also received the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Mandela, though later left the government under great pressure from the National Party and others.

It was a fascinating period, in which USAID contributed on a large scale to this fully democratic election and ultimately peaceful transition of power, which was almost miraculous if looked at from the perspective of the 1980s. There was still a lot to do to achieve the reduction of residual violence in South Africa, both between blacks and whites and between the ANC and the party of Zulu leader Buthelezi, who was both a tribal and political rival. There were some very difficult times leading up to the election including major acts of violence, and the magnitude of the change and the ANC victory did not entirely quell this. Mandela’s work in reconciling and unifying the country was in some senses just beginning. The U.S. was determined to support this process, and President Clinton expanded further his earlier commitment of assistance to support it.

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RHODES: Mandela did a historic and unusual thing in 1999, declining to run for re-election to the presidency, even though he was still eligible under the constitution to stand for re- election. As you know, that example has not been followed by many other African leaders of his generation, and was particularly ignored by his neighbor and fellow liberation struggle leader, Robert Mugabe. As we all know -- to our sorrow -- while Mugabe was hailed as the primary leader in the struggle for Southern Rhodesia's independence and the establishment of the nation of Zimbabwe, he has to this day declined to leave power and remains there, presiding over a beautiful country which has steeply declined under his long autocratic rule. But Mandela was determined to firmly institutionalize democracy in South Africa quickly, even though it was – and to a lesser extent remains -- essentially dominated by one party, his party, the African National Congress. There were some growing opposition parties back in my time there, and there was another 'free and open' election held in 1999, with Vice President Thabo Mbeki as the ANC candidate, and winner by a large margin. I had the pleasure of being an official observer to those elections, and was so impressed by the determination of the government and the people were to assure that the electoral franchise was fully exercised by all who were able. After experiencing the horrors of apartheid, and the complete denial of political rights and civil liberties for so many decades, voting is a treasured exercise of civil rights, and virtually nobody was denied the opportunity to vote. No government- issued 'photo-identification' was needed, at least in those days, though the system for voter registration was developed and is much more sophisticated today. But South African voters would patiently wait in line eight or more hours for their chance to vote, uncomplaining. The lines would snake back and forth outside the polling places for extraordinary distances. I even observed voting inside a prison in South Africa, with prisoners coming out of their cells into a voting area to booths set up in a common area. The group of international observers I was with were impressed as these guys in their orange jumpsuits came into the commons and reviewed these large ballots, then cast their votes! As many South African voters were illiterate, the ballots are very graphic and colorful, with photos of the candidates, and symbols or logos of the parties, with the name of the party spelled out in block letters It was such an impressive exercise in extending the franchise, and seeing democratic elections being taken so seriously. Very high turn-out rates; puts us to shame. We were proud to help finance the preparations for this second national election in South Africa and witness the peaceful transition of power.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

WILLIAM S. ELLIOTT
Department of State
Bureau of African Affairs
Office of Southern African Affairs
Washington, D.C.
(1992–1998)

Topical Focus: U.S.-South Africa Relations Post-Apartheid Elections - late 1990s

Q: This is John Pielemeier. I'm talking second interview with William Elliott on the 24th of January, 2017. We left off when Will was back in Washington working with the Office of Southern African Affairs. I will encourage him to start at that point.

ELLIOTT: Thanks, John. Yes, I served in South Africa, as I said in the last recording, from 1993 to the early part of 1994 when we were evacuated for medical reasons for my son. He came down with leukemia but is fine now. From1994 through 1998, I led the South Africa team in AFR/SA. South Africa was a very important country to the U.S. government and USAID at that point. April 1994 saw the election of Nelson Mandela and the end of Apartheid. Obviously, a very, very big deal for South Africa and for the U.S. government and for the U.S. society. Much could be said about how the U.S. society across color lines had been engaged in the anti-apartheid movement, whether with protests at the South African Embassy, with Congressmen and other leaders and citizens doing civil disobedience and getting put in jail, or the U.S. government's own 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which, as I said before, its purpose was to accomplish the dismantling of Apartheid. During the Apartheid years the engagement between our two countries was, you could say, on hold. The United States did not embrace Apartheid. One of the initiatives that the U.S. government had done with Russia and with Egypt was to establish binational commissions. It would twin/link up similarly mandated ministries between the two countries. Since the relationship between the U.S. and South Africa had been in mothballs, the two Departments of Energy, the two departments of Interior or Natural Resources, the two Departments of Health, of Education, all twinned. Ministers or Deputy Ministers/Secretaries or Deputy Secretaries, led by the vice presidents of the two countries, would meet every six months, alternating the venue between the two countries. While it formally was called the U.S.-South Africa Binational Commission (BNC), it took on the title of the two vice presidents, the Gore-Mbeki Commission after Vice President Al Gore and Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. Brian Atwood, USAID Administrator, was very much involved in this process. At the working level, he would lead the U.S. delegation, whether it was in Washington or in South Africa. There were numerous meetings that we had with Brian preparing for the deliverables that were required by Vice President Gore's office. We had many meetings with Leon Fuerth and his staff. Mr. Fuerth was the National Security Advisor to Vice President Gore. That was quite a critical time, as well as for the Mission itself, now operating in a fully open way to engage the country of South Africa in which every citizen could now vote.

Q: Will, give us a little flavor of how the Binational Commission meetings actually worked and what they accomplished, or didn't?

ELLIOTT: They would be held over a one or two-day period where you would, in Washington, be in a meeting room at the State Department. There might have been a dinner the night before, and then the next day, beginning at 9 a.m., you'd have the introductions by the vice/deputy presidents of the two countries to give an overall sense of the work of the Commission. The Commission had different committees, sometimes taking on the name of the ministries or sometimes taking on more of a functional role. For example, the two education ministries might have had a human development and training committee; the two energy departments might have had one called the energy committee. Then the two Commission leaders would turn the sessions over to their committee co-chairs, from the two countries, or their designee. It was quite high-level, and I think in most cases it was the minister and the cabinet secretary, and, if not, it was certainly the deputy. I think it really indicated at that time the commitment of the United States and the commitment of South Africa to really make up for lost time in the relationship between our two countries that without Apartheid would have been a far, far closer one. Without

the governmental ties, there were still many, many ties to NGOs, advocacy groups and colleges and universities between our two countries.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

DENISE ROLLINS
USAID
Deputy Mission Director
South Africa
Pretoria, South Africa
(2004-2009)

Denise Rollins studied at Howard University and Johns Hopkins SAIS before joining USAID in 1987. She served in a number of different countries including Jamaica, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, and Bangladesh, initially retiring in 2014 before being called out of retirement in 2015 to serve as the Senior Coordinator for the Ebola Task Force. She fully retired in 2016. She was interviewed by Carol Peasley in 2023.
Democracy and Elections Subject reader

Topical Focus – Women's Rights

Q: Yes. You said the program was very much dominated by PEPFAR and HIV-AIDS work, but you had mentioned the person who headed up the democracy and governance office. Were you doing much work on that front? Were you doing any anti-corruption programming?

ROLLINS: No, not with an anti-corruption commission. What we were doing was working on local elections and local civil society organizations and mainly, we had a heavy focus on women's groups and *Sesame Street.* (Laughs)

Q: Ah, right.

ROLLINS: I'll talk about *Sesame Street* later. But the women's groups were key to our DG program. I have never seen women beaten like this by their spouses. Alcoholism is huge in South Africa. And in the townships, it's just awful. The men get drunk, they come home, and of course, he has spent all the money, he's angry and he comes home and he starts whipping his woman. And it was at epidemic proportions. We funded a program—we funded a television program that was—it was a serial, like Days of Our Lives, to address domestic violence. The series focused on domestic violence and taught community women to help stop the assault when they heard the woman scream by coming out of their homes and beating pots and pans and banging on the culprit's door. In addition to the violence, he often infects his wife with HIV/AIDS.

So, that was a huge part of DG efforts. We also supported women through a legal aid program in several places in the country. The most active program was in Cape Town, and I can't remember the name of the program now, but the program used shipping containers and turned them into offices near the courthouses. Women would arrive to press charges or get restraining orders against their partners. There are certain moments in one's career that are seared in your brain, and I remember walking into one of those containers—it was set up as an office, and it had a waiting room—and I walked in, and I just looked at these women's faces and eyes bruised and battered. It took my breath away to see how these women lived. And they have no place to go. So, they have—they can't just get up and leave. They have no resources in many cases. And so, it was just that human factor in South Africa. I've seen poverty, I've seen horrible living conditions—but it was just the impact on women's lives and children's lives, you know. And girls are not safe there. Because they live in very close quarters in these townships, basically tin roof homes and no indoor plumbing, they must go to—there's a communal toilet often some distance away and if they have to go at night, they're in serious trouble.

So, it was just all of that. That really, it just—whoo.

Q: Was this someone who had experience with USAID or was it a management/ leadership consultant?

ROLLINS: She was a management leadership consultant, yes.

She had never worked for the government or anything. But it was good for me because I could bounce ideas off her and try to figure out, okay, if I'm going to have this big meeting on some topics, how do you manage that meeting and the people in it? The head of the DG program was Jeff Bakken. So, as I said, I had stars on my team. And I'm supposed to manage them. So, it was—but they were all good people. Carlene turned me loose and said, "Go for it." As I would identify issues like, for example, the one with the auditing problems, she'd say, "Okay, figure it out; you can do it." And so, she just gave me full rein to do what I needed. And I put together a kind of a leadership trust so I could go to Melissa, I could go to Jeff, I could go to—I forgot who the controller was, but they were all, they had much more experience than I did in their areas, so—and James Watson. James Watson came in as a program officer after Melissa, so, I had a good strong group of people and they helped me learn how to manage them.

Pretoria, South Africa
(1998-2001)

Mr. Rhodes was born and raised in Tuscon, Arizona. He received his Bachelor's at Occidental College and his Master's at Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies. He was a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia, attended U.C. Berkeley's Law School, and worked in the legal field before entering the Foreign Service. He worked in various positions for USAID in Haiti, Washington D.C., Morocco, Nepal, Guatemala, South Africa. After retiring from USAID, Mr. Rhodes did NGO work for the Institute for International Education and Save the Children, worked as the Latin American Managing Director at the Millennium Challenge Corp, and the Chief of Staff for the Peace Corps.

Topical Focus – Transition from Apartheid to Democracy and the Mandela Administration in South Africa

RHODES: There had been a program for South Africa, some form of USAID involvement there, over quite a long time. But there was no actual field 'Mission' and staff there until the early 1990s. I don't know exactly how long the assistance program per se had been going on, though I would guess it could be dated back to 1986-87. But it was never carried out through the "apartheid regime" there. Rather it was focused on supporting the black population through scholarships and training programs implemented outside South Africa. I believe there was also a pretty extensive small grants program for civil society organizations which supported the end of apartheid and a real democracy in South Africa. These programs were administered for a substantial period by USAID staff working from offices in neighboring countries and in Washington. A full history of this effort would be both very interesting and instructive, as it was in effect a USAID program in opposition to the governing regime of the country for which it was authorized! Rare!

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RHODES: It was an honor for me to be able to be named Mission Director for USAID in South Africa in 1998. While I was not personally familiar with the history, USAID's prior involvement in South Africa was quite lengthy and extraordinary, in highly positive ways, during a very difficult period historically. As I mentioned last session, there were significant assistance programs in the late '80s which provided scholarships, training and small grants to black South Africans, many of whom went on to lead the struggle against apartheid, and later to become government officials during the Mandela administration in the mid-1990s. Before that time, the apartheid government essentially operated a highly oppressive system of separation by race, carrying out a quasi-socialistic effort to meet virtually all the needs of the 15% white population, while deliberately neglecting even the most basic needs of the black population, which it viewed not only as inferior, but to be exploited as a cheap labor force, and physically confined to traditional tribal lands.

Q: In 'homelands'.

RHODES: Yes, black South Africans had to have to have 'internal passports' to move from their so-called Bantustans or 'homelands' to work in the white cities, and had to be out by a certain hour of the day. It was an amazing thing. Seems incredible today that it was allowed to exist for so long, into the 1990s. There were several official divisions or separations of the South African population by skin color, and in addition to whites and blacks, there were what the regime called "Coloreds" – often Indian South Africans, or 'mulattos' who were a bit lighter in skin color than blacks. They were treated differently than whites, discriminated against yet treated significantly better than the majority black population. This apartheid system of 'separation by race' had been in place since the mid- 1940s, under the ruling National Party.

The Reagan administration's policy of 'constructive engagement' with South Africa was implemented under the leadership of Chester Crocker, our ambassador to South Africa. He was a senior political appointee of great influence. In some respects, it seemed that the USG was 'trying to have it both ways', maintaining regular diplomatic relations with the apartheid government and quietly urging it to make changes, while also trying to quietly provide some modest assistance to emerging black leaders, from outside the country. But officially the USG had labelled the African National Congress (ANC) a 'terrorist organization' after the level of violence in the struggle increased significantly in the 1980s. Of course the ANC was the primary 'struggle organization' of Nelson Mandela, and would go on to become the absolutely dominant political party in South Africa. So this shortsighted action lived on well past the time the ANC gained political power and caused all sorts of problems for USAID South Africa, often making it very difficult to obtain U.S. visas for ANC members who had become high level officials!

As I mentioned last session, Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) in 1986, which was unequivocal in its opposition to apartheid, and called for greatly increased assistance to black civil society organizations, undertaking a whole different approach in support of the liberation struggle. This was then one of those rare occasions where the foreign policy of the United States became determined primarily by the legislative branch, rather than the executive, with Congress overriding President Reagan's veto of the CAAA, with the support not just of Democrats, but also a significant number of Republicans. This changed almost everything in the diplomatic relationship, and its impact has been well-analyzed and discussed at length in the book Partner to History, by Princeton Lyman, who went on to become a very important ambassador to South Africa in 1992, during the 'transition' from apartheid to democracy.

The new law and policy required a new assistance program, and USAID sent its first director and a small staff to South Africa to reside and work in-country for the first time. Tim Bork was the first director and he had a very pro-active staff who not only greatly expanded its scholarship and training programs, but made many more and larger grants to black-led and civil society organizations. One later evaluation of the program described it as a highly unusual effort to hasten the demise of an existing regime, similar to what we now term a 'regime change' initiative, by overt and growing support for a new and expanded democracy. Extraordinary to have a USAID program that was directly opposed to the continuation of the government and its policies in the country in which it is operating. I doubt there have ever been other cases like that, at least not to this extreme.

The CAAA limited direct U.S. assistance only to black populations and community organizations. But violence and acts of 'guerilla warfare' in the country were increasing, as the ANC and other organizations were rapidly moving away from what had originally begun as a non-violent approach. I think the hope was that more direct U.S. support for black organizations and leaders, and a clear U.S. policy against apartheid, would help move the process into an accelerated transition period toward full democracy, reducing the violence. Perhaps it did in some modest ways, but far more important than U.S. assistance was the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in early 1990, after 27 years in confinement. The U.S., along with a very large number of other governments and international organizations, had been strongly urging South Africa to take this step for years, and his release was greeted by vast and massive celebrations across the country. More than a quarter century after his initial imprisonment, Mandela emerged as the clear leader of South Africa's majority black population. It was really something to behold. While National Party leader F.W. de Klerk remained as President of the country for another 3-plus years, 'the writing was on the wall'. This transition period in the early '90s until the first true democratic election involving the entire population in South Africa in 1994 was challenging and difficult for many — difficult for many, and Ambassador Lyman's book offers far more detail than I can on the U.S. diplomatic and assistance efforts that led to the completion of the transition.

As I mentioned, it was very unusual, if not unique, for USAID to operate a program that was overtly opposed to the existing government, essentially supporting a near term "regime-change". Probably one of the most interesting and dramatic pieces of USAID's history anywhere in the world. Before President Clinton was elected in 1992, near the end of the administration of George H.W. Bush, Leslie 'Cap' Dean was appointed to go to South Africa in 1992, replacing Dennis Barrett, who had served after Tim Bork initiated the program. Bork and Barrett had used the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act as the guiding policy for an active but relatively modest-sized USAID program. Under President Clinton, in 1993, the USAID program was greatly expanded to support the systems needed to carry out a successful set of national elections in 1994. USAID enhanced programs to support the preparation of voting materials, voter education materials, training of political parties – the kinds of things that were increasingly becoming more common elsewhere through USAID's expanding democracy and governance programs. A much-heightened role for USAIDs democracy programs took place in the lead-up to the '94 elections, to help assure they would be 'free and open', and achieve international 'legitimacy'.

As almost everyone knows, the Presidential election was won overwhelmingly by Nelson Mandela, who became the first ever truly democratically-elected leader of South Africa. This now seems almost ancient history, but it was a world-wide event in many respects. Its success in assuring a transition from a repressive all-white apartheid regime to a government controlled by the former "terrorist organization", the African National Congress, was due in great part to the wisdom of Nelson Mandela -- combined with the remarkable willingness of former President F.W. de Klerk -- to include de Klerk as one of his two vice-presidents in the new democratic government. The other V.P. was ANC leader Thabo Mbeki, in many respects the principal 'policy guru' of the ANC, later to become Mandela's successor as President. They started as co-vice presidents under the new Mandela regime in 1994, symbolizing racial reconciliation and

the peaceful transition. F.W. de Klerk also received the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Mandela, though later left the government under great pressure from the National Party and others.

It was a fascinating period, in which USAID contributed on a large scale to this fully democratic election and ultimately peaceful transition of power, which was almost miraculous if looked at from the perspective of the 1980s. There was still a lot to do to achieve the reduction of residual violence in South Africa, both between blacks and whites and between the ANC and the party of Zulu leader Buthelezi, who was both a tribal and political rival. There were some very difficult times leading up to the election including major acts of violence, and the magnitude of the change and the ANC victory did not entirely quell this. Mandela's work in reconciling and unifying the country was in some senses just beginning. The U.S. was determined to support this process, and President Clinton expanded further his earlier commitment of assistance to support it.

USAID Director Cap Dean then went forward in 1994 to begin to implement the huge Clinton initiative announced after the inauguration of President Mandela, of a $600 million U.S. assistance program commitment to the new Mandela government over a three-year period. Of course, positions in the new government coming in were mostly filled by ANC members who had little or no governing experience, and the governmental institutions were extremely weak, especially since they had previously been dedicated to serving only the white population. A lot of very energetic and committed activists from the ANC were named and determined to move things forward, but the institutions were not built or ready to move in the directions the Mandela administration wanted to go. Most new government managers and staff had been political activists or leaders of NGOs or civil society organizations for decades, and the institutions they assumed control of were not equipped to undertake the enormous transformation now required. So it took a lot longer than hoped or anticipated to develop and start implementing large-scale projects and programs expanding public services in health, education and other sectors. But USAID's committed assistance levels grew rapidly each year from 1994 through 1997, resulting in a very large funding 'pipeline'. Much of this funding could not be spent for the actual implementation of programs until later years, including my time from 1998-2001.

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RHODES: So the focus of USAID assistance shifted dramatically towards institution-building. Programs were developed in close collaboration with South African counterpart agencies. The effort was intended to fully support the Mandela government's initiatives and carry out institutional strengthening programs in key areas where the new government's priority was to transform public services, whether it was in education or public health or agriculture or business and trade. It became a very large and broad-based bilateral program to build the capacity of the new public sector to address the needs of those who had been excluded for so long. In the justice area, it started with assistance to building up a functioning court system out in the former homeland areas, both with new facilities, and through extensive training of lawyers, judges, prosecutors, public defenders and court administrators. Indeed, my first field trip after arriving in 1998 was out to Umtata in the former "Transkei" homeland to help inaugurate a new courthouse facility built with USAID support to Omar's rapidly reforming and expanding Ministry of Justice. The training process took longer than the building of courthouses, but the latter were

highly symbolic. The very existence of a new courthouse promised great change in the way black South Africans were regarded and treated under the new democratic judicial system. Criminal justice was no longer to be based on forced confessions but on evidence and open trials before a neutral magistrate. This was huge.

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RHODES: In contrast to the experience we had in failing to establish a large-scale HIV/AIDS program during my time there, one of the joys of being a part of the USAID program during this period was in witnessing the growing bonds between our two countries' leaders. After the Clinton Initiative started, the two presidents developed a close relationship that became apparent to all. While President Clinton was much younger than President Mandela, they developed a special friendship seen by some as almost a "fatherson relationship", which went well beyond a traditional relationship between two heads of state. With the Clinton administration being so highly and publicly supportive of the transformative processes the Mandela government was implementing, it was great to actually see the closeness of the President's relationship, and to feel like part of the transformation resulting from it. Beyond the Presidents themselves, this mutual commitment extended down through their respective Executive branches. Vice-President Gore and members of the U.S. Cabinet were tasked to work closely, at the highest level, with Vice President Mbeki and their counterparts in the South African executive to establish the U.S.-South Africa Bi-National Commission, or BNC. The idea was to significantly deepen the relationship between the two governments beyond an "assistance program". There were major BNC meetings, starting in 1995, of almost the entire cabinet. While not all of the USG cabinet 'secretaries' were involved, but the ministers of the South African departments of agriculture, housing and urban development, environment, energy, education, and health would meet with the secretaries of those departments of the United States, both in South Africa and in the U.S. USAID was tasked by the Ambassador to effectively serve as the 'secretariat" of these BNC meetings, and to coordinate follow-up to the agreements resulting from them. Vice-President Gore worked very hard to establish and maintain this relationship with Thabo Mbeki, who was seen as the likely successor to Mandela.

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Mandela did a historic and unusual thing in 1999, declining to run for re-election to the presidency, even though he was still eligible under the constitution to stand for reelection. As you know, that example has not been followed by many other African leaders of his generation, and was particularly ignored by his neighbor and fellow liberation struggle leader, Robert Mugabe. As we all know -- to our sorrow -- while Mugabe was hailed as the primary leader in the struggle for Southern Rhodesia's independence and the establishment of the nation of Zimbabwe, he has to this day declined to leave power and remains there, presiding over a beautiful country which has steeply declined under his long autocratic rule. But Mandela was determined to firmly institutionalize democracy in South Africa quickly, even though it was – and to a lesser extent remains -- essentially dominated by one party, his party, the African National Congress. There were some growing opposition parties back in my time there, and there was another 'free and open' election held in 1999, with Vice President Thabo Mbeki as the ANC candidate, and winner by a large margin. I had the pleasure of being an official observer to those

elections, and was so impressed by the determination of the government and the people were to assure that the electoral franchise was fully exercised by all who were able. After experiencing the horrors of apartheid, and the complete denial of political rights and civil liberties for so many decades, voting is a treasured exercise of civil rights, and virtually nobody was denied the opportunity to vote. No governmentissued 'photo-identification' was needed, at least in those days, though the system for voter registration was developed and is much more sophisticated today. But South African voters would patiently wait in line eight or more hours for their chance to vote, uncomplaining. The lines would snake back and forth outside the polling places for extraordinary distances. I even observed voting inside a prison in South Africa, with prisoners coming out of their cells into a voting area to booths set up in a common area. The group of international observers I was with were impressed as these guys in their orange jumpsuits came into the commons and reviewed these large ballots, then cast their votes! As many South African voters were illiterate, the ballots are very graphic and colorful, with photos of the candidates, and symbols or logos of the parties, with the name of the party spelled out in block letters It was such an impressive exercise in extending the franchise, and seeing democratic elections being taken so seriously. Very high turn-out rates; puts us to shame. We were proud to help finance the preparations for this second national election in South Africa and witness the peaceful transition of power.

SOUTH SUDAN

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

WILLIAM HAMMINK
USAID
Mission Director
Sudan
Khartoum, Sudan
(2009–2011)

William "Bill" Hammink grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota to a family of six kids. Mr. Hammink received his BA in Psychology with a minor in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Minnesota, followed by a MA at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs in public affairs with a focus on international economics and international Development. Mr. Hammink joined USAID in 1981 as an International Development Intern (IDI). While at USAID, Mr. Hammink was stationed in Swaziland, Senegal, Madagascar, Russia, the West Bank/Gaza, Ethiopia, Washington, D.C., Sudan, India, and Afghanistan. He held a variety of roles, such as a Program Officer, focusing specifically on Democracy and Governance, and Mission Director in many countries. After 36 years of service with USAID, Mr. Hammink retired in 2017.

Topical Focus – South Sudan Independence Referendum

Q: Would you be going to Khartoum or to Juba?

HAMMINK: At the time Sudan was still one country, and the Mission Director job was for all of Sudan and covered the entire country, meaning both Khartoum and Juba. But I was assigned to Khartoum which was still the capital of the country. Anyway, I left EGAT in February of 2009, and I got to Khartoum a few weeks later. As I mentioned, it was still one country, although what they called one country-two systems. There was a separate government in the south called GOSS or Government of South Sudan based in Juba, even though it was one country. Under the CPA, GOSS basically could set up as a regional government with its own security forces, but could not have any separate foreign policy or monetary policy or anything of their own, which was still under the purview of the government of Sudan based in Khartoum.

So, it was tricky and difficult. But the idea was then, half way through the fifth year of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, there would be a referendum that the south and the southerners would vote on whether they wanted to stay as one country within all of Sudan or whether they wanted the south to pull out and become its own country.

And so, I'll get to that part, which I think everybody knows what happened on that.

I got to Khartoum late February of 2009. One country. So, we had officially one mission, but really, it was two missions, because we had a team in Khartoum assigned to Khartoum, and we

had a team in Juba assigned to Juba, each with their own budget and authorities as well as sanctions to maneuver around. And they rarely mixed, because going back and forth was sometimes tricky and risky.

I was based in Khartoum, but literally, I spent half of my time in Juba, because I was still responsible for a very large development program there and a large staff. It was a different appropriation, a different budget, different rules applied in the south and in the north. So, it was very much like running two missions, but it was still officially one mission.

Anyway, just before I arrived in Khartoum—while I was on my way in fact—the Government of Sudan expelled 13 NGOs—13 international NGOs and all their expatriate staff, as well as three or four larger Sudanese NGOs, out of Darfur. With one fell swoop, just before I arrived, the government of Sudan had abolished about 60 percent of the emergency assistance capacity in Darfur. So, I faced an immediate emergency the moment I landed in Khartoum.

We were the largest donor by far, providing food aid and other assistance for Darfur. It took a lot of effort and a lot of time to work through this new emergency. And the presidential envoy at the time, who was a former general, Scott Gration, flew out to Khartoum and started negotiations with the Sudanese government to get the INGOs back into Darfur. If I remember right, three or four of those 13 were U.S. NGOs. And so, we were negotiating to allow them to go back, one way or another. With the U.N., other donors and the INGOs and Sudanese NGOs still allowed to work in Darfur, the immediate issue was to fill the immediate gaps so that life-saving humanitarian assistance could continue. The international community and Sudanese humanitarian NGO community came together and many organizations and people picked up the work where the expelled NGOs had been working. Because of the immediate response, people's lives were not in danger and emergency assistance continued, while we supported the negotiations with the President's special envoy, General Gration.

Q: How much assistance was cut off? All of what we were providing to Darfur?

HAMMINK: We didn't cut any assistance. What was cut off was the—those NGOs that had teams in the field to distribute and manage that assistance. So, when they had to leave, we had to hustle to find other people to take their place. So, it was not so much the assistance from us. It was the implementing partners on the ground who were kicked out—

Q: Right. Were you able to find others?

HAMMINK: It took a while. It took a while in the negotiations to allow some of the American NGOs back. But for example, SAVE-U.S. (Social Awareness & Voluntary Education) could only work under the flag of, if I remember, SAVE-Sweden or SAVENorway. And so, it was very tricky. But in the meantime, we were able to continue the vital kind of life-saving humanitarian foreign assistance.

I spent half my time, as I mentioned, in Juba, and half my time in Khartoum. I would take and fly on this local airline that the British and the other Europeans would not allow their teams to fly on. They were, like, 50-year-old planes, you know, 727s and 737s and the like. And it was

always crowded. There were very few expats. I'd be taking those flights crammed on an old plane at least once a week.

Q: Who were the pilots?

HAMMINK: They were mainly from Eastern Europe and speaking, of course, Russian. And I was of course a little nervous, because planes have fallen out of the sky before in Sudan. But luckily while I was there, there wasn't a plane crash. I had a Deputy Mission Director based in Khartoum that ran the day-to-day work in the north and a Deputy Mission Director based in Juba that managed operations in the south.

Q: Who were those people?

HAMMINK: In Khartoum, it was Brooke Isham who was the Deputy Mission Director. She was fantastic. After Sudan, I met Brooke again when she was the Deputy Mission Director in Afghanistan. Now she's the USAID Mission Director in Iraq.

Q: Really?

HAMMINK: Yes. And it was tough for her, because she was there that night of the assassination. And she was "Acting" mission director. So, that was a very difficult time for her, but she helped me a lot to understand the seriousness and severity of the security measures that then were put in place and how important it was for us to follow them.

In Juba, the Deputy Mission Director was a guy named Peter Malnak, who you may know. After Juba, he became the Mission Director in Rwanda and then Nepal. So, he is a senior guy in the agency, and did a fantastic job in Juba. Both were terrific, because of course, I was in the other place half the time. And they ran things while I was not there. But in Juba, we were working with the Government of South Sudan that was totally nascent. You can imagine in South Sudan a situation where you've had decades of civil war, extreme animosity, tribal groups against each other, a very, very high illiteracy rate.

You had a large percentage of the population that had left the country as refugees and were now coming back with this peace agreement in place. And those who had stayed were unhappy with those coming back. Most of the returning refugees had some schooling in the refugee camps. Those who had stayed were basically mainly illiterate and resented these South Sudanese who were coming back and most of them getting jobs and the like. So—

Q: Coming back from overseas?

HAMMINK: Correct. Well, at least from neighboring countries where you had the refugee camps, like Kenya. I'm sure you've heard of the Lost Boys of South Sudan, many of whom came here to the U.S. Some of them returned to South Sudan as well, which is great. Very moving stories of course.

But it was a difficult time. You had a totally nascent government. Before you had zero infrastructure, because the North had not spent much money at all on sewer systems, water systems, and roads. You know, in South Sudan, an area the size of France, there was not one tarmac road outside of the capital, Juba.

You were starting from scratch on almost everything, including the Government of South Sudan that would continue as the government of a new country—depending on the referendum, if the people of southern Sudan voted to continue as part of Sudan, the South would still have some autonomy, and you would still have a separate government in South Sudan. So, we were establishing for the first-time institutions to carry out key functions of government.

And a lot of these government institutions had no procedures, no process, no buildings. Nothing. So, everything was starting from scratch. And I remember we funded a group to come in and do a study on very basic key functions of government. It was a seminal study on what are those key and basic functions of government. Thinking, OK, this is a brandnew government. What are those areas that a brand-new government in a new country would have to carry out, at a minimum? And then we focused on those key basic functions in our support to a dozen or so ministries.

Q: An incredible time!

HAMMINK: Yes. So, the CPA was signed in 2006. Sudan, including in the north and the south, had national elections in summer 2010. USAID had a large program of support for this election, which was necessary for the north to agree to support an independence referendum in the south. And then in January of 2011, the referendum for independence was scheduled. And we helped pull it off to have the referendum where people from South Sudan got to vote whether the south should stay with Sudan or become independent. This was an historical vote and historical moment, the outcome after decades of civil war and five years of a peace agreement. Even those south Sudanese who lived in Khartoum were allowed and encouraged to vote in the referendum. Many had fled to Khartoum during the civil war.

Q: Do you remember what the question was, how it was posed?

HAMMINK: Sure, it was something like, Do you want to secede? And “yes” or “no”. Because there were so many southern Sudanese who were totally illiterate, they had a symbol of, I think, an open hand and a closed hand. Something like that. I still have the ballot at home.

And so, USAID was very much part of the support for pulling off a referendum that was on time and that was deemed to be fair by international observers.

Q: What had USAID done to do that?

HAMMINK: Well, we brought in partners: NDI, IRI, IFES. I spent a lot of time in coordinating with the government authority set up to run the referendum, the other donors, our implementing partners and USG leaders. It was complicated, because under the CPA, there was an electoral body that was chaired by a northerner. And the deputy chair was a southerner. And members

were a mix. And then, they had to agree on the process and players and they had to agree on the "rules of the game." It took a lot of upfront time, bringing in electoral experts, referendum experts who had worked on these types of activities before.

I still remember that we were behind the curve, and we were in Juba on a porch of the U.S. Consul General on the compound there. And the Presidential Special Envoy, General Gration, was very unhappy and very upset that things were going so slow. And if you look at the timeline of the number of days to do everything that needed to be done, such as to print the ballots and get them out, we were falling behind. And he was threatening to basically take USAID out of it, because he didn't think we were doing a good job. And the Deputy Mission Director at the time, whose name is Susan Fine— Maybe you know Susan?

Q: Yes.

HAMMINK: She's now the head of PPL (USAID Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning). She and I had a four-hour meeting with General Gration. The Chargé d'Affaires at the time, who was a former ambassador, didn't say a word. He was basically letting us figure it out. And we walked through everything. We drilled down on all the issues. We kept our calm. We kept our cool.

And that was a useful kind of example of how important it is for leaders in USAID to, one, keep your calm and keep your cool. Use facts. Speak as much as possible based on evidence. And then, drill down and pull issues apart and agree on the main sub-issues that you could then agree on the specific steps to move things forward. So, after four hours, using this approach, we could calm down the Special Envoy and agree on next steps to move the process forward. It was a very, very tough meeting.

And then, General Gration and I went to Khartoum and we met with the head of the electoral and referendum commission. We knew exactly what we wanted to see. We wrote some letters with clear descriptions of needed actions from the electoral commission. And within a few days, we got where we needed to be. So, it was kind of a call to action.

Q: Was he under presidential pressure to maybe cut AID off at that point, or was that just his own—

HAMMINK: It was his own assessment to cut USAID out of the process. And yes, he was under a lot of pressure from the White House, where there were many people who strongly wanted this thing to succeed, including the National Security Advisor, Susan Rice. And so, I totally understand. I mean, we were all under a lot of pressure in fact, because things could've gone off the rails very easily with all that history, political issues, and security was still an issue.

So anyway, the referendum took place. And the vote was 90-plus percent to secede. And then Independence Day was scheduled. It was in the CPA that if the vote for independence was positive, then Independence Day would take place before the end of the five years of the CPA, which was July of 2011. From one day to the next there would be a new country; the youngest country in the world. So, we used those six months to work through bureaucracy back here in Washington to basically set up a new USAID Mission for South Sudan. The State Department set

up a new (U.S.) embassy for South Sudan the moment the country became independent. And for us in USAID to set up, we'd need a USAID mission too, a totally separate mission from the one in Khartoum.

So, that's what we did. We got everything laid out. We even had a new Mission Director approved by the SMG panel and named. So, I was fortunate enough to stay as the last Mission Director for the entire country—

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: —and was replaced by two mission directors, one for Sudan and one for South Sudan. And the guy who was chosen to—of course, it was a competitive process -- to be the first Mission Director for South Sudan was a guy named Kevin Mullally. He was serving as mission director in Senegal at the time.

We put all that in place. I was there on Independence Day, which I think was around—if I remember right—July 10 or so. And the next day, I flew back to Khartoum. I packed out, and I was out of the country by the 15th.

Q: Did you have your hat in the ring for one of those positions?

HAMMINK: No. I had been there two and a half years, and it's normally a one-year tour, because this is a very hardship post. So, I was exhausted and ready to move on.

Q: My goodness. I'm sure you went out very pleased with what you had led your missions to do.

HAMMINK: Absolutely. I had a great team. Of course, Susan Fine is great. And the Deputy in Khartoum at the time for the last year and a half of my time there was a guy named Doug Arbuckle, who then went on to be Mission Director in Malawi. And now he's back here in Washington.

So, I had a great team in both places, and they understood. We designed a new strategy for the south, thinking that whether the south became independent or not, it would need education, health, agriculture, an economy and jobs, infrastructure and a government with clear rules of the game, especially accountability and transparency. We also developed a separate new transition strategy for the north of Sudan.

So, my first year in Sudan was to do everything to make the two USAID teams—one in Khartoum and one in Juba—feel like one mission. And because people couldn't go back and forth very easily, we had our mission retreats in Addis (Ababa) or in Nairobi, because these were places people could fly to from both Khartoum and Juba. And especially for our FSNs, because it was hard for them to go to the other capital.

And then, my last year there I was preparing for two separate missions, with all the planning, staffing and approvals that entails.

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Q: Oh, really?

HAMMINK: Yes. So, while I was there, and this had started well before I arrived, we were very close to finishing up a road funded by USAID from Juba down to the Ugandan border to a town called Nimule. And that was the first tarmac road in all South Sudan outside of Juba. You know, I heard recently, it's doing well.

But I can tell you, looking over the last few years, what's happened in South Sudan, it just totally breaks my heart. With all the good will and all the hard work and the excitement at independence. There were a million people at that Independence Day. It was so exciting. That the government there, including the President—who's still the president, Salva Kiir (Mayardit) -- had so much good will from his people and from the international community, and could have moved things forward. And because of a huge lack of leadership, both him and the Vice President Riek Machar, who came from different tribal groups, never did get along, never provided the kind of leadership that any country needs, much less a brand-new country.

And so, it's just heart breaking. I sat with other people who were also engaged on South Sudan and in senior positions back before 2011 in USAID and in the State Department and talked about what we could have done differently. And you know, my opinion on that, like others I talked to, was that we should have been tougher on accounting for funds and putting in place stricter systems to account for the oil money coming into southern leaders' bank accounts. But many people told me there was little we could have done differently. That it's just poor leadership, that they weren't ready to become a country. Maybe the UN should have maintained protectorate status.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

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Topical Focus – USAID Support for the South Sudanese Independence Referendum

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Q: What had USAID done to do that?

HAMMINK: Well, we brought in partners: NDI, IRI, IFES. I spent a lot of time in coordinating with the government authority set up to run the referendum, the other donors, our implementing partners and USG leaders. It was complicated, because under the CPA, there was an electoral body that was chaired by a northerner. And the deputy chair was a southerner. And members were a mix. And then, they had to agree on the process and players and they had to agree on the "rules of the game." It took a lot of upfront time, bringing in electoral experts, referendum experts who had worked on these types of activities before.

I still remember that we were behind the curve, and we were in Juba on a porch of the U.S. Consul General on the compound there. And the Presidential Special Envoy, General Gration, was very unhappy and very upset that things were going so slow. And if you look at the timeline of the number of days to do everything that needed to be done, such as to print the ballots and get them out, we were falling behind. And he was threatening to basically take USAID out of it, because he didn't think we were doing a good job. And the Deputy Mission Director at the time, whose name is Susan Fine— Maybe you know Susan?

Q: Yes.

HAMMINK: She's now the head of PPL (USAID Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning). She and I had a four-hour meeting with General Gration. The Chargé d'Affaires at the time, who was a former ambassador, didn't say a word. He was basically letting us figure it out. And we walked through everything. We drilled down on all the issues. We kept our calm. We kept our cool.

And that was a useful kind of example of how important it is for leaders in USAID to, one, keep your calm and keep your cool. Use facts. Speak as much as possible based on evidence. And then, drill down and pull issues apart and agree on the main sub-issues that you could then agree on the specific steps to move things forward. So, after four hours, using this approach, we could

calm down the Special Envoy and agree on next steps to move the process forward. It was a very, very tough meeting.

And then, General Gration and I went to Khartoum and we met with the head of the electoral and referendum commission. We knew exactly what we wanted to see. We wrote some letters with clear descriptions of needed actions from the electoral commission. And within a few days, we got where we needed to be. So, it was kind of a call to action.

Q: Was he under presidential pressure to maybe cut AID off at that point, or was that just his own—

HAMMINK: It was his own assessment to cut USAID out of the process. And yes, he was under a lot of pressure from the White House, where there were many people who strongly wanted this thing to succeed, including the National Security Advisor, Susan Rice. And so, I totally understand. I mean, we were all under a lot of pressure in fact, because things could've gone off the rails very easily with all that history, political issues, and security was still an issue.

So anyway, the referendum took place. And the vote was 90-plus percent to secede. And then Independence Day was scheduled. It was in the CPA that if the vote for independence was positive, then Independence Day would take place before the end of the five years of the CPA, which was July of 2011. From one day to the next there would be a new country; the youngest country in the world. So, we used those six months to work through bureaucracy back here in Washington to basically set up a new USAID Mission for South Sudan. The State Department set up a new (U.S.) embassy for South Sudan the moment the country became independent. And for us in USAID to set up, we'd need a USAID mission too, a totally separate mission from the one in Khartoum.

So, that's what we did. We got everything laid out. We even had a new Mission Director approved by the SMG panel and named. So, I was fortunate enough to stay as the last Mission Director for the entire country—

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: —and was replaced by two mission directors, one for Sudan and one for South Sudan. And the guy who was chosen to—of course, it was a competitive process -to be the first Mission Director for South Sudan was a guy named Kevin Mullally. He was serving as mission director in Senegal at the time.

We put all that in place. I was there on Independence Day, which I think was around—if I remember right—July 10 or so. And the next day, I flew back to Khartoum. I packed out, and I was out of the country by the 15th.

Q: Did you have your hat in the ring for one of those positions?

HAMMINK: No. I had been there two and a half years, and it's normally a one-year tour, because this is a very hardship post. So, I was exhausted and ready to move on.

Q: My goodness. I'm sure you went out very pleased with what you had led your missions to do.

HAMMINK: Absolutely. I had a great team. Of course, Susan Fine is great. And the Deputy in Khartoum at the time for the last year and a half of my time there was a guy named Doug Arbuckle, who then went on to be Mission Director in Malawi. And now he's back here in Washington.

So, I had a great team in both places, and they understood. We designed a new strategy for the south, thinking that whether the south became independent or not, it would need education, health, agriculture, an economy and jobs, infrastructure and a government with clear rules of the game, especially accountability and transparency. We also developed a separate new transition strategy for the north of Sudan.

So, my first year in Sudan was to do everything to make the two USAID teams—one in Khartoum and one in Juba—feel like one mission. And because people couldn't go back and forth very easily, we had our mission retreats in Addis (Ababa) or in Nairobi, because these were places people could fly to from both Khartoum and Juba. And especially for our FSNs, because it was hard for them to go to the other capital.

And then, my last year there I was preparing for two separate missions, with all the planning, staffing and approvals that entails.

Q: One more question.

HAMMINK: Yes.

Q: Just in terms of distances, what was the distance between Juba and Khartoum?

HAMMINK: It was a two-hour flight. So, that would be maybe 800 to 1,000 miles.

Q: But no way it could be driven?

HAMMINK: You could drive it, but it would take a week. There were no roads. Well, there were no decent roads once you got to the border of what became South Sudan.

Q: Oh, really?

HAMMINK: Yes. So, while I was there, and this had started well before I arrived, we were very close to finishing up a road funded by USAID from Juba down to the Ugandan border to a town called Nimule. And that was the first tarmac road in all South Sudan outside of Juba. You know, I heard recently, it's doing well.

But I can tell you, looking over the last few years, what's happened in South Sudan, it just totally breaks my heart. With all the good will and all the hard work and the excitement at independence. There were a million people at that Independence Day. It was so exciting. That the

government there, including the President—who's still the president, Salva Kiir (Mayardit) -- had so much good will from his people and from the international community, and could have moved things forward. And because of a huge lack of leadership, both him and the Vice President Riek Machar, who came from different tribal groups, never did get along, never provided the kind of leadership that any country needs, much less a brand-new country.

And so, it's just heartbreaking. I sat with other people who were also engaged in South Sudan and in senior positions back before 2011 in USAID and in the State Department and talked about what we could have done differently. And you know, my opinion on that, like others I talked to, was that we should have been tougher on accounting for funds and putting in place stricter systems to account for the oil money coming into southern leaders' bank accounts. But many people told me there was little we could have done differently. That it's just poor leadership, that they weren't ready to become a country. Maybe the UN should have maintained protectorate status.

Q: Protectorate?

HAMMINK: Protectorate, exactly. Sovereignty for a while. It's hard to tell. I mean, you know, hindsight is always like that.

At the time, it was very exciting to be there for the Independence Day and for seeing this new country launch.

Q: Meanwhile, Darfur was still around.

HAMMINK: Right.

Q: What was going on during your stay there with Darfur? Was there any progress in dealing with those issues?

HAMMINK: Yes, that's a great question. A lot of my time and effort in Sudan was also spent on supporting the Darfur Peace Process and trying to move some of our assistance, where it was possible, away from just solely humanitarian assistance that could support development-type objectives and helping to build some local capacity. We wanted to help the millions of IDPs move into situations where they could be part of communities.

Q: IDPs are?

HAMMINK: Internally Displaced People. And the difference between an IDP and a refugee: IDPs are displaced people who stay within their country, whereas refugees are displaced people who flee to another country. And they're known as refugees.

In Darfur, as you know, all the IDPs had been displaced because of fighting and because of civil war. It was just tragic to see.

We were trying to work through the IDP issues with the lead taken by the UN. General Gration was also involved on the political side and I was involved on the development side in terms of what we could do to support that process. They were talking about building new communities: you know, schools and clinics and other infrastructure, for the IDPs to return to. You know, I think it was understood that those IDPs in IDP camps in Darfur could not all go back to where they came from, because some of their villages had been burned, of course, in the civil war. And much of the land they had fled from had subsequently been settled by others.

Q: So the land was gone.

HAMMINK: The land was gone. So, they needed to figure out new ways for resettlement. It was very complicated.

There are certain international norms and rules regarding returning the IDPs that had to be followed. You could not force IDPs to move against their will. You had to make sure that they had the means to live, including jobs, social services and the like. The Sudanese government claimed that IDPs did not want to move out of camps because they were getting so many benefits from the international community as IDPs, a huge disincentive to move. I went to several conferences on the peace process: for example, one in Bahrain and one in Cairo. I was the USAID rep (representative) at those. There was some forward movement but not enough.

As you know, even now, here we are in 2018, there are still very large IDP camps in Darfur. What's happening and has happened in other places in the world where you had large IDP or refugee camps, like the Palestinians who lived around Amman or other cities in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, those refugee camps have basically become part of the city that they started next to. And so, they're no longer viewed as a refugee camp anymore. Although people who lived there had certain special privileges.

In any case, that was around Darfur. That's what was happening.

In the northern part of the country, at USAID we also supported a peace process in an area that's called The Three Areas, which are three provinces in Sudan just north of South Sudan where a lot of the fighting in the civil war also took place. But in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, it was agreed that these three regions would be part of the North. They would not be part of the South, even though a good percentage of their populations were tribal groups that were from the South.

And the agreement was that people in those three provinces would be able to go through a process of broad discussions—community-level discussion. And then they would be able to decide whether they wanted to liaise with the North or with the South. So, we helped with that whole process as well.

Q: How is that presently?

HAMMINK: That, I don't know what's going on, unfortunately, because of the politics and fighting also broke out again in those areas. It was very hard for us to get into those areas even six, seven years ago to support peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Q: Were you dealing at all with the President of Sudan personally?

HAMMINK: The President of Sudan was of course indicted by The Hague (International Criminal Court)—he was an international war criminal.

Q: Was that while you were there, or was that later?

HAMMINK: It was just before we arrived. So, there was a prohibition against U.S. diplomats meeting with him. We weren't allowed to talk to him. We didn't have an ambassador to Sudan because of the sanctions against Sudan. There were layers of sanctions but most came from Sudan's support at one point in the 90s for Osama bin Laden and global terrorism. There were some serious sanctions from the '90s that were still in place. The issues around president Bashir came from his role in the atrocities carried out in Darfur. We were not allowed to talk to him. And we were very careful, whenever we had media follow us with the Senior Presidential Advisor, we were always looking around.

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: And it happened once to a visiting (U.S.) congressman. He was in a meeting there, and Bashir—President Bashir—kind of joined him as he was walking to his car. President Bashir had his photographers with him. So, it was an unfortunate setup.

But I was very fortunate, because I had an excellent counterpart, I remember, at the Ministry of International Cooperation, who had studied in the U.S. He still understood the importance of a good relationship and the role of development.

You know what? The Sudanese understandably were working with the donors to try to move beyond mainly humanitarian assistance. Some 95 percent of all the assistance, especially from the U.S., was humanitarian assistance. And they wanted to move that to recovery and rehabilitation type of assistance. I totally understood. We worked with (the U.S.) Congress and tried to figure out where and how we could do that.

Q: Were they getting assistance from Chinese and other donors?

HAMMINK: They were not getting typical assistance like we understand it. We tried to meet with the Chinese, but they would not meet with us from the development side. They didn't consider themselves donors.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: They had huge investments in the oil industry in the North and parts of the South as well. So, it complicated the whole dynamic. Besides decades of civil war, there was oil and

money from oil. And so, it all had to be negotiated, because most of the oil— 60 or 70 percent—was found in the South. Whereas, it had to go through a pipeline that went up through the North up to Port Sudan.

Q: That was the only way out?

HAMMINK: At that time, it was the only way out.

Q: And now, is there—

HAMMINK: I think it's still the only way out, although the South has been trying to get money to build a pipeline through Kenya so that they wouldn't be dependent on the North. I think that those plans have now been on hold for the last three years because of the fighting in the south.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

PAIGE ALEXANDER
USAID
Assistant Administrator
Europe and Eurasia Bureau
Washington, DC
(2011-2014)

Paige Alexander grew up in Atlanta, Georgia in a very politically and socially active family. She got involved in working on election campaigns and working as an intern in political offices while attending college at Tulane and moved to DC following her graduation from Tulane to work in non-profits in the area. She continued her work in non-profits following her move to Prague in 1990 and worked in non-profits both before and after both her forays into working with USAID under the Clinton administration and the Obama administration. Mrs. Alexander currently works as the CEO for the Carter Center in Atlanta.

Topical Focus – South Sudan International Engagement Conference

Q: That's pretty exciting. So, were you then released from the task force?

ALEXANDER: Then I was released from the task force. I went back to the E&E Bureau for a little bit. I should look at the dates when the South Sudan International Engagement Conference was happening (2011). I happened to be talking to Don Steinberg, and Raj came in and said, "Well, Paige, you were in charge when the last new country, Kosovo, was declared. And now we have South Sudan. The White House wants to do an international engagement conference with South Sudan and it's not going well in the

Africa Bureau." The political appointee, Raja Jandhyaia, was having problems working with Gayle Smith at the White House, and they had lost confidence that AID was going to be able to pull off the conference. It's already been delayed once, I think. And so he said, "Can you work on the South Sudan conference?" And I remember walking to the front office and going to the galley to get a soda from the soda machine. And Carla Koppel walked in. And I was like, "I've just been asked to work in South Sudan, and I literally am not sure I know anything about the country. I don't even know what language they speak." "Well," she said, "a lot of dialects where they also speak English." And then she started telling me a little bit and I said, "Do you want to do this together?" And she said "Sure." So, we walked back into the front office with my soda and I said to Don, "I'm only going to do this if I can do it with Carla."

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Q: Well, she's a very can-do person, so I'm sure she was a great ally.

ALEXANDER: She was. And then we did the International Engagement Conference [for South Sudan]. I remember that it was December 11, 2011[December 14-15, 2011].

Q: The political pressure around South Sudan must have been even more intense than around the Arab Spring.

ALEXANDER: It was. I was brought in to basically make sure that Gayle Smith was happy with AID. The conference hadn't been put together well. There were a lot of questions. Mine wasn't a substantive role. It was just getting this conference off the ground.

SPAIN

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

J. BRIAN ATWOOD
Department of State
Personnel Officer and Special Assistant to the Ambassador
Madrid, Spain
(1969-1972)

Mr. Atwood was born and raised in Wareham. Massachusetts. He earned his Bachelor's in History and Government from Boston University and entered the Foreign Service in 1965. He worked in numerous positions across the board, including as a deputy assistant and assistant secretary of state for congressional relations, as the president for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, and as the administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development. Mr. Atwood was interviewed by Alex Shakow in 2022.

Topical Focus – Pursuit of Democracy in Spain

ATWOOD: And by the time I got ready to travel to Spain Franco had died, so there was an ongoing transition, and it was a fascinating one because no one knew where it was going to come out. A lot of new political parties were forming. There was an assumption that the Christian Democrats would do best because it was a Catholic country with an agreement, a Concordat, with the Vatican. The military was still a factor. They didn't have an external mission and their internal mission was quite oppressive under Franco. So, I asked Senator Eagleton whether I could play this role and told him about the McCloskey conversation. So, I did go in. I spent two weeks interviewing everyone. Before doing that, I had a friend who had been with me in the embassy in Spain and he was now in Rome. So, I got hold of him, and I said, "I'll come through Rome. Would you take all the embassy cables you see coming out of Spain and let me see them?" I told him that I had the approval of the State Department, which I did. I also had a top-secret clearance, so that wasn't an issue. So, I went to Rome first and read everything the embassy had written. When I got to Spain, I met with the ambassador and the political section and began letting them know that I knew what they had been reporting. They had assumed, probably, that McCloskey had given me all these cables. That wasn't true. But the embassy was very, very helpful, and I set up maybe thirty interviews with every political party leader, key people in the Catholic Church-- a very important institution-- a few people in the military, even the head of the Communist Party, which was then illegal. The Communist Party wasn't recognized.

Q: Did the embassy arrange all these interviews?

ATWOOD: Not with the Communist Party. But they did help me with the other interviews, most of the other interviews. The Communist Party person picked me up at my hotel on a Sunday morning when not very many people were around and they whisked me through the streets. I had no idea where I was going. And took me up to an apartment where I met the head of the Communist Party. He said to me, "Look, we're a Euro communist party. We're not here to storm the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg." I quoted him in my report. We talked for an hour or two. I came away convinced that this party wasn't interested in overthrowing democratic institutions. They were a reactionary workers' party organized to oppose Franco. Then I met with Manuel Fraga, who was the interior minister; he was very well known as being a really hardline guy close to Franco. But he turned out to be one of the key Spanish officials that were negotiating the details of the new democracy. I happened to be in his office when Crown Prince Juan Carlos called. One of the issues that they were considering was whether or not there would be a monarch, a royal family. There would be a plebiscite to determine that. Needless to say, Juan Carlos was very nervous as to how this would come out, and Fraga told him—he didn't make me leave the office, I just listened to his entire conversation-- "Don't worry, Juan Carlos. We're not going to put the crown in the ballot box and hope it comes out." I quoted him in my report. My report got a lot of publicity in Spain. It was called El Informe Atwood (The Atwood Report). There were still some controls over the press, but there were five or six Spanish reporters in Washington, so they reported on it in detail. It was now a part of the public record, published in the Congressional Record. So, it made headlines in Spain. For the first time, a lot of people in Spain saw their country and the realities of the transition. My report was like a mirror of what was going on. I mean, they were able to look at themselves from an institutional point of view and to see which direction they were going. Several years later, when I was the DAC Chair at the OECD, the Spanish Ambassador asked to see me. He came to thank me for playing what he called an historic role in his country's transition to democracy.

Q: The ostensible reason for all of this, for your interviewing all these people and so on, was that there was a prospective treaty—

ATWOOD: Right. The question was whether Kissinger would actually submit it to the Senate for ratification as a treaty.

Q: —that was to involve the placement of American troops in bases in Spain. Is that right?

ATWOOD: To be precise, the continuation of American troops at Torrejón and the naval base in the south called Rota.

Q: Right, okay, sorry.

ATWOOD: So it was the continuation of these bases under new terms. But, remember, at the time no European country had an embassy in Spain. Franco had been an ally of Hitler. They had cut off diplomatic relations with him. And they were not going to restore diplomatic relations until they saw the final outcome. So, what Senator Eagleton said, and I had put in my report, was that we thought the trends were moving in the right direction and that we should move forward with this as a vote of confidence that Spain was going to become a democratic country. That was quite a step forward in those days. But the important effect of it in the Senate was that a liberal senator who had been an anti-Vietnam War senator was saying it's okay to go ahead with the treaty. This would confirm our confidence that Spain was moving in the right direction. And indeed, the agreement was submitted as a treaty—McCloskey kept his word. It was submitted and approved as a treaty.

Q: What was the final vote on that?

ATWOOD: I don't think there were too many people who voted against it, but I'll have to look that up.

Q: Well, it doesn't matter, but the basic point was that it did receive enough votes for approval—

ATWOOD: Right.

Q: —as a treaty.

ATWOOD: That's right.

Q: Rather than simply an executive action or something of that sort.

ATWOOD: Right.

Q: That is very impressive. And your understanding is that this report of yours contributed to that sense of confidence, right?

ATWOOD: Yes. And I would add that both in the U.S. Senate, and also in Spain where it got a lot of attention, it was seen as a positive self-fulfilling prophecy. That is a concept and a phrase I like a lot. I am a big admirer of positive self-fulfilling prophecies! The war powers legislation was the most important issue. The issue I mentioned before, the Cyprus-Turkey issue, was exciting to work on. But I think the thing I was most proud of, because I pretty much did it myself, was this report on Spain.

Steven Wagenseil
Department of State
Special Assistant to the Ambassador; Officer of Political/Military Affairs
Spain
(1976-1978)

Steven Wagenseil was born in Danbury, Connecticut in 1947. He attended Le Collège Cévenol in France, completed a post-graduate year at Gresham's School in England, and received his B.A. from Yale University in French. He entered the foreign service in 1974, and had postings in Spain, Mali, Zimbabwe, and Senegal. After his work in the foreign service, he worked at the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor as the Director for Multinational Affairs, and the Office of Democratic Institutions of Human Rights as the Acting Director. Steven Wagenseil was interviewed by Peter Eicher on January 15, 2008.

Topical Focus – Spain's Transition to Democracy and Political Reform

Q: The political situation was what?

WAGENSEIL: When Franco [Francisco Franco] died the King ascended to the throne, as it were, under the arrangement he took the throne and became Head of State.

King Juan Carlos inherited the government, the prime minister and the cabinet that Franco left behind, in sort of an uneasy relationship. Nobody knew what to make of Juan Carlos at the time because he had the reputation of being a good looking young prince who was out of a job. He had an income, he had a castle or two and he had a beautiful young bride whose brother was the king of Greece. He had no particular training or job skills in serving the Spanish military, theoretically.

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Q: So this is not a democratic government?

WAGENSEIL: It was not a democratic government. I got there in May. The beginning of July, the second of July, the king fired the prime minister he had inherited, and Madrid was abuzz because nobody knew what was going to happen. This was the King's first independent action. Everything else had been sort of scripted and this was unscripted.

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They had elections in late ’76 or early ’77; the elections for the parliament, the first democratic elections in Spain in 40 years. Massive voter turnout, of course, hotly contested and clean, as far as we know although there were some suspicions when the computer broke down at the beginning of the evening. It was a fascinating transition. The world was watching.

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Q: Did the United States look favorably on this transition to democracy or were they afraid that the Commies would take over? It must have been in the middle of the Cold War.

WAGENSEIL: We were not really concerned about the Commies because it was pretty clear, we were more concerned about the Spanish military or Spanish establishment would dig its heels in to any transition to democracy away from the hypocrisy they had and things would go backward to a whole right-wing kind of regime.

The Spanish Communists were not -- as far as I can tell -- perceived as a threat by the U.S. The Socialist Party was known to be strong but wasn’t seen as strong enough to take power -- or if it ever came to power, not strong enough to impose socialism (which was a code word for communism) on Spain, which had such a strong history with Catholic faith and so forth.

Q: So we generally did look favorably on the democratic opening, but with some concern as to where it might lead.

WAGENSEIL: We were very much, we were very cautious about where it might lead but very much in favor of it leading somewhere -- because this was the mid-‘70s. The Revolution of the Carnations had taken place in Portugal a year and a half earlier; the transition from the Salazar regime in Portugal had gone well. It had been a pretty good transition. That was seen as a good thing.

SYRIA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

PAIGE ALEXANDER
USAID
Assistant Administrator
Middle East Bureau
Washington, DC
(2014-2016)

Paige Alexander grew up in Atlanta, Georgia in a very politically and socially active family. She got involved in working on election campaigns and working as an intern in political offices while attending college at Tulane and moved to DC following her graduation from Tulane to work in non-profits in the area. She continued her work in non-profits following her move to Prague in 1990 and worked in non-profits both before and after both her forays into working with USAID under the Clinton administration and the Obama administration. Mrs. Alexander currently works as the CEO for the Carter Center in Atlanta. She was interviewed by Ann Van Dusen in 2022.

Topical Focus – The Role of USAID in Helping Syria and its Results

Q: I'm curious on that point, did we actually think that Russia was playing a positive role in Syria?

ALEXANDER: Yeah, well, remember at that time Russia was actually removing the weapons. They were being very helpful. But I had also lived through the Balkans, and I had seen how helpful Russia could be and how harmful they could be. And there were a lot of people who did not trust Russia at all. Yet we're having to recognize that we couldn't get things done in Syria without Russia's help. So we could not spank them on Ukraine while also asking for their help. And so this is why Secretary Kerry and Sergey Lavrov, the foreign minister, were having daily phone conversations. I mean, there were funny readouts of those conversations. I mean, they literally knew everything about each other, because they were talking every day.

Q: Keeping the lines open, which initially is good, even if you're only talking about the weather. Okay, so did you do a lot of travel during your stint as AA for the Middle East?

ALEXANDER: I did. Israel-Palestine, I was in Tunisia, I led a Countering Violent Extremism delegation to Algeria for the region. As in Egypt, I did a fair amount of traveling, but because the NSC [National Security Council] was calling constant

meetings, it was really hard and there was just no one else. They were saying “principles only.” And I was always allowed if Don Steinberg couldn't go, or I was always allowed as the plus one if they took it as plus one. But I wouldn't have been able to delegate. So, there was a need for me to stay in DC [District of Columbia]. Syria was a huge portfolio for us. And we were able to be very creative there together with OTI [Office of Transition Initiatives] to try to get work done out of Gaziantep with the SRTF—the Syria Recovery Trust Fund. And that was huge, because we did it with the UAE [United Arab Emirates], and we did it with the Germans. And it was very creative, something that was slightly akin to the loan guarantees that we had done in Bosnia back in the 90s, the Bosnian reconstruction trust fund. I was able to help with some parallels between what we had done in Bosnia in the 90s, and what we were doing in Syria in 2014. There was a lot of room for creativity. Back to your initial question–you had to know enough and have this historical knowledge to say, I know we just did this in Ukraine, we did these loan guarantees. Why can't we do this in Tunisia? And sort of leveraging that.

Q: And was there ever a time when you were optimistic about Syria?

ALEXANDER: Not really. I mean, I think when we decided to train and equip, I thought there was a chance, but the administration at the time stuck its toe in and pulled it back. Because, again, we were also hampered by the Russians saying “Don't give them weapons. This is our area, we'll take care of it.” And then the Turks were also very upset about us giving any support to the PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Party]. I’ve got a picture in my office, where I was talking to President Obama. I was invited in to have this conversation. And he asked what I was working on, and I talked about the Mosul Dam. We were worried that in Iraq, the Mosul Dam was going to break and flood and in ninety-six hours all will be underwater. And all the infrastructure that would come down from the dam was going to destroy everything. Basically, it would be a flood of epic proportions. And I mentioned this to him. And he said, “That's one of the three things that keeps me up at night.” And I thought, “Oh my god, the president of the United States—like I'm working on an issue that keeps the United States President up. Maybe I should stay up more.” Yeah, but Iraq, Syria, and Yemen sort of burned me out. And I only did it for two years. But there was not a lot of hope there. It was just an attempt to actually save what we could save at the time.

TAIWAN

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

WINSTON LORD
U.S. Ambassador
Taiwan
(1985-1989)

Ambassador Lord was born in New York City on August 14, 1937. Lord received his B.A. in English from Yale University, and completed his M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He worked at the National Security Council on a multitude of assignments from 1969 to 1974. Lord was an Ambassador to China from 1985 to 1989 before becoming the State Department Assistant Secretary. Ambassador Winston Lord was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker on April 28, 1998.

Topical Focus – Taiwan Democratization and U.S.-China Diplomatic Balance

Q: [Bernkopf] You mentioned Taiwan. I just wanted to say, and perhaps this is the last thing I would want to mention, that this was the beginning of a period of tremendous change in Taiwan. That is, it was the beginning of the process of democratization and of real change. This was a change which, one can even argue, completely altered our perspective on Taiwan. Suddenly, Taiwan became what we always wanted it to be, with an open, democratic process.

How skeptical were people in charge in the State Department and you, as Ambassador to China, about these changes in Taiwan? How much of a surprise were they? How much of an impact did they make in terms of your view of the balance between China and Taiwan?

LORD: I can't speak for others, but my own view was, first, that I was not skeptical of these changes in Taiwan. On the contrary, I was encouraged by the changes in Taiwan. Chiang Ching-kuo was followed as President of China by Lee Teng-hui.

Chiang Ching-kuo had started in the right direction. He was able to do that because he had the mantle of his father, Chiang Kai-shek, so he could hardly be accused of doing anything against him. In a sense, Chiang Ching-kuo opened doors on the political process. It was easier for him to do this because he was part of his family. Therefore, this protected him against opposition and legitimized the great, further steps that his successor, Lee Teng-hui, took. It also made it possible for someone born in Taiwan (Lee) to be the leader of the country. So, Chiang Ching-kuo's contribution was very significant. I forget when he died, but his contribution was very

meaningful. Although they weren't close to open elections in Taiwan while I was Ambassador to China, the Taiwanese were clearly moving in the right direction.

I was not skeptical about the changes in Taiwan. I was encouraged. I also felt, even as I do today, that these changes, if not inevitable, were predictable. In my view we have seen economic progress in Asia and the aspirations of the middle class reflect the universal principle that man or woman does not live by rice alone. This process has been at work in Taiwan as well.

I was consistently in favor of maintaining strong, unofficial ties with Taiwan and not giving in to unreasonable Chinese demands, even as we balanced off our interests with mainland China. So my own views certainly didn't change. I felt that we had a moral and historical connection to Taiwan in any event and that we should stand by our friends. If anything, of course, their movement toward a freer political system reinforced my view that we should strongly support Taiwan even as we moved ahead with China. I believe that six American presidents of both political parties have done very well in carrying out this balancing act.

I don't recall now the impact the changes in Taiwan had on China. These changes didn't affect our policy. We have pursued a consistent policy which had been set out by previous administrations, in which I served. Taiwan has always been a key issue with the mainland Chinese. There is no way that you could have a high level meeting with the mainland Chinese without the Taiwan question coming up.

My recollection of that period when I was Ambassador to China is that the Taiwan issue was not as hot as it is today or was, when we opened diplomatic relations with mainland China or during the early years of the Reagan Administration. The Taiwan issue was always there, but the mainland Chinese were already deploying troops away from the coast facing Taiwan and were concerned about the Polar Bear to the North [i.e., Russia] and the Vietnamese to the South. As I recall it, the rhetoric concerning Taiwan was obviously unpleasant but not at a very high decibel level. Taiwan was not an issue that they kept beating us over the head with at our various meetings. Taiwan has always been and will continue to be a key issue in our relations with China. However, I felt that throughout this period it was quite a manageable matter.

Q: [Kennedy] I would have thought that you belonged to the Kissinger school of 494 realpolitik. In this context Taiwan, as a rather small area, has really been screwing things up with China by doing exactly what we would want and would aspire to have them do. However, the gap between what Taiwan has been and what it is becoming has been growing. It's going to be harder and harder for the United States and the world to refuse to accord recognition to Taiwan. I would think that, in terms of policy planning and looking at the matter with the cold eye of what's in it for us, this, in a way, would be a disturbing development. Did you find this to be a consideration?

LORD: No, not at all. I really felt that the changes in Taiwan were - and are - an encouraging development. They are good for the people of Taiwan. Initially, we didn't have as extensive a debate as we have had in recent years on universal versus so-called Asian values. This is a phoney debate and Taiwan's move toward democracy proves that. I think that these changes in Taiwan are not only good for Taiwan itself but are a good example generally in the world, in Asia, and to show that Chinese people want freedom, too - a strong message to the mainland.

I don't recall Congressional sentiment bubbling up about a need to be more pro-Taiwan and anti-mainland China because Taiwan was becoming freer, and mainland China wasn't. I don't think that the Taiwan issue really complicated our policy toward China while I was Ambassador. Above all, speaking personally, I've always set great store about promoting our values. I've been insistent on that. Clearly, I also have geopolitical instincts since I worked for Kissinger and I think that these are legitimate. However, you have to balance off these considerations. My only reaction to these changes in Taiwan is a feeling of pleasure for the people of Taiwan. If anything, these changes might encourage political liberalization in China, at least in a modest way. Now of course you could argue that Deng Xiaoping and others who are more conservative might see developments in Taiwan as a threat to their position. However, I think that they were looking more particularly at what was happening in mainland China.

It is hard to judge the impact of what has been happening in Taiwan on the people in China. I suspect that Taiwan developments didn't have much of an impact on them in the past. You should recall that when I was Ambassador to China the authorities in Taiwan were loosening up, but they had by no means reached the point of free elections. So the situation in Taiwan had by no means approached the dramatic point which it reached by the early 1990s.

TIMOR-LESTE

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

EDMUND MCWILLIAMS
Department of State
Political Counselor
Indonesia
Jakarta, Indonesia
(1996-1999)

Mr. Williams was born and raised in Tennessee and educated at Atlanta University, the University of Illinois and Howard University. After newspaper work in Atlanta, he went to Washington, DC, where he served several assignments on Capitol Hill before joining the State Department in 1962. There he served in the Office of Protocol and as Staff Assistant and Special Assistant in several departments dealing primarily with management issues. After his resignation from State, Mr. Williams in 1968 joined the University of Chicago as Assistant Vice President, where he was involved in the creation of the Universities Joint Center for Poverty Research. Mr. Williams was interviewed by Ambassador Ronald Palmer in 1994.

Topical Focus – Indonesian Human Rights Violations in East Timor

Q: What- can you talk about during your time, East Timor?

MCWILLIAMS: Yes. I think probably, at least in the early stages, the first year or two, that was the principal bone of contention between myself, my section I should say, and the military in the embassy. Because it was a horrific story, tremendous abuses going on out there. And for many years there had been I think growing concern in Congress, certainly in the press about what the Indonesians were doing to East Timor and the embassy for many years had acted as a defender, an advocate for the regime, trying to basically defeat these arguments that in fact Indonesia was guilty of human rights abuse on a grand scale in East Timor. Our reporting, and I had a particularly good officer, Gary Gray, who was out there, spoke Portuguese which helped a lot, as well as great Bahasa, and his reporting was particularly well done and I think established a baseline of much better understanding what was going on in Indonesia for Washington. There was in the summer of ’97, excuse me, summer of ’98 an opportunity to write another dissent in which I proposed that we begin thinking about advocating a referendum in East Timor. Not well received at the embassy, not well in Washington. I had a conversation subsequently with the assistant secretary in the fall of ’98 in which he said look, I agree with what you’ve said, I’ve agreed you know, morally, historically you’re right, but I just don’t believe East Timor is economically viable and therefore I think an argument for a referendum which might lead to independence is just not going to work. And I undertook to write for him a long message which looked at the economic question, viability of East Timor, anticipating oil and gas revenues and so

on. Oddly enough I published this, I sent out this very long report, 20-some pages on the very day that, in January that President Habibie announced that he was going to allow a referendum in East Timor. And I know there was great thinking in the embassy and I understand subsequently in Washington that somehow I had advance word of that; it was just a coincidence. But it was from that point forward, January, that we began to look to a referendum that would be monitored by the United Nations in East Timor which along with the fall of Suharto was one of the two great events of those three years that I had there.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

PETER W. GALBRAITH
United Nations Transitional Administration to East Timor
Director for Political, Constitutional, and Electoral Affairs
(1999-2001)

Ambassador Galbraith was born in Massachusetts, the son of a renowned economist and ambassador. He was raised in the U.S. and abroad and educated at Harvard and Oxford Universities. He joined the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1978, where he served until 1993. There he became closely involved in Middle East matters, particularly those concerning Iran, Iraq and the Kurds. Conflict among nations of the former Yugoslavia later became a major issue in which Mr. Galbraith became closely involved and where he developed expertise. In 1993 he was named United States Ambassador to Croatia, where he served until 1998. In the course of his assignments, Ambassador Galbraith played a major role in resolving the conflicts among the Balkan nations. After this assignment, he was appointed to the United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor, where he served from 1999 to 2001. Ambassador Galbraith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Topical Focus – East Timor Transition to Independence

Q: Did you get hit with an awful lot of non-governmental organizations there? They have their own bureaucracy which can you know for getting emergency aid to a place quickly, it works well, but I was thinking of a situation of more development would be difficult.

GALBRAITH: Completely, there were a lot of non-governmental organizations and they were more of an issue for the people who were working the substantive departments, people who were dealing with housing, distribution of food aid, reconstruction, economic development. There was also the World Bank, the IMF, the host, the United Nations development program, UNHCR, all these humanitarian agencies and international organizations, non-government organizations. There were political non-governmental organizations of the National Democratic Institute, the Republican Institute of International affairs, two American ones, but there were European and others and then a large number of visitors. This was a fact of life. Mostly they did good work, but sometimes things were complicated.

For example, all these organizations had their ideas of how things should be done and they wanted typically to promote the best international practice. Well, if we tried to apply best international practices in East Timor, the entire budget of the country would be consumed on a relatively limited number of activities. It simply wasn't possible. There was a lot of desire to do social engineering, which I resisted. I mean I found myself in the ironic position of since I'm politically rather liberal of being often the most conservative person in the cabinet. But, to illustrate the kinds of issues that would arise. For example, we had a discussion of prison systems. The New Zealanders were helping to design the prison system and they were staffing it. UNICEF weighed in because it was concerned about juvenile justice. The human rights weighed in because they wanted to make sure that everybody got the right to a lawyer and that nobody could be held in detention for more than seventy-two hours and all this stuff. Well, great stuff in theory, but the practical problem was there were like twenty lawyers in East Timor and they were not of a very high standard. The last place you'd want to get into trouble was East Timor and have to depend on an East Timorese defender, East Timorese judge or an East Timorese prosecutor or at least circa 2000 and 2001 because these people had gone to Indonesian law schools, and that standard I think was rather low, and many of them hadn't done particularly well in them, and they'd just done this as an undergraduate course or a partial one. Of course the number was very small for the size of the country. The result was that for example the right to counsel. Some people would get a lawyer, but others would languish in prison for months because so many of the resources were devoted to getting public defenders for a few people. Others never got processed. In the case of juvenile justice, UNICEF was taking a view that juveniles needed to have their own facilities, juvenile meaning anybody under 18. There shouldn't be any punishment for juveniles; the goal should be rehabilitation and all that. The latest in thinking on juvenile justice. If you couldn't do that you should release the juveniles. Well, the reality was that some of the worst killers and the violence were juveniles. The violence that took place in September of '99 and there was still a gang problem, so we couldn't release the people. We didn't have the money to create a separate juvenile facility. We didn't have the money for rehabilitation or education or everything that UNICEF had wanted. If we had done all the things that everybody wanted us to do on a criminal justice system, the cost would have exceed $45 million I calculated, $45 million being the entire budget of the government of East Timor for everything education, health, roads, communication and so on. This was the kind of problem that we were up against.

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Q: Peter, we can cover the National Defense University at the end altogether, but how did this East Timor business, I mean what happened?

GALBRAITH: The larger background I think you know. East Timor had been a Portuguese colony for about 500 years almost entirely neglected by the Portuguese. Then on December 7, 1975 just as Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger lifted off out of Jakarta, Indonesia invaded and took it over. The Indonesians Imagined that their takeover would be something like the Indian takeover a decade earlier of Goa, but it wasn't. I suppose for a variety of reasons. One was that the Indonesians were extraordinarily brutal when they landed. They had paratroopers come in. Some of them died in accidents and they just took it out on the local population. In fact, when I was there I heard countless just appalling stories of what happened in the very first days. They rounded up the population of Dili and sort of selected some of the elite and marched them to the edge of Dili wharf and shot them one by one. One of the people shot was the wife of

the president of the self proclaimed Democratic Republic of East Timor. She was in her 20s and had a baby in her arms. The baby, ultimately there was bargaining and they decided not to shoot the baby and the baby is now a young man who is a member of the parliament of East Timor. Anyhow, it was appalling behavior when they took it over. Also I think the world was less tolerant by '75 of this kind of action. East Timorese didn't accept the Indonesian takeover as the Goans did accept the Indian takeover. Anyhow, there were the East Timorese, FRETILIN and the military on Falintil waged an extraordinary conflict with no outside support for many years. So, from '75 to '78 they held much of the center of the island and then were able to wager guerrilla war, more or less continually until '99. Low level, but they also had a clandestine movement in the urban areas. In 1998 Suharto was overthrown, his successor, Habibie , a kind of a curious story. Prime Minister Howard had sent him a letter urging dialogue.

Q: You're talking about Australia.

GALBRAITH: Australia. Urging dialogue with the East Timorese on a possibly autonomy solution and Habibie resented that letter. He went and held a press conference and he said, "We are going to offer the East Timorese autonomy and if they don't want it, if they don't go for our autonomy proposal, they can be independent." The UN which had been brokering rather fruitless between Portugal which retained having the role of the colonial power and Indonesia immediately jumped in on the basis of this Habibie statement on the 5th of May 1999 an accord was brokered in which a referendum would held on the Indonesian autonomy proposal and with the agreement that if the autonomy was rejected then East Timor could be independent. There is a lesson in this whole story because for years the Indonesians had been telling the world how much they had done for the East Timorese, how many roads they'd built, how many schools they'd built, how many teachers they'd trained. Actually all of it was true. The untrue part was that they had won the hearts and minds of the Timorese people, that hadn't happened, but telling the world how much they had done for them and how much the East Timorese loved them, the Indonesians fell victim to their own propaganda. It is a lesson that the first victim of propaganda is most often the person who propagates it.

Q: The Sandinistas fell into the same trap.

GALBRAITH: Perhaps, I don't know the Nicaragua situation. Believing that they were going to win they allowed the referendum to proceed. I think that some of the Indonesian military began to realize that things weren't maybe going to go their way, or the way they thought, so there was a lot of intimidation. Imagine their surprise when they discovered that in fact the vote was 79.5 percent for independence and just 20 percent in favor of remaining part of Indonesia. Incidentally had the elections been genuinely free almost certainly it would have been 90 percent for their own independence. Well, the Indonesians responded with a, by going on a rampage. The vote by the militias that they had set up, these were East Timorese militias, pro-Indonesians Timorese militias, young thugs and the Indonesian military itself and I suppose a month in September of 1999 every public building in East Timor was destroyed. About 70 percent to 80 percent of the physical structures in East Timor were destroyed. 350,000 East Timorese fled or were forced to leave to West Timor in Indonesia, so just about well, 40 percent of the population actually was driven out of the country and probably about 1,000 people were killed. Interestingly, given the scale of the physical destruction, the death toll was not as high as it might have been. The physical destruction was complete. In this environment the United Nations stepped in and President Clinton played

an absolutely key role. There was an APEC meeting in Wellington, New Zealand. What Clinton did was he got Habibie to request UN intervention to help restore law and order, a military intervention. That intervention then came in the form of a resolution that authorized a coalition of the willing and that coalition of the willing became known as INTERFET, the International Forces of East Timor. It was led by Australia. It deployed in I guess late September.

Q: September of '99.

GALBRAITH: September of '99 and within a week the disorder had, a week or two, they had in fact restored order. Then on October 24th the Indonesian parliament met. It repealed the annexation of East Timor and at that time the UN Security Council Resolution 1272 was adopted in which the United Nations was assigned full executive legislative and judicial authority for East Timor. This was the most; this was the United Nations mission with the broadest mandate of any United Nations mission in history. I'm not sure there will ever be one like it again. Virtually all other UN missions come into being to implement some kind of peace agreement and that peace agreement is the road map for how the United Nations mission will operate. So, in Eastern Slavonia, UNTRA, United Nations Transitional Administration Eastern Slavonia had a lot of authority in the two years. Jacques Klein was the dictator of Eastern Slavonia, as I used to call him, but what he actually did was very much circumscribed by the Erdut Agreement. It was spelled out in the Erdut Agreement, the peace agreement between Croatia and the rebel Serbs. Well, in the case of east Timor there wasn't any road map, there wasn't any peace agreement. The UN had full authority with the only provision of the mandate was the goal was to prepare East Timor for independence, but in terms of what kind of system of government it would have, would it be presidential, would it be parliamentary, what law it would have, would it be common law system, would it be a civil law system in terms of whether the applicable law would be Portuguese, would it be Indonesian? Indonesian because that was the immediate past law Portuguese because that was the last lawful authority in East Timor since the Indonesian occupation was illegal. What would be the government departments? Who would be the civil servants? All of this was not specified. There was no road map.

Now, to head the mission Kofi Anan selected Sergio Vieira de Mello, a Brazilian who had begun his career at the UN with UNHCR. He had been the first SRSG, Special Representative Secretary of the General and head of mission in Kosovo. Undoubtedly he would have been the best man to run the Kosovo mission, but he was a Brazilian and the Europeans wanted a European and so Bernard Kouchner, a French minister was chosen to replace Sergio. He was also absolutely ideal for East Timor. Of course as a Brazilian he spoke Portuguese. He is a very charming personality, absolutely masterful diplomat who, I mean I watched him in action over the 18 months I was there and he could persuade almost anybody to do something, to make a commitment and he was never confrontational, always reasoned with people, but just enormous persuasive powers. He asked me. I had met him in Croatia in Zagreb where he was the head of civil affairs for the United Nations, for the United Nations, UNPROFOR, the UN Mission in Croatia and Bosnia. We had worked particularly closely together in August of 1994 to deal with the Bihać crisis. This was when the Abdić refugees from Bihać were defeated by Dudaković. They had come into Krajina, the Serb-controlled Krajina. Some of them were caught between the front lines in a place called Turan and Sergio and I had gone down to Bihać and we negotiated an agreement which was to permit these refugees to return and the ways in which they would be protected. The agreement was a

considerable negotiating success. Unfortunately, nobody returned under the agreement, but nonetheless Sergio and I worked together, well, worked there well together and I think he had seen something of my abilities as a negotiator.

In any event, he asked if I would come out to East Timor as the head of the Office of Political Affairs and the UN then decided while they had originally had an idea of having separate offices of political affairs and constitutional affairs and electoral affairs, they decided after I was chosen to consolidate that. So I became the director for political, constitutional and electoral affairs. The senior leadership of the mission were about four or five people. It was myself; it was Sergio of course as the transitional administrator and special representative to the secretary general. It was a wonderful French prefect named Jean-Christian Cady who was Sergio's deputy and responsible for governments and public administration. Then there was the military component as well as a chief of staff, a Malaysian named, the former ambassador to Vietnam named Parameswaran, known as Param and finally a Japanese who headed the humanitarian component. Now, the mission was set up as a traditional UN mission in which there were three pillars. I think this really copied Kosovo. There was a humanitarian pillar, which was headed by the Japanese. It was a governments and public administration pillar, which was headed by Cady, the Frenchman and the military component which was headed by a Filipino, Jaime de Los Santos. In February of 2000 the UN peacekeeping force took over from INTERFET. INTERFET had been led by Peter Cosgrove and the Australians. It became apparent right at the beginning to me that in fact neither the humanitarian component nor the military component would be a major focus of the mission. Both were important and the military, there were about 10,000 peacekeeping troops, was essential to providing security, but there were no there were no significant military changes. There were a few problems and I ended up dealing with the political side of those, but basically once the Indonesians were gone, the area, the country became stable. The military was deployed along the border to deter Indonesian insurgence and we did have a problem with those in the spring and summer of 2000, but not a serious problem. Otherwise there was basically stability in the country. Similarly the humanitarian issues quickly faded from the top of the agenda. Why? Because in fact East Timor is small, 800,000 people. The UN was able to get UNHCR able to get emergency food and shelter to the half more than half of the population that had been displaced, but it’s a relatively small place geographically, although very mountainous, it was possible to get shelter to everybody. It was possible to get emergency food rations to everybody.

Q: Where it was, it’s basically warm and fertile.

GALBRAITH: Exactly. That was just the point that I was going to make. Plus, unlike Kosovo, East Timor has a very forgiving climate. It is fertile and people there were very poor. While they had lost their homes, it didn't require a lot to restore them to the standard of living to the very low standard of living they had previously had. So, the humanitarian component quickly accomplished its core mission. It remained, but it didn’t involve issues that the mission as a whole had to address. It wasn’t, we had daily staff meetings and we didn’t spent a lot of time on either the military issues or on the humanitarian issues. The crux of the problem was how to govern the country and what kind of institutions to create that might be left for the future and how this should be done.

Initially when Sergio arrived, he arrived in early November. I arrived incidentally in the middle of January. He took a number of steps. Regulation One and the UN legislated by issuing regulations, but

these were laws and they remain the laws of East Timor. Regulation One established that the applicable law in East Timor would be the law that existed on the 24th of October 1999 namely Indonesian law, except the Indonesian law frozen as it was on October 24th, 1999 except the provisions that violated human rights or which were contrary to the mission of UNTAR, the United Nations Transitional Administration, to East Timor were voided. Actually we didn't know what those provisions were, but that at least gave a legal basis if something came up we could void a provision that violated human rights.

The second decision he took in Regulation Two was to establish a national consultative council which consisted of, four internationals and there were going to be eleven East Timorese, it ended up only being ten. Seven of the ten East Timorese represented the CNRT which was the umbrella group of those who favored independence and four were to represent I guess it was seven from the CNRT, one from the church and three from the pro-Indonesia parties.

Q: Roughly you're shadowing the vote.

GALBRAITH: Yes, and in fact, Xanana Gusmão who is the very charismatic East Timorese guerilla leader who had been in prison in Indonesia for seven years from '92 to '99. He was captured in '92. He was the one who "I'm going to be generous, there should be an extra one for the pro-independence forces." I meant the pro-Indonesia forces. As it happened that third seat was never filled and the reason it was never filled is that one of the pro-Indonesia parties refused to participate. Two of the pro-Indonesia parties did participate and actually it helped the reconciliation process a lot. Part of my time was to try to get the third one to agree to designate somebody to participate in the National Consultative Council. Sergio put even more effort into that. It was not successful. In the end it didn't matter much.

This was the institution, which would advise the UN mission, which would represent the local voices. The four international members incidentally were Sergio who chaired it, Cady, the Frenchman who was his deputy, Takahashi the Japanese, and a woman named Sidney Jones who was the head of the human rights unit. It was formed before I got there. In any event Sergio wanted to have a woman on it although logically the head of the political operation should have been on it, but I didn't mind. As it worked operationally, however, the National Consultative Council became less and less effective as an institution. The reason was this. The UN came in and it deployed a lot of staff from all over the world into different departments and immediately it set out creating new law, new regulations. There was a lot, a huge amount of things to be done. Initially this was all coordinated out of the office of the principal legal advisor and a young German, thirtyfive year old German municipal judge named Hansjoerg Strohmeyer who, a brilliant guy who had been transferred to work at OCHA, a part of the UN that deals with humanitarian affairs. Then Sergio had brought him to East Timor. Hansjoerg would draw up in his team of very young lawyers, would draw up these regulations which might be proposed by different departments of the UN whether it dealt with agriculture or creating the court system, the judiciary or eventually establishing a system of taxation or finance currency, all the kinds of decisions that had to be dealt with by a government. This arrangement which then the legal department would prepare regulations which would be submitted to the National Consultative Council began to frustrate the East Timorese because although the title of the NCC was consultative, the way Sergio operated is that he only acted if they agreed. In fact, he insisted that there be a consensus, that everybody on the council agree. The Timorese, however, as I said became frustrated because regulations would be presented to them. It would be explained it's absolutely urgent

that we have this regulation on taxes otherwise there will be no money of the government and we won't be able to pay the teachers. So, you've got to decide it today. The regulation would be 30 pages thick and these leaders, resistance leaders, who after all had virtually no experience in government, they'd been either abroad in exile, or a few of them had been in the hills fighting or, like Gusmão, in prison. They'd look at it and they wouldn't have any idea, so they didn't actually have effective control over the process. Yes, they could have voted no, but it was explained that if they voted no, the schools would shut down or whatever, the power system would shut down and the decision had to be made today.

In fairness, I would say that it is true that the staff working on some of these regulations would work with their counterparts. They would be assigned counterparts with the CNRT, the Timorese umbrella resistance movement. But those Timorese counterparts never communicated up to the leaders. Incidentally within the CNRT, the CNRT was a coalition of political parties only one of which actually had a lot of support, FRETILIN, which had only one seat on the CNRT, and the others didn't have much support, so there was an inherent tension there as well. In any event, come May, Sergio is getting the level of East Timorese criticism is getting to be very high, that the UN is arrogant, that it is not properly consulting, that the Timorese are not involved and Sergio comes into my office and he's very frustrated. His chief of staff, this Malaysian, Param, was supposed to draw up a strategic plan, but he hadn't gotten around to doing it. In any event, his idea of a strategic plan was to go around to the different parts of the UN mission and then ask everybody what they were doing, how long it would take and then that became the plan. So, Sergio asked if I could do something about this, if I could offer some thoughts.

I did two things. First, I moved a group of the senior staff that I trusted up to Baucau for a couple of days. We had a retreat to talk it through. Then I came back and I drew up a very simple plan. First, I reduced the number of tasks that the UN needed to do to six. We can't do, I mean we can't do sixty or eighty different things. It may be useful for us to get sports facilities built and to have cultural programs, but it's not something that has to be accomplished before East Timor can become independent. I mean we can do it, but it's not simply that absolutely something that has to be accomplished. What is it that needs absolutely to be accomplished? Basically the things, the six things that needed to be accomplished was to address the humanitarian emergency. We couldn't leave, turn things over if people were starving. But actually that had already begun. Second, we needed to have military security and again, that had pretty much had already begun. Third, we needed to get essential services functioning by which it was limited to education, health care, electric power generation. Fourth, I have to go back and look at my list, but the other really key one was there needed to be a system for political transition. In other words, a mechanism by which the Timorese would choose their own leaders and decide on their own future form of government.

Then I came up with a proposal which was that since the current institution of Sergio as the absolute dictator supported by national consultative council which was a sort of legislature, but without any ability to actually review legislation wasn't working. We needed a new system. I proposed that we transfer power from Sergio to an executive cabinet and I had in mind that the British cabinet in the nineteenth century, not the current system which was basically presidential in the form of a prime minister, but a cabinet of colleagues. I proposed that there be a majority of East Timorese. But when the East Timorese looked at the proposal, they said, no, we want to make it half East Timorese, half-international. So, the decision was to form a cabinet of eight members. Then the cabinet any regulation after it had been approved by the

cabinet would go to a national council, an appointed parliament which would review the proposal. This interim government would last however long, probably a year and then it would be followed by elections. The elections would be for a constituent assembly. The constituent assembly then would write the constitution. I'll say a little bit more about the constituent assembly. In any event, this was the proposal. Sergio agreed. There was a big conference that the CNRT had organized outside of Dili including people from abroad and I gave the keynote speech in which I outlined this proposal. It was meant to be a basis for discussion. The conference considered it. They liked the idea and then Sergio gave the concluding speech in which he then endorsed this proposal. It went into effect on the fifteenth of July. I had set that as the date to have it go into effect. Nobody thought it could be done because the UN hadn't done anything on time, but I got it done by the fourteenth. What was required, it was required for two regulations to be passed by the National Consultative Council, one establishing a cabinet, second establishing the national council, this appointed parliament and then actually selecting the cabinet members. The cabinet members were selected and sworn in on the fourteenth of July and they consisted of four international members and four East Timorese and I was one of the four international cabinet members. So, my portfolio, it was called political affairs, but in fact I handled the foreign affairs for East Timor as well as the domestic political transition, the constitutional issues.

Let me see. I then spent a year in this role as a cabinet minister of East Timor and I must say it was one of the most interesting years of my life.

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GALBRAITH: But, but, I must say, when we made this transition to the cabinet and we were able to say to them, oh, that's the government of East Timor doing it, they accepted it and the interference became absolutely minimal. There was no cabinet decision that was significantly held up and none that was reversed by New York, reversed or changed by New York.

Q: Did you get hit with an awful lot of non-governmental organizations there? They have their own bureaucracy which can you know for getting emergency aid to a place quickly, it works well, but I was thinking of a situation of more development would be difficult.

GALBRAITH: Completely, there were a lot of non-governmental organizations and they were more of an issue for the people who were working the substantive departments, people who were dealing with housing, distribution of food aid, reconstruction, economic development. There was also the World Bank, the IMF, the host, the United Nations development program, UNHCR, all these humanitarian agencies and international organizations, non-government organizations. There were political non-governmental organizations of the National Democratic Institute, the Republican Institute of International affairs, two American ones, but there were European and others and then a large number of visitors. This was a fact of life. Mostly they did good work, but sometimes things were complicated. For example, all these organizations had their ideas of how things should be done and they wanted typically to promote the best international practice. Well, if we tried to apply best international practices in East Timor, the entire budget of the country would be consumed on a relatively limited number of activities. It simply wasn't possible. There was a lot of desire to do social engineering, which I resisted. I mean I found myself in the ironic position of since I'm politically rather liberal of being often the most conservative person in the

cabinet. But, to illustrate the kinds of issues that would arise. For example, we had a discussion of prison systems. The New Zealanders were helping to design the prison system and they were staffing it. UNICEF weighed in because it was concerned about juvenile justice. The human rights weighed in because they wanted to make sure that everybody got the right to a lawyer and that nobody could be held in detention for more than seventy-two hours and all this stuff. Well, great stuff in theory, but the practical problem was there were like twenty lawyers in East Timor and they were not of a very high standard. The last place you'd want to get into trouble was East Timor and have to depend on an East Timorese defender, East Timorese judge or an East Timorese prosecutor or at least circa 2000 and 2001 because these people had gone to Indonesian law schools, and that standard I think was rather low, and many of them hadn't done particularly well in them, and they'd just done this as an undergraduate course or a partial one. Of course the number was very small for the size of the country. The result was that for example the right to counsel. Some people would get a lawyer, but others would languish in prison for months because so many of the resources were devoted to getting public defenders for a few people. Others never got processed. In the case of juvenile justice, UNICEF was taking a view that juveniles needed to have their own facilities, juvenile meaning anybody under 18. There shouldn't be any punishment for juveniles; the goal should be rehabilitation and all that. The latest in thinking on juvenile justice. If you couldn't do that you should release the juveniles. Well, the reality was that some of the worst killers and the violence were juveniles. The violence that took place in September of '99 and there was still a gang problem, so we couldn't release the people. We didn't have the money to create a separate juvenile facility. We didn't have the money for rehabilitation or education or everything that UNICEF had wanted. If we had done all the things that everybody wanted us to do on a criminal justice system, the cost would have exceed $45 million I calculated, $45 million being the entire budget of the government of East Timor for everything education, health, roads, communication and so on. This was the kind of problem that we were up against.

Q: Well, now, if you want, I mean, okay here you are kind of as foreign minister and other stuff. What were you doing?

GALBRAITH: Let me give a few examples. One of the big issues that I worried about and that held my portfolio was the transition. How do we go from where we are to an independent country? There were many different ideas about this. Some people thought that there should be, we should have a constitutional commission perhaps East Timorese, but also, international experts and that should draw up a constitution. Some suggested that I should draw up the constitution or I should hire experts to draw up the constitution and that's the way it should be drawn up. There was a suggestion that we should draw up a temporary constitution that elected government on the basis of that and then that government could possibly come up with a permanent constitution. I rejected all those proposals. I considered it absolutely fundamental that the decision on the future of East Timor should be made by the East Timorese themselves, that it shouldn't be made by the United Nations, it shouldn't be made by international experts, that a constitution that the East Timorese wrote for themselves might not be the best constitution according to some legal scholar, but it would be their own. They would have a sense of ownership. After all a constitution, if it isn't followed, it's only a piece of paper. I happen to think that the American constitution is flawed in many ways. It's an eighteenth Century document. This is the twenty-first Century. Some of the ideas clearly violate democratic principles such as... [END OF TAPE]

Q: You were saying one man?

GALBRAITH: One man, one vote. When my state of Vermont has the same voting power as California, you know, that's a flaw at least by modern standards, but the genius of the U.S. constitution is that everyone accepts it, it's respected, it works. My feeling was that rather than a brilliant document; it should be a document written by the East Timorese themselves. I thought that the way you get there is by the simplest way possible and that in my view is the election of a constituent assembly. So, I came up with a system that we would elect a constituent assembly on the basis of proportional representation for a part of it. It ended up having eighty-eight seats, seventy-five elected on the basis of proportional representation in which there was no threshold. So, if you got one seventy fifth of the vote you got to go into the parliament. My idea there was to make the parliament as representative as possible of the different views in the country. It was also dictated by a recognition that FRETILIN, the dominant party was going to win a huge majority and I wanted a system that would minimize, that would not give it any more votes than its actual percentage. Obviously if we had a single member district approach, FRETILIN would have gotten one hundred percent of the seats. As it was, FRETILIN got fifty-nine percent of the vote which translated I think into fifty-five seats. I take it back. It got about fifty-nine percent of the vote which translated into forty, well, I'll tell you, forty-three seats out of the seventy-five, forty-three seats out of the seventy-five.

In addition, there were thirteen districts, administrative districts in East Timor and because East Timor has like forty different languages and some of the languages are completely different in origin as well as different ethnic groups, I thought it was important to represent these regions and particularly to let the people in the east who were of quite different origin from most of the Timorese spoke a different language that they should be represented, which a proportional representation system might not allow. In addition in the west there was an enclave called Oecusse, which was geographically separated from the rest of East Timor. It was in West Timor and those people felt very isolated so I wanted to make sure that Oecusse in the west and Lospalos in the east had a voice in the constituent assembly. So, I created 13 single member districts, one for each district.

In any event, this was a system that made sure that the constituent assembly was as representative as possible and then in terms of the mandate for the constituent assembly I wanted to make sure that there was as little requirement as possible. In other words, that the East Timorese could shape whatever universe they wanted. If they wanted a monarchy, they could have a monarchy; they could choose what human rights would be protected. I had confidence they would come up with a democratic system. I might have thought different if I didn't think they would come up with a democratic system, but not something that we would impose.

There were a couple of controversial issues here. First, the CNRT wanted a requirement that members of the constituent assembly declare that they respected the results of the popular consultation of the thirtieth of August, 1999. That is the vote that gave East Timor its independence. I resisted it strongly, any requirement that a candidate swear to a particular point of view. My view was that if somebody wanted to run on the idea that East Timor should rejoin Indonesia, that would be their democratic right to do so. That should not be excluded. Again, I might have thought different if I'd thought there was a real threat there, but I didn't think anybody would run on that basis. In fact, nobody ran on a pro-Indonesia basis, but I didn't want the election tainted by the idea that we had excluded that point of view. I didn't want us to

be criticized in Indonesia and I thought this, what happens in East Timor isn't so important about East Timor which is a small place, but it's establishing global norms. It's saying something about how we're going to run the world in the twenty-first century, and it's about the UN. I wanted the standard to be the most democratic possible, and so I didn't want any point of view excluded. In the end I worked out something, a compromise, which the CNRT and the East Timorese leaders all agreed which is that we would describe the election as an election for a constituent assembly to write a constitution for an independent and democratic East Timor. That was true, that was descriptive. No candidate had to sign up to any particular position to run and that principle was preserved.

The second issue was kind of an interesting one, which had to do with these NGOs. I should say the process by which the transition took place is that the cabinet considered. So, the second issue relates to these, sorry, I was explaining the procedure. Establishing the constituent assembly was done by a regulation. Like all regulations it had to be approved by the cabinet and approved by the national council, this appointed parliament. I will add parenthetically actually I preferred that the regulation not go through the cabinet and appointed parliament on the grounds that the UN itself should decree a level playing field and while we could entrust East Timorese that we had appointed to running the day to day affairs of the country, our cabinet was not elected, so it should not be making decisions about the future of the country. On this point the East Timorese insisted that they should vote on it and it should go through this appointed cabinet. When I realized that I could get what I wanted by having a vote I went with that route. In any event, I got the regulation through the cabinet fine in the manner that I wanted and with this compromise describing it as an election for a parliament of the constituent assembly to write a constitution for an independent and democratic East Timor.

In the national council this appointed parliament, some of the women's groups wanted to amend the election for a constituent assembly to establish a quota for women. That is that one-third of the, no, not one-third, that thirty percent of the seats would be for women and they proposed that each party would have to put on their party lists women in every third position. Well, I mean I only speak personally; I don't like the idea of quotas. I think on an election people ought to have a right to vote for whoever they wanted. If they want to vote for one hundred percent women, that's fine, if they want to vote for one hundred percent men, that's fine. What I particularly objected to was that the UN would be telling the Timorese how to organize their first parliament. If the East Timorese decided in their constituent assembly that they wanted one-third of the seats in their future parliaments to be held by women, that was their decision, but the decisions on the future of the governments of East Timorese, ought not to be made by internationals, it ought to be made by the East Timorese themselves.

Here I had an ally in a woman named Carina Perelli who was the head of the UN electoral unit in New York, but who also opposed, she was Uruguayan and she was quite a feisty character. She opposed quotas on principal. In the end the quotas were defeated by the national council because there were thirteen women members of this appointed national council and twenty male members. The thirteen women members voted twelve to one against the quotas while the twenty male members voted ten to nine against, so it was defeated by the women. It ended up making me very unpopular with UNIFEM and many of the women's groups there, but that gives you another example. The end result thought was that we got a regulation for a completely democratic election, for a constituent assembly that had a mandate to write whatever kind of constitution they wanted. As it was they came up I think with a reasonably good

constitution. Basically it was a constitution that FRETILIN had put together some years ago, but that's fine. They won the election; they get to do the constitution. One thing that I insisted on was that the constitution had to be adopted by a super majority, sixty votes and FRETILIN was able to achieve the sixty by making alliance with one of the smaller parties. That was one part, major part of my work, was doing this political transition.

In terms of how the cabinet worked, my office, we put together a cabinet manual, which we borrowed from New Zealand. New Zealand had its cabinet manual on the Internet, so 260 we adapted it. The cabinet met every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. The reason we picked that time was to make Jean Cady, the French guy who had been the head of the government's public administration and who believed he was losing the authority by the creation of this cabinet to make him happy because he said, "The French cabinet always meets at 10:00 on Wednesdays." I said, "Fine, we'll have our cabinet meet at 10:00 on Wednesdays." In any event, I created a cabinet secretariat. Before every cabinet meeting papers would be prepared on the issues to be decided by a minister, a cabinet member would present the issue, that the cabinet papers could be not more than three pages, they had a standard format, recommendation, reason background, reasons for the recommendation, legislative implications, financial implications, public consultation, likely public reaction, public controversy. We would have good discussion of issues and we approached things in a very orderly manner. The important point about this system was that it was a real education for the East Timorese cabinet members. Education as to how the institution would work, how to do an orderly decision making process. It had an impact on the larger bureaucracy, which started out being all international, but internationals were recruiting and training East Timorese and people would say, oh, we have to get this paper ready for cabinet. As I said, it had the beneficial effect of shutting out New York as well largely.

One of the great, really fun things about being in the cabinet was the nature of the decisions we had to make. Normally in government, you make decisions just at the margin. Should we lower or raise the income tax rate, should we lower the income tax rate from thirty-seven percent to thirty-four percent, that kind of decision. Well, when we talked about taxes it was, should we have taxes, if so, what taxes should we have? If we have an income tax, should there be personal exemptions, that is exemptions for the size of a family? We had great debates on these questions. Typically the sharpest divide in the cabinet was between myself and the finance minister who was also an international, he was a Canadian named Mike Francino from the IMF and he came up with a lot of economic orthodoxy that I objected to. So, I fought him on, he had initially proposed a flat tax and I said it should be a graduated tax. He didn't want to have personal exemptions. I said it's ridiculous that a single person making $100 a month should pay twenty percent of their income as should a family with ten children. I mean and the East Timorese would join in these debates, but again, they saw how the dialogue took place. International cabinet members were always however careful never to take the decision that the East Timorese agreed to, so it never happened that the international cabinet members were on one side and the East Timorese on the other. That was a very important point.

Some of the big issues. Budget. The IMF really had a, it wanted to impose very tight fiscal discipline on East Timor which I thought was unrealistic because in fact East Timor was going to have much higher revenues in the future from oil and I thought it makes no sense to starve the current generation or deprive them of education, that was the real issue, was education, if in the future years East Timor would be able

to afford on a recurring basis more money on education. So, I and the East Timorese cabinet ministers, we came up with a common position, we increased the budget I think by $10 million which is a very big increase to go principally for education. As I said we had a discussion on taxes, we established an army for East Timor, an East Timor defense force. We did create, reopen the Dili University which the finance minister was very much opposed to and I which thought was a mistake because I didn't think East Timor could afford it, but the East Timorese minister responsible for social affairs wanted it. He was a priest, and so we kind of went along even though we thought it was not a wise use of money. These were the kinds of issues that came before the cabinet. Cabinet ministers then would go down to the national council and testify on their proposals and the national council would debate them. Rarely would they amend them, but on occasion they rejected some of our proposals. All of this I think was a very good education in democracy. The beauty of the system also was that we gave to the East Timorese those portfolios that had most of the government employees. Social affairs, which was education, health, labor. That was this priest, Father Filomeno Jacob. Infrastructure, a guy named João Carrascalão who was the head of UDT one of the lesser parties, he was in charge of infrastructure which was the power system, roads, the port. Economic affairs was Mari Alkatiri who was my closest friend there. He was the FRETILIN leader, he is now the prime minister and he had natural resources and tourism and other economic issues. District administration was Ana Pessoa also from FRETILIN. She was responsible for the local administration of the thirteen districts.

In short, and this is where almost all the government employees were. I mean I had no, I mean my department had about thirty people and they were actually almost all internationals. It was then up to these ministers to decide how fast to bring in East Timorese into positions of responsibility in their ministries. We had programs to recruit people and to train them, but in the early part of the mission, East Timorese said even only after we had only been there a couple of months, said, you're going too slowly. You aren't bringing enough East Timorese in. Well, once they became ministers, they had to choose. They had to choose between delivering services efficiently to their constituents which meant having more internationals in senior positions and on the one hand and Timorizing their departments, hiring Timorese who however had less experience and were less qualified and therefore diminishing the quality of services. It was up to them to make the balancing act. Some of them would complain. Well, the UN isn't doing anything or you're not doing enough for Timorization. I would say, well, you're in charge of the department, hire more Timorese and then they would back off. It was an idea to transfer responsibility and I think it worked, it worked very well.

Just I mean there were many issues to deal with. One of the things that I was most proud of in my tenure there, actually this took place a little bit before I became a cabinet minister, but I did write regulations in that early period and I created the national parks of East Timor. I had traveled around the island, which was very beautiful although with a lot of environmental problems, notably deforestation. It goes from obviously sea level to 3,000 meters. There are a couple of offshore islands, one of which Jaco Island was completely uninhabited, and there were a few wonderful rain forests right on the ocean side and then some forests up in the mountains. I was concerned that these would all be spoiled if we didn't protect them. It was a completely open area; there was no applicable law. Developers, outsiders were looking for a fast buck and so on. So, I wrote a regulation that protected every, all the areas above 2,000 meters, the various mountain peaks as well as some of the nice beaches that I knew about, this little offshore island, Jaco Island. I created a list of endangered species that were protected, such as crocodiles, which were

sacred in East Timor according to local culture, marsupials of which they have some, and then gave an authority to the head of government to put others on the list and protected the coral which was spectacular. Anyhow, it was kind of a fun thing. In typical UN fashion, the environmental unit objected to my regulation on the grounds that I was political affairs and I shouldn't be doing that. I realized if I wanted for them to do it, it would never get done, so I went ahead and got it done and got it through the National Consultative Council. About six months later they came and said, "You know, you were right," and they made good use of the regulations to protect some of these assets. The other big project that I did and we can talk about it now or later was negotiating the Timor Sea Treaty.

TUNISIA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

PETER O. SELLAR
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(1964–1966)

Peter O. Sellar was born in Connecticut and grew up in New Jersey. He graduated from Harvard University with a degree in American History and Literature and later completed a master's degree at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. After joining USAID in 1963 as a Management Intern, he served in a wide range of positions over a 30-year career, including assignments in Guinea, Liberia, and Washington. His Washington postings included senior roles in the Africa Bureau, the Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation, the Near East Bureau, and the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, where he worked on the Central America Initiative and helped develop USAID's Democracy Program. He retired in 1993 after serving as Senior Program Officer in the Office of Democratic Initiatives. Following his USAID career, he consulted on democracy and governance programs in Guyana and Nepal and authored a paper on USAID's first decade of democracy promotion. Throughout his career, he focused on program planning, democracy promotion, governance, and development policy. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on January 21, 1999.

Topical Focus – Tourism, Agriculture, and Job Creation in Tunisia

Q: Then after that assignment you went on to the Tunisia Desk? This was in 1964?

SELLAR: Yes, and I was there for a couple of years.

Q: What was the situation in Tunisia at that time?

SELLAR: Well, they were doing relatively well as compared to most African countries. Of course in a way, you can say they are not even an African country, but they are more of a Middle Eastern country, but they happened to be in the Africa Bureau. They were much more advanced than most of the sub-Saharan African countries, except for South Africa, but they still needed help with a lot of things. We had a big program, and we had the luxury in those days of having three desk officers. A chief officer and two assistant desk officers, of which I was one.

Q: That's just for Tunisia?

SELLAR: Yes. Of course, it would never be possible today to have three officers. But it was a big program. We organized ourselves sectorally, so I took agriculture and tourism and my colleague took the other sectors we were active in.

Q: What was the situation in tourism in Tunisia?

SELLAR: They were just trying to get started, actually, developing an organized effort to be attractive. We, in fact, financed a tourism master plan for them, although it was controversial as to whether we should be involved in tourism development.

Q: Why was it controversial?

SELLAR: Well, some people felt that it was inappropriate because it attracted gambling and skimpily clad women.

Q: Corrupting society.

SELLAR: Yes. People also said it didn't really provide much in the way of multiplier effects in the local economy. The only additional jobs created were low level jobs cleaning rooms and being waiters and whatnot. Personally I felt that wasn't true, that there was a lot that could be done with handicrafts as well, and that, in any event, those low level jobs were jobs that hadn't existed before. People were happy to have them, or they wouldn't have gone into them. So there was some development even though it wasn't ideal. Also, it was just a fact that for some countries tourism was the most important natural resource they had. Tunisia has beautiful beaches and very interesting Greco-Roman remains and other things that people would be interested in. It didn't have a lot of mineral resources to work with, or too much on the agriculture side because of the dry climate.

Q: Before we get to agriculture, what were we trying to contribute in tourism?

SELLAR: We contributed the proposed plan to help them get going, and beyond that I can't tell you exactly how much further we went. I don't think we went much further than that because the Mission Director who was sent out during this period was one of the ones who didn't really like tourism. So I don't know that they took it any further.

Q: Do you remember the main features of the plan?

SELLAR: I remember one suggestion was that we try to do something about the flies, which were all over everything and everyone in Tunisia, and also to get them to prepare their cakes in some other manner because they tasted rancid. These were very specific recommendations. I remember them because I personally experienced the flies and the rancid-tasting cakes. In addition to these specific things, there were obviously broader suggestions. How to develop the Greco-Roman ruins and other sites to increase tourism expenditures, by such means as staging events at them as they did in Egypt and other places. And start putting in higher value hotels that would attract the higher income clientele, because Tunisia had only low rate facilities on the beaches, and mostly Germans came, who spent almost nothing. Things like that.

Q: And in the agriculture sector, what were we trying to do?

SELLAR: I can't actually remember that with any precision. It's a dry country so most of it I think was in livestock, helping them try to increase the productivity of their herds. We also did an enormous amount of tree planting under PL 480 Title II. I suppose you'd say that was more environmental and natural resource conservation than agriculture, but the trees were used for fire wood. It wasn't justified as being environmental at that point. It was justified as a kind of a WPA program, job creation, even though obviously it wasn't anything that we could sustain. Nevertheless there was a significant unemployment in Tunisia, and this was one way to deal with that in the short term at least, and give the other developmental things going on a chance to take root.

Q: How well did the program work?

SELLAR: It was very successful.

Q: Any recollection of scale?

SELLAR: It was a large scale program. I think we were employing around 50,000 Tunisians, a significant portion of the labor force. It was PL 480 Title II.

Q: Who was managing the program?

SELLAR: The Tunisian Government.

Q. You weren't involved in it?

SELLAR: No.

Q: How did you find your first venture into a developing country?

SELLAR: I think actually my first venture into a developing country was Scotland. But I thought Tunisia was absolutely delightful. Tunisia is and was a charming place. It has a French atmosphere, which I like, and has beautiful beaches and flowers blooming and Mediterranean architecture. The country was running pretty well, the air conditioners worked in the hotels, and there was an interesting variety of restaurants. From what I could see of it from the work I was doing there, it was delightful.

Q: How would you characterize the development condition of the country?

SELLAR: I'd say it was a mid-level developing country, well above almost anything else in Africa. Although there was some severe poverty, it wasn't as pervasive as in most developing countries. In fact for many years I think we provided aid to Tunisia long after we really should have stopped. I worked myself to try to phase it out. I always recommended that when I was in Africa/DP.

Q: Why was that?

SELLAR: Because they didn't need it nearly as much as most other countries. The counter argument was that they could use it more effectively. Of course that's an argument that went on forever.

Q: Is that the main reason why we did not phase out and kept going back?

SELLAR: No, I don't think so. I think probably the main reason was that the State Department wanted us there. There were some security considerations in the Cold War context, although not major ones. We didn't have any bases there, I believe. Also, quite frankly I think both on the State and the AID side people wanted to continue it because it was a very nice post.

Q: You didn't find any State Department specialists wanting to influence the structure of the program?

SELLAR: No. Not the content or the structure of the program. It was really just a question of the level of the program and continuing it rather than terminating it.

Q: How did you find the Tunisians to work with?

SELLAR: Very good. Very cooperative, and they seemed to be interested in what we had to offer. They were much better educated than most of the folks I encountered later in other countries. Very good to work with.

Q: Any special issues you had to work on during two year stint?

SELLAR: I can't really remember that there were any special issues other than the ones we have already talked about. There were issues of program assistance versus totally project assistance, which my boss Phil Birnbaum handled. He was an exceptionally able guy, a Ph.D. economist. He just did the big issues himself. My issues tended to be more sector or project-level, such as should we be in tourism or not, and levels and types of programs and projects.

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SELLAR: I went to Near East DP and that was not because I wanted to, because I really liked Latin America and the Latin American Bureau and would have liked to have stayed, but I was in the situation where I had to move back into a GS-15 job within one year or lose the grade and lose the pay. Brad Langmaid offered me the job.

Q: He was the Head of DP at that time?

SELLAR: Yes. He offered me the job of Program Chief, which was also de facto Deputy, because he didn't have a Deputy. What I did was supervise on a daily basis about four program analysts and two budget analysts in reviewing and recommending disposition of projects and

programs from 15 Middle Eastern, North African and European countries. The total budget was over two billion dollars. In time I also supervised the Bureau Controller when the Controller's functions were decentralized to some extent to the Regional Bureaus. And, somewhat unusually, I thereby had responsibility for analyzing operating expenses as well as program funds. And also staffing levels as well as program budgets, which was unusual.

Q: That's a big program to be reviewing and overseeing.

SELLAR: Well, it was certainly big in terms of the money. The fact is, many of them were rather small in terms of numbers of activities. Egypt, however, was huge and kept getting bigger and bigger. So, averaging those out, I guess you would say, yes it was a pretty big program. Spain, for example, was just basically a military base payment, and for Israel we just wrote them a check that accounted for a lot of money, but didn't require any programming.

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Q: Well, what about some of the other countries that you were concerned within that office?

SELLAR: Actually, we had a couple of development assistance countries. I tended to concentrate on those. This is the way Langmaid wanted to do it. Initially, we had a very split, sort of schizophrenic situation in the office. Because with the Development Assistance countries, we had to take our tin cup and go begging to PPC for money and fight very hard for whatever money we could get, because the host countries were relatively advanced with the exception of Yemen. The advanced ones were Morocco and especially Tunisia. I think those were the only three. The rest of the program was ESF funded and there was never a question of getting enough money, it was just a question of, in fact, trying to hold the levels down, as I mentioned before. So Brad took that part. He gave me the hard part, the tin cup detail. But it made sense, because the ESF Programs were, of course, the most important. Yet the Development Assistance programs required a lot of time, because you had to have a totally separate budget and do all the same things in terms of programs and missions.

Q: What were the Development Assistance countries that you were working on?

SELLAR: Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen. Yemen was a fascinating situation. I spent a good deal of time on it, because its needs were so great. It was sort of rushing headlong out of the fourteenth century, as people put it. It had been completely closed to the outside world for a long time and it had only recently opened up and allowed foreigners in and decided that it wanted to develop. So they needed everything, but we didn't have the budget to do everything there.

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Q: What about some of the other developments in other countries?

SELLAR: The others were much more developed than Yemen. We've already spoken about Tunisia a little bit. They were always on the verge of being graduated, and we were always having to defend the continued existence of the program. I promoted phaseout internally, but

then when I was overruled, I would go forth and defend continuing it up the line.

Q: What argument were you making to discontinue the program?

SELLAR: Just that the money was needed elsewhere much more urgently, and what we were doing there was not all that important in terms of Tunisia's overall economy. We also often had difficulty with programs for lack of French-speaking personnel.

Q: Was there any particular focus of the program?

SELLAR: Again, a good deal of it was concerned with agriculture. We also helped with some planning assistance in the tourism sector, which appeared to be one of their most promising avenues. I think they discovered a little bed of oil at one point, which again, gave them a boost and made the continuation of the program more questionable.

Morocco was an interesting country. Great contrasts between the wealthy few and the mostly poor many. Great contrasts between the pretty sophisticated urban areas and the very undeveloped rural areas, particularly up in the mountains. But they had good farm land along the coast. I know we were working with them on wheat production and livestock. I can't remember too many of the specifics beyond that. There was PL 480 Title II, nutrition and health education and family planning.

Q: There was a political rationale program there at that time?

SELLAR: No. That was a development (DA) program. It was justifiable developmentally. Overall per capita income was sort of intermediate. It wasn't tremendously low, but it wasn't nearly as high as Tunisia or Costa Rica or some of the other advanced developing countries.

UGANDA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

CRAIG G. BUCK
USAID

Mr. Craig G. Buck, born in 1944 in Jackson, Mississippi and raised in Carthage, Texas, is a retired senior officer at USAID. Following his undergraduate education at Texas A&M, he spent a year conducting research as a Fulbright Scholar in Bolivia (1966-1967) and the following year as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Stanford (1968-1969). He later earned a M.A in Economics from Stanford in 1980. Mr. Buck first joined USAID in April 1969 as an intern in Turkey (1969-1972) and held postings as a mission director in Uganda (1980-1983), Dominican Republic (1984-1987), Peru (1989-1992), Kazakhstan (1993-1995), Bosnia (1995-1999), Kosovo (2000-2002), and Afghanistan (2002-2003). His Washington assignments include the Latin American Bureau (1972), Turkey Desk Officer (1972-1976), Office of the Senior Advisor for Narcotic Matter (1976-1977), and Egypt Desk Officer (1977-1979). Following Mr. Buck's retirement from USAID in 2003, he worked in the private sector as a contractor for AID and other developmental organizations.

Topical Focus – Post-conflict Reconstruction and USAID Mission-Building in Uganda

Q: Let's take a second on that, then. So, when you arrive in Uganda, it is a post-conflict country. To what extent did that impact what you wanted to accomplish as AID director? The fact that it was just post-conflict, and there were still signs of the conflict and perhaps ill will on various sides.

BUCK: Well, I think one of the problems was that, to some extent, Uganda had lost a generation of leaders during the times of Idi Amin, which only lasted six to eight years. But before that there had been a president, Obote, who had become increasingly authoritarian and many of the skilled people had left. So, when we arrived, there was a paucity of trained personnel to work with, although at independence there had been a large cadre of highly skilled people to promote development.

Previously, Makerere University had produced some of the finest people in all of Sub-Saharan Africa, but they had taken advantage of that, and they had moved on to the African Development Bank, or into other jobs, or they'd migrated and were reluctant, given the security circumstances, to return. So, one, we had difficulty finding government counterparts that we could relate to.

Secondly, the insecurity continued, and in fact it became increasingly difficult. The Tanzanian army pulled out four or five months after I arrived, and they, of course, had been one of the major causes of insecurity. But when they withdrew, there was no adequate police force to replace them. There was not a court system, there was not a capacity to enforce the rule of law. Subsequently, the government in power – Obote was

reelected after Idi Amin's departure. His government became increasingly intolerant of other ethnic groups, and as a result, a guerrilla movement broke out, and that began to, one, cause his security services to become increasingly authoritarian, and then they ended up with destruction. Again, property destruction, lack of a rule of law, and what have you.

So, this continued for basically all the time that I was there. I think one of the most important things was that because of the lack of security, people would not invest. Only people who could make a very quick investment, make their money at exorbitant rates, would put money into it. So, that was one of the problems. The insecurity, rule of law, lack of investment, lack of trained personnel, all were kind of factors that influenced what we were trying to do.

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Q: And over the course of that time, did the mission grow? Did USAID Washington begin to feel more confident that more people could go into it?

BUCK: Yes. That was an interesting thing. Mission management was one of the things that I began to learn while I was there. It started out with only me and the secretary, and by the time I left, we had ten or twelve more Americans, some four or six other expats, and a fairly large contingent of probably 30 to 40 Ugandans. We spent a considerable amount of time training them, getting them to recognize the issues and help us in our implementation.

So, establishing the mission, trying to deal with all of the myriad issues of establishing our own administrative set up were challenging. The embassy had no capacity to provide us with any resources, and I guess it was just a fond vision in somebody's mind at that point; it did not exist. We were completely independent in terms of our administrative operation, which provided a major learning opportunity for me, because I was not familiar –

As you know quite well, the number of regulations that are in your administrative operations are endless, and one has to be very careful about how they procure things, how they implement things, how they manage their human relations resources. So, it was all a learning experience, but we developed and grew.

Q: Did Washington understand all of the difficulties and why it was relatively hard to make progress, or very substantive progress, while you were there?

BUCK: We had sufficient communications with Washington. I went back to Washington every five or six months for consultation, or we had senior officials that would come out. We would take them around and they got to see the bigger picture. I think what they understood – The problem was that Uganda was the big disappointment. Uganda had been the pearl of Africa at its independence, and it went downhill from there. After Idi Amin's departure, there was this perception, back in Washington, that we could once again recreate the pearl of Africa.

So, I kind of started on – Well, even before I got there, people recognized, "Uh oh, it's not going to be as fast or as rapid as we had hoped." And I think during my three years there, I think people realized that things were not getting significantly better, and in fact in some areas were just as bad, if not worse, as under Idi Amin.

UKRAINE

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ANNE AARNES
USAID
PROGRAM OFFICER
KIEV, UKRAINE
(1994-1997)

Anne Aarnes was born in Summit, New Jersey in 1947. She earned her B.A. in Political Science from Oberlin College and her M.A. from George Washington University. Her work at the United States Agency for International Development took her to Pakistan, Ukraine, Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, and Kazakhstan, serving as Mission Director and Deputy Mission Director in several locations. Anne Aarnes was interviewed by Ann Van Dusen in 2017.

Topical Focus - USAID in Ukraine after Independence - 1994-1997

AARNES: AID did accomplish important things in Ukraine in those years. In the democracy and governance sector, one of the first things AID did was help set up the mechanisms for presidential and parliamentary elections, with support from IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems). NDI (National Democratic Institute) and IRI (International Republican Institute) received large grants to work with a number of local organizations and to train candidates running for the first time in multi-party elections. In the economic growth sector, the work that was done privatizing small enterprises and reforming the banking system was very important.

Q: Right. Did it surprise you that corruption in Ukraine has really flourished and that they went back to a fairly autocratic leader?

AARNES: Sadly, it was not a surprise, depressing and disheartening as that is. I think there are many things that AID, and other parts of the U.S., can help with. But there may be other factors that are deep-rooted that keep democracy from flourishing and allow corruption to continue. AID's development assistance is important, but a lot of other things have also come into play, over which AID has absolutely no control. Ukraine, especially with the Russian influence, is particularly vulnerable. On the other hand, I know that some of the FSNs have been active in politics, some of them left the mission and ran for office, and others have spouses who are very active in politics. They're still working to make Ukraine democratic. It's wonderful that they're so dedicated because, when we came to Ukraine in 1994, many of them were very afraid that everything would slip back into Stalinism.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

MARY CHAMBLISS
FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE
KIEV, UKRAINE (1981-)

DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

Mary Chambliss was born in Virginia in 1942. She received a bachelor's degree from Roanoke College and a master's from George Washington University. She worked for the US Department of Agriculture before joining the State Department. Her career included working at the International Cooperation and Development Agency and the Foreign Agricultural Service. Mary Chambliss was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.

Q: Well talk about Ukraine.

CHAMBLISS: Amazing. There were several food aid programs in Ukraine. It was a difficult country to work with. Because we were providing substantial food aid that created large local currency resources. The Ukraine and the US governments had to agree on the uses of these local currencies and that was where we ran into conflict. How many times did we go over to try to sort out with the Ukraine government officials how those resources would be used because of our concern that the resources would be diverted. In Ukraine that's probably when I, at least personally, worked as close as I ever did with State Department people. I traveled with them, we did the negotiations and jointly delivered the message - you will not use the currencies in ways they proposed. There had to be mutual agreement on the uses. USDA had the legal authority and State had the political clout. But it was one of those situations where we really worked well together especially with Bill Taylor. I don't know what Bill's doing now, last time I worked with him was on Afghanistan. Anyway, we were able to actually get the Ukrainians to do some productive things but it was one not easy. It was an eye-opener for me to go to Ukraine because the situation was really bad. The government and the people were poor. I remember the government office has almost no heat so I would often have to put my coat on during our meetings.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

SUSAN KOSINSKI FRITZ
USAID
Mission Director
Mission to Ukraine and Belarus
(2016-2020)

Susan Kosinski Fritz studied at Rutgers University and American University before entering USAID as a Presidential Management Intern in 1989. She served in many different positions in several countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. Susan Kosinski Fritz was interviewed by Carol Peasley in 2024.

Topical Focus - Countering Russian Aggression

Q: You've spoken about certain elements of the program, especially in trying to work in the east and build a development program out of what had been done earlier by OTI and through humanitarian mechanisms. But you were doing other, more normal work, in Ukraine. Can you talk about some of those major parts of the program? I know that there's a long history of doing work in health. I know there's a long history of working in the financial sector. And I suspect that you were also doing some important DG and anti-corruption work as well. So, any of those things that you'd like to talk about that you all were doing?

FRITZ: Sure, let me take a step back. We did a new strategy when I was there very early on and it was unique because we had the traditional objectives, a democracy one and an economic one. But then we created an anti-corruption objective and a countering Russian aggression objective, which are very unusual for USAID missions. But as we thought through why we were there, why are we working in the energy sector so much, for example? It wasn't the economics of it, that's not what drove us to work in the energy sector. It was to counter Russian aggression – they were weaponizing the energy sector – that was the reason energy became so important, why we worked in the sector, why we put so much money into it and why we did what we did in the sector. We helped to stabilize the grid so that they could disconnect from Russia and connect to the European Union. So it was kind of unusual that way.

Our work in the east was mostly countering Russian aggression, but it also included the work on energy. The anti-corruption objective was interesting. It wasn't part of the DG portfolio, where I think most anti-corruption work would normally reside. It was almost part and parcel of everything we did. Our health portfolio was part of the anti-corruption objective. We worked in Ukraine in the health sector for a long time, but as USAID health sector funding always is, it was very disease-specific. We had HIV-AIDS money and TB money, both of which were important but the overall sector was hugely corrupt. We had a fortunate opportunity with the appointment of a Ukrainian-American doctor as minister of health and she was a real go-getter. She wanted to clean up the sector and we saw a real opportunity to go in and help her do that. We obligated anti-corruption money into a health sector reform project that was implemented by Deloitte. We helped tackle some issues, but we didn't finish because COVID happened, but we got pretty far along in terms of helping to reform the pharmaceutical sector, which was a huge source of corruption. We helped to set up a new pharmaceutical agency that had new systems for purchasing drugs and that hired non-corrupt people and so forth. We helped them to save a lot of money and reduce corruption through that effort. We were in the process of helping the ministry to right size health sector institutions, hospitals and the like, to save money and set up a new national health insurance system for Ukraine. Budget allocations had been based on the number of beds rather than the services provided. The system was bloated with too many hospitals. That only got so far along before the Minister left and COVID happened. We had been advising them to reduce the number of hospitals, but actually with COVID, you needed more hospital beds. So I think with COVID things changed in the world a lot. I don't know what happened after that, but at least the early work that we did was pretty impactful in terms of reducing corruption.

And then we had the more traditional programs in DG and EG. In economic growth we had a lot in the agriculture sector because Ukraine has a huge agriculture sector and a lot of opportunities there. On the democracy and governance side, we had a lot of traditional programming in civil society, judicial reform, a big decentralization program that was under the radar and I think had some pretty good successes and in a pretty challenging environment. We did media work as well and some work with parliament, which we did for way too long. I just felt like after 25 years, how much more can you work with the parliament? But the evaluation we had commissioned told us that everybody who we worked with loved it. So therefore, I guess we just continue doing it. Yeah, well, that happens sometimes.

Q: I assume your new strategy went into Washington. Was there immediate consensus on the more nontraditional objectives of countering Russian aggressive aggression and anti-corruption? Or was there a debate about that in Washington?

FRITZ: Well, you know, it was interesting because the agency set up a new strategy process and we were one of the first missions to go through it. We were actually partway through it when they set up that process. My replacement as senior DAA, Margot Ellis, and Lisa Magno, head of the E&E program office as well as others, had been helping us with the strategy. So it wasn't like we sent it in and, oh, what's this? We coalesced around these ideas and decided that they seem to be the right development objectives or strategic objectives for us. They were part of that discussion so it wasn't news to them. And ultimately, the bureau adopted the countering Russian aggression strategic objective for the E&E regional strategy. I think it just makes sense in this environment. I don't think there was a lot of pushback and they definitely were part of the process so it was easier.

Q: Okay, that's actually an important lesson. If you're going to be doing something that sounds a little non-traditional, it's best to involve people early on. So, there was an election in Ukraine during this period, correct?

FRITZ: Yes, that was interesting.

Q: And that would have been in 2017 or 2018, I can't remember, when Zelenskyy was elected. And was USAID providing support in that election?

FRITZ: We were definitely part of that. The previous president, Poroshenko, was the consensus candidate coming out of the Maidan, but he was an oligarch. In the beginning, he was on board with the Maidan revolution and the reforms that civil society pushed for during that revolution. When I first got to Ukraine, it was really interesting. Civil society was sitting side by side within ministries helping to advance a new law to reform X, Y, or Z. That was very common. You had a coalition of NGOs called the Reanimation Package of Reforms, kind of an unusual name, but

they were side by side with ministry staff. Then at some point, Poroshenko decided that these civil society actors were actually looking to get into power. He came at the international community, criticizing us for supporting civil society, saying "You're just supporting those who are going to run for office in these next elections." There were some within civil society that decided to run. We couldn't control that. But going back to the relationship, it soured between Poroshenko and his administration and civil society somewhere, I would say, towards maybe within a year, year and a half of his time as president. So our ability – and the ability of civil society – to work on some of these reforms became more and more difficult.

Yes, we did work on the elections. We worked with political parties through NDI and IRI. We helped on election administration through the IFES. I talked earlier about ENEMO, a regional body of election monitoring organizations around Eastern Europe. I believe we funded ENEMO to monitor elections. So yes, we were heavily involved in supporting the process.

I think a lot of people were surprised when Zelenskyy came into office. It was a bit challenging because he was not supported in Kyiv. He was a populist, popularly elected populist president. Most of the USAID staff are intellectuals living in Kyiv – they were not happy. Not only were they not happy, but also they thought USAID should not be working with the new president. I heard murmurings of this and ended up setting up informal discussions once every couple of weeks for anybody who wanted to talk about the election and the results. They asked questions like, "Why are we working with him?" And I said, "He's saying all the right things. He's the democratically elected president.
And until he says or does anti-democratic things, we're going to be working with him. It's U.S. government policy and if you cannot abide by that, I suggest you go work somewhere else because right now, that's our policy and we will be working with him, with his team, with his staff." And we did. By the third meeting people were very, very upset. It was the last meeting we had about it, but it was the hardest. People were crying and saying that they had fought on the Maidan to speak their own language, to not be beholden to Russia. They really thought because Zelenskyy was a Russian speaker, because he had ties to an oligarch through his TV show, that he would be pro-Russian. People were seriously worried, enough to cry about this. Looking back now, it's surprising that that even happened, given where we are today in Ukraine, but it did. And it was a difficult turning point in the mission, from Poroshenko to Zelenskyy. And most surprising to me because as I mentioned earlier, Poroshenko by that time was not a reformer.

Zelenskyy brought in a lot of good people, a lot of young IT people. We've had a lot of success, or USAID has had a lot of success in bringing government to the people through IT applications, like government services. Dia is "government in a smartphone." It's an app that everybody can use to get government services. We helped with that through the Eurasia Foundation. We had really good people to work with that he brought into his administration.

Q: It's really interesting that the local staff had such strong views. Is that something that you discussed with the ambassador and with the embassy? It sounds like you handled it really well.

FRITZ: I don't know about that. I'm sure I mentioned it to the DCM because I had weekly one on one meetings, usually with the DCM. The ambassador would join when she had time, but she was really busy. It was mostly with the DCM.

Q: Okay, that's really fascinating how you handled them. That's not the kind of thing anybody gives you training on when the staff reacts that way. Did any of the FSN staff leave?

FRITZ: No.

Q: Did they see early on that he was doing some of the right stuff?

FRITZ: It took some time. Quite honestly, I think the war changed their mind on Zelenskyy. I think it took that long.

Q: Okay. So you were there during one of the more chaotic periods in U.S. foreign policy. I don't know if we want to talk about this today or whether we want to do it at a fresh session.

FRITZ: Well, we're getting to two hours. So maybe a fresh session might be better.

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Q: Okay, today is June 17, 2024. And this is interview number four with Susan Fritz. Susan, last time we'd begun to talk about your time in Ukraine and had a very interesting discussion. You had mentioned you went through a revision to the strategy and you mentioned working with the Poroshenko government early on. That strategy had included a lot of reform elements. And then there was an election in Ukraine in which Zelenskyy came in and you mentioned the concerns that your own Ukrainian staff had about his election. Was it easy to go forward with this strategy with a new host country government? Or did you have to make adjustments?

FRITZ: Let me take a step back before my time, before I arrived in Ukraine. At the time of the Maidan, the mission had just started a new strategy but everything changed with the Maidan. Previously we couldn't work with the government so our strategy was more of a civil society kind of strategy, working at the grassroots because those were the people we could work with. And the mission had a lot less money. The mission had put that strategy aside but we hadn’t really devised a new strategy and we had not gotten additional funding yet. But we sort of had a plan that we were working against and that's what I came into when I arrived. And then as you know, we developed a new strategy in about 2019, when Poroshenko was still in power and we were transitioning then to the new government shortly thereafter.

What happens in Ukraine and a lot of countries in the region when you have a new president or prime minister is that in addition to the top political echelon, a lot of the civil servants leave as well. It's a wholesale change in government so that could be a bit of a challenge. Towards the end of the Poroshenko administration we started running into roadblocks, particularly on anti-corruption reform. As I mentioned earlier, civil society was seen as a political opposition. So we were already running into some issues by the end of Poroshenko. With the Zelenskyy administration, we saw new opportunities, at least some of us saw new opportunities to engage. I would say one of the main areas that he brought in good people was on the IT side. He brought in some young tech-savvy IT experts who really wanted to advance citizen access to government through IT platforms. And they developed what they call government in a smartphone, the Dia app. And so we were able to, through our implementing partner, do a lot to advance a greater appreciation for responsiveness by the government. We helped to bring citizens and government together through this Dia platform by providing services more easily, making them more accessible and doing it in a way that reduced opportunities for corruption. So there were some opportunities too. It was challenging, but there were opportunities.

Q: But as I recall you saying that part of the new strategy was to counter Russian aggression. Hadn't Zelenskyy, as a Russian speaker, campaigned that he would be best positioned to mend fences with Russia? Did that raise questions about your strategic focus on stopping Russian aggression? Or, were our efforts so subtle that it would not have been noticed?

FRITZ: Well, as I talked about earlier, some of it was just putting many more resources into upgrading the grid, getting it prepared for detaching from the Russian grid and attaching it to the European grid. Some of the work in the east that OTI was doing and some of the early development work that we were doing in the east, that needed to be done no matter what. I would say that there was a bit of a challenge because of the change in Ukrainian government representatives in the east. It was new people, new priorities, and that was much more at the granular level because we were out there working in each of the government-controlled areas of those oblasts. And then new governors in the surrounding oblasts like Mykolaiv and elsewhere wanted our assistance as well. So that part of the transition was a little more difficult, I would say, but not impossible. It's just that you have to get to know new partners and new administrations and everything kind of comes to a standstill and all that, which I'm sure you've experienced as well.

Q: Okay, because we tend to think about political transitions only in terms of U.S. ones; we sometimes forget that there are ones in the countries where we work as well. I know that another part of the strategic approach was to build a portfolio that could be adapted as changes occurred in the country. How did you approach this, both strategically and operationally?

FRITZ: Yeah, so it was both. I would say when I first got to Ukraine, as I think I mentioned earlier, the mission was on sort of a downward path budget-wise. There were some that were thinking that it would close. What I found when I came out were very small – I would even call them boutique – projects, a million dollars here and a million dollars there. And they were very narrowly defined activities. To go from about twenty-five of those activities with maybe a total budget of I think $20 or $30 million to $180 million dollars a year was going to be difficult. And we weren't going to be able to do it by doing more of these boutique activities which also don't pivot easily. So if an opportunity came up in another area, we just couldn't do it because we couldn't get ourselves together to get our contracts in place and the like.

I'll give you a good example. One of the legacies of that approach was a contract we had with Deloitte to do customs reform. We thought customs reform was going to go somewhere because the former president of Georgia, Misha Saakashvili, had been appointed governor of Odesa Oblast. He chose customs as an area that he was going to reform and he brought in a very young dynamic reformer to work with him on that. We were still trying to get that contract in place when I arrived. When we finally signed the contract, Saakashvili had been removed as was his customs reformer. Poroshenko's guy in Kyiv running customs was very corrupt so there wasn't anything we could do with him. So I went to the ambassador and said, "This is a waste of money. We're not going to get anywhere. The reformers are gone and this guy who's heading up customs is a sleazebag." But she knew USAID pretty well and she was reluctant to let us cancel the contract because she knew how long it took to get it in place. Her thinking was that maybe today there's not a reformer, but maybe in a month or two there might be, or maybe a year from now. And how long is it going to take USAID to get an assistance vehicle in place? Eventually I convinced her that this was not a good use of our money. And so that was, again, a very narrowly defined boutique program.

Looking at some of the activities that we designed going forward, like the work that we designed out in the east, multi-dimensional economic development activities, multi-dimensional democracy governance activities, each with one contract, but multidimensional. And we said, "Okay, right now we're going to focus on these five oblasts in the east," but within the contracts, we said, "if opportunities come up elsewhere, we can move." Well, we barely got the contracts in place and there was a big opening in Mykolaiv. It was a little bit of a problem with the bandwidth of the contractors, within their own teams, but we shifted and said, "Okay, let's get OTI in initially, get them moving and then we can mobilize those contracts to come down and do some work in Mykolaiv in the south." We also made them multi-dimensional in terms of the kinds of things they could do. We made them flexible in terms of where they could work. And we had just great contracting officers who worked with us in the designs to figure out how we can make them as flexible as possible. The other thing I would say is we made these as big as we could thinking that if the funds didn't come through, we could more easily modify and reduce, but it's easier to do that, then to then add another component and another $10 million.

We did that early on in designing the energy activity. We started out with a small energy efficiency activity – maybe a couple of million dollars – and ended up with a new $65 million contract for a much broader energy security project that could pivot and meet the needs in the energy sector as they came up. The original design was much smaller, but I insisted that we add another $20-30 million to it. Everybody on the energy team was nervous going that big but I knew money was coming and the sector was extremely important developmentally and politically. We knew there was a lot of support on the Hill, and on both sides of the aisle. So we knew that the money would come at least for several years. And if we did some smart programs that had results that there would likely be more coming. So that was our approach. It seemed to work at least while I was there. It gave us a lot of flexibility. And I think Jim Hope would say that when he came in after me, that the mission was set up with some more flexible instruments that could pivot pretty easily.

Q: And that probably should always be done in these transitional situations, right?

FRITZ: Yeah, I think so. It should have been done earlier in Ukraine, but when I came out as acting AA on a couple of trips, I found an overwhelmed staff, overworked, really very, people were tired and they had just been through the Maidan and they knew people fighting out in the east – friends' kids or their sons and their daughters. I said, "We need more staff. We need to hire more local staff. We need more foreign service officers. We need the people to be able to manage these programs and we can't do one-off activities, a million dollars here, a million dollars there." We ended up staffing up, but the initial reaction I got from the mission was, well, no, we were downsizing so we can't start hiring staff. I said, "That was then, this is now. We're not downsizing anymore and won't be for the foreseeable future. So, if we don't want to work our staff to death, we've got to come up with more people and a smarter way of managing our programs."

Q: That's good. I think we sometimes forget that there have been successes on the policy reform front in Ukraine given all of the change and turmoil. I believe that may have included pension reform. Was that under the Poroshenko regime?

FRITZ: That was early on. And we did it jointly with the IMF and the World Bank. They provided the impetus because there was a lot of interest in shoring up the pension system. Ukraine was $17 billion in the hole when Yanukovych fled. Our reform didn't totally fix the problem but it did close loopholes and reduce the percentage of GDP necessary to pay out pensions. On the pension system reform itself, the work was very collaborative. We had the technical assistance that could help the government implement some of the reforms that both the World Bank and IMF were calling for and supporting with their financing. A second component was envisioned that would establish the possibility of private pensions like our TSP or 401ks but it was too hard politically to go into that second component. And you have to remember there

was a banking crisis before that in which a lot of people lost their money so the citizen demand for it wasn't quite there. So we only did the first pillar.

Q: Okay. I believe Eurasia Foundation worked alongside USAID in Ukraine. Was it a significant program at that point in Ukraine? In Russia, Eurasia localized the foundation and spun it off. Did they do the same in Ukraine? Can you talk a little bit about how Eurasia Foundation was operating?

FRITZ: Sure. Before I got there, the mission had done a procurement for an e-governance program. It included e-procurement, e-governance, and open data. Eurasia Foundation won the cooperative agreement. Years earlier, Eurasia Foundation did spin off a local organization called the East Europe Foundation in Ukraine, and they also were implementing programs with USAID funding, including our parliamentary assistance program. And then they had some small pieces of other activities from time to time.

Q: So they were both operating then?

FRITZ: Yeah. They try not to compete for the same things. And let me take a step back. I am on the board of Eurasia Foundation, so I should be very transparent about that. The local spin-off, the East Europe Foundation, was implementing the Parliamentary Assistance Program. Eurasia Foundation, the U.S.-based organization, won the cooperative agreement to do the e-governance program. That program grew, especially when Zelenskyy came in, but even before Zelenskyy, we were making some headway on a lot of aspects of e-governance. It really advanced two and threefold, maybe even more than that, when Zelenskyy came in and brought in these young tech savvy IT people and they set up the Ministry for Digital Transformation, a ministry that's specifically devoted to advancing IT solutions to government issues. Eurasia Foundation implemented that program throughout the time I was there. It is finally wrapping up this year. Eurasia Foundation received a follow-on program to do similar work, but at a much greater scale, a lot more money.

Q: Well, that was fortuitous that you had that program started when Zelenskyy came in.

FRITZ: Yeah, yeah. I wish I could take credit, but I can't. My predecessors were really smart about that and we hired a really good FSN to manage that program. So yeah, that worked really well and fortuitous that we had a great partner. And while we didn't have a champion in Poroshenko, he did have a great tech-savvy, smart guy working for him that we could and did work with. We made some progress, particularly on open data. We also shored up the storage of the e-procurement platform called ProZorro, which we also supported the expansion of. That was a huge anti-corruption tool because it put all public procurements on this transparent platform. USAID put additional funding aside to enable the Ukrainian government with Eurasia Foundation to do similar programming in other countries around the world to help them put

government in a smartphone. So the things we could do under Poroshenko, we did. And then we had more opportunities even after him. So yeah, it was good.

Q: Oh, that's good. Okay, we'll maybe move on to the elephant in the room, which is the degree to which Ukraine became a political issue in the U.S. during the period you were there. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about how that affected you all. And that would have been happening throughout 2019. Is that correct?

FRITZ: Right, it was spring 2019, it started to unfold. Let me talk about that part. And then there's an earlier part of the history with USAID. It was devastating to observe. I was not front and center. I didn't testify, but several of my colleagues did. All of us observed the very disturbing and upsetting way the ambassador was removed. Any president has the ability to remove an ambassador for any reason, so it wasn't that, but it was the lies around it, the made-up stories in the Hill newspaper. I remember somebody forwarded me an article from that newspaper and it was false. It was talking about what Ambassador Yovanovitch had or had not done. She was accused of bad-mouthing Trump, which she never did. She was accused of all kinds of things. And so you had the Hill newspaper, then you had the so-called reporters on Fox News repeating what was in the Hill newspaper, which wasn't true. And then you had Donald Jr. tweeting about our ambassador saying some pretty awful things. And for somebody like Masha Yovanovitch, one of the top-notch diplomats in the foreign service, someone with such integrity. She was very, very careful dealing with a difficult situation where you had the U.S. ambassador in Europe, the U.S. ambassador in Germany, you had Kurt Volker, you had the White House, you had people from all those groups trying to intervene related to U.S. policy in Ukraine and run our relationship with the Ukrainian government. That's the job of the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. So she was trying to navigate that. It was horrible, but also fascinating to see how that just unraveled from a false story to being repeated and repeated and then all of a sudden it becomes true—watching lies become disinformation in real time. She had come back to the United States to accept an award, I think from the National Defense University. That's when she was told, "Wait. Do not go back to post. Cool your jets and wait for further direction." And finally, when she was given further direction, it was to go pack out and come back to the United States. We were all horrified to watch this happen to her. She did not come into the office that week. She packed up her things. She came to give a farewell speech to the embassy community. I'm getting choked up thinking about it now. I cried. I cried for her. I cried for our country. Just to see somebody like that whose name was dragged through the mud so viciously.

Most of my colleagues got called up to the Hill. Bill Taylor came in behind her as Chargé. I told Ambassador Taylor that the (only) silver lining of Masha's removal was that I got an opportunity to work with him. I had never worked with him before. I wish there were other circumstances under which that would have happened. But yeah, so they all went up and testified and yeah, so that was that. And it was gut wrenching, the whole thing. It was so upsetting.

Q: Did it affect your ability to work with the Ukrainians?

FRITZ: Less so for the USAID mission, just because we were working more technically. But certainly U.S. policy towards Ukraine. I think it was challenging for my embassy colleagues more so, but I wasn't in the middle of that. But the United States lost a lot of credibility, and that part of it did affect us.

Q: I was just curious how much confidence they would have in dealing with individuals on controversial issues given all that was happening. To what extent did this affect what USAID was doing?

FRITZ: So it did, but way earlier and here's how. The day I arrived in Ukraine to take up my position as the mission director, the DCM had reached out and said, "Hey, you know, there's an article in one of the local papers. It's written by a parliamentarian who oftentimes accuses us of things that aren't true. Can you just follow up on this? There's a story about USAID and she's talking about USAID and Burisma being close." Burisma is the oligarch-owned company that Hunter Biden was on the board of. So you know how it is, checking in, getting access to your computer, you're just getting oriented at post. I was meeting all the heads of the different sections and so forth. So I asked John Pennell, my deputy, to look into it. He wasn't aware of anything and talked to our energy folks in the economic growth office. After he followed up, he said, "No, nothing now. Apparently, we had a relationship last year but that has ended." So this was late July, early August in 2016 that this was playing out. Every year our energy program would have an awards program for, I think it was journalists that covered renewable energy issues and maybe local governments that did any kind of renewable energy projects in their cities. We had an agreement with Burisma that they would provide the awards such as TVs or something like that, nice prizes for this event. When John had checked with the economic growth folks they said that we were no longer doing it. But a couple of weeks later, John says, "Never guess what I've just found out. Apparently, we are still working with Burisma. And we're planning on doing this again in September." I said, "No, we're not. We're not doing this. Let's talk to the implementing partner and let them know we're not doing this. No way we can work with Burisma. This cannot be associated with USAID in any way, shape or form." So we did cut the relationship or our partner cut the relationship.

Unfortunately, Burisma had some pretty high-powered lobbyists who showed up in Kiev and did a full court press on me and on the DCM saying that Zlochevsky, the oligarch who owned Burisma, has never been convicted in court of any corruption so there's no reason for USAID to pull out of this relationship and blah, blah, blah. We stuck to our guns. I got a lot of support from the DCM. I talked to him about it before we pulled the plug and we agreed that it was the right thing to do. There was a lot of nasty blowback. They were okay to me, but the DCM took a big hit from these lobbyists. So that was our relationship with Burisma. The DCM mentioned it in his testimony and he said the story's out there already but nobody really followed up on it. It had

nothing to do with Hunter Biden—our implementing partner established the relationship on their own. It never came to the surface or anything after that, but we did have that early on relationship.

Q: Okay, but you never got any pressure from Washington to do anything?

FRITZ: We let our Washington folks know in the Bureau. We kept them apprised of things in case they blew up. Fortunately, it didn't come back to bite us. It came back to bite others, but not us.

Q: Just another aspect of the politics of USAID, whenever it works in a high priority country. Did you have a lot of Congressional delegations (codels) that came to Ukraine? If so, could you talk a little bit about how you manage those codels. Were they bipartisan, or did they come separately?

FRITZ: So no, they usually came together. They were usually managed by the political section and then if there was a USAID dimension to it, we'd have a control officer for that meeting or that event. Usually they were interested in the military relationship, the intelligence relationship, and what was going on in the east so very rarely did we get pulled in. The most memorable codel was when Senators Amy Klobuchar, John McCain, and Lindsey Graham came out over the winter holidays – it was really cold. I think maybe they came over New Years. This was when Poroshenko was still in power. When they met with him, he invited them to go out with him to the front lines, but they had not brought that kind of gear. The control officer was running around getting boots and socks and all kinds of stuff. The ambassador accompanied the three senators to the east. We were left with the staff who didn't get to go on that trip and so we briefed and went out to dinner with them. We had regular briefings of a lot of high-level military from the United States. There was always a country team to brief them or State Department or the NSC. When Zelenskyy was inaugurated Senator Ron Johnson from Wisconsin, Kurt Volker (who was U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations) and I think the U.S. ambassador to the EU, Gordon Sondland, came out to represent the United States.

Q: Did Vice-President Pence go? Maybe not.

FRITZ: No, he did not. And so we briefed the three I mentioned when they first came out. It was a small group, like three, three or four of us who briefed them. So we did a lot of briefings, but not a lot of show and tell of USAID projects. I was most impressed with General Mattis when he came to Kyiv. He requested to be briefed by the broader country team, so it was a room full of people. He listened intently to each briefer, and asked each person if they spoke one of the local languages as well as other questions about their background. He is extremely smart, personable, and exuded leadership. Briefing him was a highlight of my time in Ukraine.

And then I did a lot of briefings when I came back to DC from time to time. There was a lot of interest on the Hill. I did a lot of staff briefings, which I grew to have a real appreciation for how smart a lot of those staffers are and how up to date they are on what's going on. They knew just as much as I did. And I was on the ground getting my hands dirty (literally with our agriculture work) overseeing all of our projects. They were very well-versed in what was going on in Ukraine and had a good understanding of the lay of the land.

Q: When you did have to do briefings and consultations on the Hill, was the focus often on what you were doing on the anti-corruption front? Was that absolutely a priority?

FRITZ: Yeah, that was absolutely. That was the biggest priority. Some interest in what we're doing in the east as well, but the anti-corruption part was front and center.

Q: Can you say a bit more about what we were doing on that front? And were there any elements you saw to be more effective than others?

FRITZ: Yeah, so I haven't talked about them as anti-corruption programs, but the big Eurasia Foundation TAPAS program -- the e-governance, e-procurement, and open data program that I described earlier – were all part of the anti-corruption work we were supporting. The e-procurement platform, Prozorro, closed opportunities for corruption in procurement, for skimming off the top. The Ministry of Economy estimates that to-date over $70 million have been saved since the establishment of Prozorro. Also, previously I spoke about our health reform program. Those were the two centerpieces of our anti-corruption work and I believe the ones that had the most impact. We had another project, Support to Anti-Corruption Champion Institutions (SACCI) that worked with the National Agency of Corruption Prevention (NACP) and with various government institutions to help them establish anti-corruption action plans. We also did a lot on judicial reform. I would say judicial reform and independence are more long-term prospects. There's a lot of old guard which is really hard to weed out as you're trying to reform a judiciary, but we were working in that space as well.

Q: Right, that's important. Were you doing any work with an anti-corruption commission or anything along that front?

FRITZ: We were. So there were four pieces to the new anti-corruption architecture established after the revolution: the Anti-Corruption Court, the NACP, the Special Anti-corruption Prosecutor (SAPO), and the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) which was an FBI-like investigative body. INL was helping NABU and SAPO and we both helped stand up the Anti-corruption Court. We had different pieces of it, so we coordinated.

The NACP, which USAID was taking the lead on, was another interesting case. This was towards the end of the Poroshenko administration. SACCI was one of the projects that was slow

in the procurement process. By the time that contract was just about set, we were getting ready to roll out the program with the NACP. I had gone to meet with the head of the NACP who was a Poroshenko appointee. At that point we weren't helping them at all. They were rumored to be politically targeting who they were investigating. Also, one of the conditions for one of the sovereign loan guarantees that we had provided to Ukraine was related to establishing an e-declaration system whereby public servants had to declare their assets. This would enable civil society and media to track whether a civil servant was getting wealthier than their salary would suggest. That system was supposed to be run by this anti-corruption agency, but the system had been dismantled. It had been created by the United Nations, I believe, and then dismantled by this anti-corruption agency led by a Poroshenko appointee.

We were sitting on a bunch of computers that were sitting in boxes in Odesa Oblast, where Saakashvili had been trying to reform the customs service. Before they were even able to get everything set up, Saakashvili and his advisor were sacked. So we collected those computers that OTI was providing them. Before our SACCI contract with lots of resources rolled out, we thought, "Why don't we offer them to NACP and see what they do with them?" Ostensibly that was the purpose of my meeting with the head of the NACP. I had asked her, "How do you select people to investigate?" She said, "We act on accusations." I said, "You don't have a risk-based system whereby you look at the most probable or fishy cases? She was very open about going after their political rivals and I was horrified. I said, "Well, thank you. This meeting has been very helpful. I'm sorry we can't provide assistance to you at this moment. This is not an agency that we want to work with, the way you're working, the way you're working both your declaration system and then how you identify who you're going to investigate or audit."

There were several commissioners that ran this agency. There were some good people on that commission and they were quite frustrated that she was the head of it. They also were in that meeting. This was not something that I was going to go public with, but rather, we planned to quietly step away from this agency. I walked out of the meeting and was ambushed by media. I played it safe, saying we had a nice meeting, we just had discussion about what the agency's doing and just left it at that. By the time I got back to the office, one of the other commissioners had put on Facebook, "USAID cuts all assistance to the anti-corruption agency" and it became like this big hullabaloo. But we didn't change our decision not to provide assistance. Again, it goes back to what you were asking about earlier about these instruments that just couldn't pivot. We ended up doing some other anti-corruption activities, but it was really working at the margins. We couldn't work with our main partner. We simply couldn't work with them. They were not reformists.

Q: Right; that's an important thing to document. But I think picking some areas such as e-governance and procurement where you can have meaningful impact and it's not dependent on this political system is probably a valuable lesson. I suspect it is often easy to fritter away resources on politically ineffective central agencies.

FRITZ: Yes.

Q: What a fascinating story.

FRITZ: Yeah, it was an exciting time to be there. We did some really good work. We had impact. That's really richly rewarding when you can see the impact of the work and the funding that you put out. Not everything was a huge success, but we had enough of them that really inspired us to do more. So it was a great time to be there.

Q: I didn't ask when we were talking about the politically difficult period, if you were getting the support you needed from USAID Washington. Did they understand the stress that this was putting on the field?

FRITZ: Yeah. I mean, how could they support us? It wasn't really much. We just kind of circled the wagons, had the resident legal officer and our energy guys sit down and document the facts so that if any questions came up, we were prepared. The bureau front office was aware but there wasn't really much they could do, unfortunately.

Q: Anything else on Ukraine that you would like to mention?

FRITZ: Not really. I did want to mention that I left during COVID, and that was a terrible way to end a career as I left in March.

Q: Right when COVID started then. Did you have to go through working virtually? Or did that begin later?

FRITZ: No. So what happened was the embassy was very nervous and by this time Bill Taylor had left we had a Chargé who was new to the region, was new to Ukraine, and it was a very hard position to put anybody in. She was doing the best she could. But then the crisis hit with COVID. The CDC representative at post told the country team that it was likely at least one of us would die from COVID so they were kind of in panic mode which was not helpful.

The embassy health unit and I believe the CDC people went through our health records. My son, Cody, has type 1 diabetes, and my husband was at that time in his early seventies. So the health unit told me that my son and husband had to go on the next plane because they were high risk. At this point, there were no planes out of Kyiv. So we thought, “Okay, well my tour's up in July so I'll stay here with Kai (my daughter). And Mike will go home with Cody, and we'll follow in July.” I was quarantining, working from home because both Mike and I had just come back from Germany on work trips. My kids were both seniors in high school.

On a Monday morning at about 11 o'clock, we got a call telling us that there was going to be a plane taking off at about three o'clock. I couldn't talk my husband into it. He was not ready to go psychologically. My daughter talked him into taking my son. And so they packed up and left. About two weeks later, we had another call from the health unit saying anybody with asthma had to go. My daughter and I both have asthma so we packed our bags and left.

We were fortunate to have a place to land. We have a beach house in New Jersey that was unoccupied since it was in the off-season, so that's where we went. I handed over my duties immediately to my deputy, Susan Kutor. She said, "You can't run a mission from New Jersey. And she was right. Although as painful as it was, I handed the reins to her. The kids did school virtually and I worked virtually from there. We got up at two in the morning every day until they graduated and I finished my tour. Basically I worked with the foreign service officers on their annual evaluation forms (AEFs). I backed up Susan where I could. I also organized virtual happy hours and tried to boost morale with things like that. And then I ended my foreign service career virtually at the end of July. The mission had a nice virtual send off. It was a hard way for my kids to finish high school, graduating virtually.

Q: I hadn't realized that the embassies were proactively asking people to leave.

FRITZ: Our CDC guy at post was extremely worried and I think communicated that to the Chargé. I think that just got people so overly cautious. The Ukrainian health system is not great either. There was concern that if anybody had a non-COVID illness or my son, God forbid, had some issue related to his diabetes, that there would be no place for him to go. You do what you have to do and you think you need to do for your family, so that's what we did.

Q: So, but that was managed post by post? It wasn't a worldwide policy to be directing people out.

FRITZ: Yeah.

Q: So did you then retire?

FRITZ: Yes, I did. I retired.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

E. WAYNE MERRY
U.S. Army Russian Institute Officer
Garmish-Partenkirchen, Germany
(1990-1991)

Mr. Merry was born and raised in Oklahoma. He was educated at the Universities of Kansas and Wisconsin, and Princeton University. After serving briefly at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, and in Washington, D.C. at the Department of the Treasury, in 1972, he joined the State Department Foreign Service. In addition to assignments on Capitol Hill, at the United Nations in New York City, and at the Departments of State and Defense in Washington, DC, Mr. Merry served abroad in Berlin, Tunis, and Moscow. A Russian language speaker, he was a specialist in Soviet Union affairs. E. Wayne Merry was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.

Topical Focus – Ukrainian Independence

MERRY: Still the Soviet Union. We went to Moscow, Kiev and the Crimea and, again, it was pretty obvious that things were falling apart. This was particularly true in Kiev, where the on-the-street manifestations of nationalism – of rejection of the Soviet Union – and of movement toward an independent Ukraine were just blatant and unmistakable, and so was the lack of any credible effort by the Ukrainian authorities to do anything about it. This was a few weeks before President Bush went to Kiev and gave his so-called "Chicken Kiev" speech in which he warned against "suicidal nationalism" in the Soviet Union. It was pretty clear on our trip that nationalism, whether destructive or otherwise, was very advanced in Ukraine.

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MERRY:...In late October 1991, George Kolt, who was the National Intelligence Officer for the Soviet Union—he was the leading Soviet specialist at CIA—sent a memo to the White House, to the NSC, saying that Ukraine might become an independent country within five years. The leading Soviet specialist at the National Security Council, Edward Hewitt, rejected this entirely. The two of them—they're both now deceased—Kolt and Hewitt, got into what reportedly was quite a confrontation over this issue. They were two of the most senior Soviet watchers in the United States, and, in fact, probably the two most senior specialists on Soviet affairs in the government, and they were arguing into early November of 1991 whether Ukraine might become an independent state within five years. It happened within less than five 202 weeks. They had been told that Ukraine was heading toward independence through a national referendum at the end of November in detailed reporting both from the consulate in Kiev and from the embassy in Moscow. The Russians knew Ukraine would be independent before the end of the year, whether Russia liked it or not. Washington still perceived the Soviet Union as an intact and viable entity when its demise within weeks was no more than a formality. By mid-autumn we could see this, quite vividly, because we were at the very heart of the process. Washington was in denial. For example, having refused for decades to recognize the forcible incorporation of the Baltic republics into the Soviet Union by Stalin, the United States was one of the last Western governments actually to welcome them back as independence states in 1991 for fear this might somehow undermine Gorbachev.

…The result was we did many more things, say, with Ukraine than we did with Russia. Not only were the Ukrainians willing to take our charity, they usually padded the bill rather extensively as well.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ERIC CHETWYND
Research Triangle Institute (RTI) & USAID
Director
Municipal Finance and Management Project (MFM)
Kharkov, Lvov, Ternopil, Ukraine
(1992–1996)

Eric Chetwynd, Jr. was born in Massachusetts in 1936. After studying Biology at Northeastern University for one year, he served three years in the Army before returning to finish his undergraduate degree and focusing on Economics. He earned a Masters Degree in South and Southeast Studies from American University and later received a Ph.D. in Economics from Duke University. Chetwynd joined USAID in 1962 through the Asia Overseas Intern Program. He worked in Indonesia and Korea. He later served as Deputy Director and then Director of successor offices in the Central Bureau until his retirement in 1992. Post-retirement, he directed the USAID-sponsored Municipal Finance and Management Project for three years, focusing on democratic governance reform in Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asia.

Topical Focus – Democratic governance, and free market economic systems in Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia

CHETWYND: The first year after retiring I did a lot of traveling. My wife took the year off from her law practice and we decided to see what retirement was really like. It was good. However, at the end of that year, I was asked by RTI if I would be the Director of a Municipal Finance and Management Project (MFM), which was a $25 million project with technical assistance to Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia. I wound up working intensively the next three years in a part of the world that I had never thought I would see. I remember the first trip to Russia. Ron Johnson, the Vice President of RTI, Ted Priftis, the USAID project manager and I found ourselves standing in front of the onion dome of St. Basils on Red Square and we just sort of looked at each other and said, "Can you believe that we are actually here?" It just seemed unreal. That was a project that drew on a lot of my past experience in municipal development and management. It was a three year contract and, like I said, it was very intense. We had offices in nine cities in this region. Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod and Vladivostok in Russia, Kharkov, Lvov and Ternopil in Ukraine, Atyrau in Kazakhstan and Karakul in Kyrgyzstan.

Q: With personnel assigned to all these areas?

CHETWYND: Yes. We had local and American staff in all nine offices.

Q: What was the project supposed to do?

CHETWYND: The project was supposed to assist the cities in coming up with a system of financial management and municipal management that was more consistent with a democratic system of governance and a free market economic system. We did a lot of computer systems work in these cities. We think of the Russians as being so advanced technologically, and yet they were really operating almost in the dark ages when it comes to management. One of the reasons for that is that municipal management was really a very low priority under the old system. Most of the decisions were made at the national level. The communist party was very much involved in decision making up and down the line. The local government was not responsive to the local citizens, as such. The city was managed from the center through local representatives of central ministries and were overseen by the communist party, which had a parallel organization at all levels of government.

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Q: In what areas that you were trying to bring about change and in which did they seem to be the most responsive ?

CHETWYND: They loved the new hardware and software and they were very eager to come up to speed in that department.

Q: What did they use it for?

CHETWYND: They used it for the new systems of management that we were giving them. For example in Nizhny Novgorod, we installed the same system of financial management as we use, for example, in Chicago, Los Angeles and Dallas. It's a system that has a lot of transparency, has a lot of audit trails and accountability. It has double entry bookkeeping (which was new to them) and all kinds of things that they were in no way accustomed to using and to which they were sometimes resistant. I mean I can appreciate the difficulty that they are having today negotiating with them to give up on their time tested principles and MOs.

One example of this we encountered while installing this new financial management system in Nizhny Novgorod. It involved their taking a financial management software program from American Management Systems (AMS) that was licensed to AMS. They had to sign the license agreement and this was something that was just not part of their culture. They did not understand using but not owning the software. We were giving them the stuff, why couldn't they have access to the code, change it, sell it, do anything that they wanted to do with it. So after three months of inaction, they sent back the license agreement totally changed. They had even changed the format for it from full page to three columns. They had completely rewritten it...completely! And you can imagine the reaction of the legal office of American Management Systems. You can't tinker even a little bit with a license agreement. .

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Q: You didn't even start out with a concept of this kind of relationship in which it was not just negotiations; it was also a different cultural phenomenon.

CHETWYND: They had some valid points, for example, the standard license agreement will reference some commonly accepted state code as the basis for arbitration. In this case New York State is the one that AMS uses because it is a very commonly accepted code in this country. The Russians said, "This doesn't make any sense at all. What are you going to do, send the state police out here if something goes wrong?" So, in the end we went with the Geneva Convention arbitration system and they were satisfied. We made a few concessions like this and in the end that project went very well. AID got into a dissemination phase where we spread these MFM activities out to a number of different cities. My successor worked with at least twelve different cities in Russia and got it to the national level in Kyrgyzstan and to adoption by the Association of Mayors in the Ukraine. A lot of national level legislation is still going on today as a result of this project. It was very successful.

Q: What were some of the other components? You talked about financial management systems, computer systems, were there other components of reform?

CHETWYND: Yes, we did different things. For example in Moscow we came up with a reform of the ambulance service there. In Vladivostok and in cities in the Ukraine we helped them establish economic development offices and regional economic development authorities.

Q: How did you decide? Were these something that they wanted help with?

CHETWYND: We would work with the municipal administration, with the mayors and so on, in an attempt to come up with priorities. They would usually have a wish list of things. The USAID Missions also had their ideas of what the priorities should be. We worked very closely with the mayors and with the Missions and with our contractor resources to come up with priority areas. We had certain mandates within the contract -- municipal finance, municipal management and municipal development. I know that's pretty broad, but would look for those areas of overlap between what the city and the USAID wanted and what the project would allow. For example, in Kharkov, Ukraine, one of our key activities was a reform of the personnel management system of the city. This included standardized job descriptions, competitive hiring procedures, how you set the salaries of city employees and employee evaluation system.

Q: How did they deal with the decentralization of authority? Was that an issue?

CHETWYND: That was an issue in all of the cities. In all of the cities they were fighting for more authority. For example, in Kyrgyzstan we developed the first city charter of the country. The President was very enthusiastic about it and wanted to pick it up as a national model for all of the cities in Kyrgyzstan. In Ukraine we did a lot of work in helping to set up the Association of Mayors, which now is the Association of Cities. That organization did quite a bit of lobbying at the national level to try and improve the autonomy of the cities.

This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on May 7, 1999.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ERIC CHETWYND
Research Triangle Institute (RTI) & USAID
Consultant
Ukraine
(1999)

Eric Chetwynd, Jr. was born in Massachusetts in 1936. After studying Biology at Northeastern University for one year, he served three years in the Army before returning to finish his undergraduate degree and focusing on Economics. He earned a Masters Degree in South and Southeast Studies from American University and later received a Ph.D. in Economics from Duke University. Chetwynd joined USAID in 1962 through the Asia Overseas Intern Program. He worked in Indonesia and Korea. He later served as Deputy Director and then Director of successor offices in the Central Bureau until his retirement in 1992. Post-retirement, he directed the USAID-sponsored Municipal Finance and Management Project for three years, focusing on democratic governance reform in Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asia. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on May 7, 1999.

Topical Focus – Strengthening Public Participation in Ukraine

CHETWYND: Now, more recently, I have been working in Ukraine on a program for the cities to prepare proposals for the World Bank and other international lenders. The part that I've been working on, in fact my wife, a lawyer, has been working with me as a team, is how to get the public involved in the project selection and development and in the project preparation process. It was basically, how to introduce and strengthen the local public participation element in selected cities that were being readied to apply for World Bank and international for municipal public works.

Q: Community support.

CHETWYND: That's right. Because no lender is going to go in there without public support for a project because they think that a lack of public support could lead to early default.

Q: You were training local people to do this?

CHETWYND: Yes, we were helping them to do public surveys, to do focus groups of various stakeholders, to do stakeholder analysis and identify the stakeholders. We worked with them to hold public hearings and incorporate public hearings into project selection and design.

Q: Whom were you working with ?

CHETWYND: Well, we were working as part of a Research Triangle Institute team. Of course it was a USAID sponsored program. But on the recipient's side, we worked with the mayor and the staff in two pilot cities. My first job was to head-up a selection team in which we went in there and selected two of the four candidate cities to participate in this program. Now we're working with the mayor and his staff and his setup committees for this activity. The committees include representatives of private and voluntary organizations and other stakeholder groups as well as members of the city staff. We train trainers in participatory approaches and then go in and work with the city resources and train them. Included in the tools that are conveyed are surveys, focus groups and public hearings. Public hearings are coming up now so we go back out there in September. And, that's the way it's gone since I left AID.

USAID DEMOCRACY PROGRAMMING

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NEIL A. LEVINE
Chief
Governance Division, Center for Democracy
Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA)
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
(2000–2007)

Neil A. Levine was born in Teaneck, New Jersey, and raised in Rockville, Maryland. He graduated from Earlham College and earned a master's degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. After working on Capitol Hill for Congressman Edward Feighan and the House Foreign Affairs Committee, he joined USAID in 1993, where he held senior leadership positions including Deputy Director for Central American Affairs, Chief of the Governance Division, and Director of both the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation and the Office of Democracy and Governance. Over his career, he focused on democracy promotion, governance, anticorruption, and conflict management across Latin America and beyond. This interview was conducted by Carol Peasley on February 21, 2022.

Topical Focus – USAID Democracy Center Restructuring and Institutional Backstop Creation

Q: You went into this new position shortly before the election. There was a change in administration in 2001, and I know that that ultimately led to a restructuring. Did the change in Administration lead to other changes in priority? Also, do you recall the discussions when the Democracy Center, which was part of the Global bureau, moved to the new bureau for conflict and humanitarian assistance. Do you recall the discussion that took place in making that change?

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. I would say that, first of all, going back to my every two-year conversation with Jennifer and finally going down to the Democracy Center, we worked together for six months before the elections and then, she was out. So, that was a long incubation and then very little time of overlap.

The creation of the DCHA bureau, Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, happened fairly quickly. And I would say, I don't know if it healed over. It wasn't a wrenching kind of thing, at least for me. Our day-to-day function changed very little. We were certainly wholly moved into this new bureau. It suffered from, I guess more so in terms of not having a front office that was focused on our issues. That wasn't the case in the Global bureau. In the Global bureau front office, every so often your day would come up as democracy and you would be able to get a principal involved in one of your issues. But they were even more spread across

development issues in the G bureau front office. The problem in the DCHA universe is that there is always a more urgent crisis going on that calls on the attention of the administrator. And while there's a devoted deputy assistant administrator, they—oftentimes you need a Senate-confirmed principal to carry the weight of the agency into these discussions, and those folks are often busy on—today it would be Ukraine, let's say.

Q: Yes; who was head of the Democracy Center when the move was made? Did that person move on to head up the office in DCHA?

LEVINE: Jerry Hyman was the political appointment there. And then—

Q: And you retained the same kind of divisions with governance and actions?

LEVINE: Yes, there was no real change under the DCHA formulation.

Q: And the assistant administrator was Roger Winter – I believe he spent much of his time on Sudan, as I recall.

LEVINE: Yeah, Roger Winter at first.

The DAA was Paul Bonicelli, who was largely an academic, and was fairly hands-off on the day-to-day running of the office, although he took a real inordinate amount of interest in our travel budget.

Q: So, you didn't really see any significant change, then, with the—

LEVINE: I think I would say there was—there were two—there was one personnel change that's important, and then some policy changes that were very important and relevant to history. The internal change was the creation of a legitimate democracy officer backstop or—now, if—and it wasn't even a democracy—they created a backstop for the bureau, which is problematic in itself in that the bureau is a mixed bag of specialties. Very unlike Global Health, for example.

Q: Yes; it was a very mixed bag. There's a difference between humanitarian assistance and democracy.

LEVINE: Right. And so, if you're sitting—so we created a—what was called the Crisis, Stabilization, and Governance backstop, CSG Backstop 76. And that accorded with the formulation in DCHA, which doesn't exist in the field. And so, the theory of the case was that in the course of your career you would likely spend time in a stable developing country, a country in transition, and at some point in your existence it would encounter a natural disaster in which the skills of a humanitarian response officer would be needed. The problem is that that's not how we staff—that's not what the Foreign Service tends to do. It staffs heavily in the steady state development country and the bulk of positions are democracy officers, and there are very few U.S. direct hire humanitarian response devoted—it's all program-funded contracted personnel.

Q: Yes.

LEVINE: Which makes sense for surges and everything else. So, there was a classic disconnect of form following function in the creation of the backstop, which they're in the process, as I understand it, of unwinding today.

The other structural problem is that the policy around democracy issues in specific countries really calls for an assistant administrator to represent that area and so, we were always underrepresented, I thought, by level and bodies in the interagency meetings when we were in DCHA. That—not everybody agrees with that view, but I think for folks who come out of that tradition, they certainly felt different, could point to examples of that happening.

The dominant policy issues were in Iraq and Afghanistan, What I observed was that when the country goes to war and it's a military mission under the direction of the Department of Defense, the concerns about reconstruction, post-war what happens next were not adequately addressed, even by the best efforts of the State Department up to the Secretary of State. And that all has been well-documented. What I would say was that AID had tried and failed to get its best analysis into the interagency deliberations to raise some of the issues that were likely to unfold and did unfold.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

JOSEPH F. STEPANEK
USAID
Mission Director to Zambia
Lusaka, Zambia
(1994-1996)

Joseph F. Stepanek was born in Texas and grew up in various countries in Asia. He has obtained a BA, MA, and PhD all in economics at the University of Colorado and University of Minnesota. Dr. Stepanek joined USAID in 1971 and was posted in a variety of positions in Bangladesh, Tanzania, Indonesia, and Kenya. He later served as Chief of the Development and Planning Office in the Latin America Bureau, as well as Mission Director in both Tanzania and Zambia. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on December 29, 1997.

Topical Focus – Development of a Multiparty System Post-President Kenneth Kaunda

Q: What was the situation when you arrived in Zambia?

STEPANEK: It was one of great hope that the new government, which had won a free and fair election from Kenneth Kaunda, was sustaining its economic policy and implementing broader, democratic reforms. The Zambian government sustained the economic reform program, but not the political pledge.

Q: This was under Frederick Chiluba?

STEPANEK: Yes. So, as in Tanzania, I inherited a program that I liked very much. I worked with it and shaped it. One part of that puzzle was a $15 million democracy

portfolio. This gave us entry to all of the political "actors" in the country.

Q: What were you trying to do under that program?

STEPANEK: In a nutshell, to provide funding to make it possible for "alternative voices" to be heard. Not so much opposition parties, of course, but to provide training to opposition parties to "level the playing field" and provide technical assistance on how to run a political party and so on. Also, to provide resources for NGO [Non Governmental Organization] monitoring groups and civics education. This covered basic civics education, involving women's groups and so forth.

We monitored the course of political reforms which the government had pledged itself to carry out, like the privatization of the press, for instance, and streamlining cabinet processes.

Q: You were doing this in cooperation with the government or separately.

STEPANEK: Some of it was in cooperation with the government and some of it was not. When the government manipulated the constitution to prevent Kenneth Kaunda from running, which happened in the middle of 1996, we and other aid donors decided to send "signals" that we disapproved of this "backtracking" on democratic processes. I helped to draft a statement which was approved by the NSC [National Security Council] and which announced that we were cutting off some of the project support to the Zambian government. So that was an education.

Q: Did it have an effect?

STEPANEK: I suppose not. However, I was instrumental in convincing the aid donors not to provide budget support to the Zambian Government. Budget support was all cut off, and I take some credit for that achievement. In that sense all of our taxpayers were better off. Project aid continues, and the aid donors, as a group, watched the political situation very carefully. As you know, Kenneth Kaunda was jailed on Christmas Eve of 1996.

Q: Meantime, were the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund proceeding with the economic side of it?

STEPANEK: Yes, and Chapter 7 of my book covers more than you want to know about that. It's all spelled out. It was an "ugly story." The Bank and the Fund are concerned about maintaining stability and maintaining the flows of aid donor funds to maintain the debt repayments on schedule. It's not a pretty picture.

Q: Meanwhile, did we reinstate our balance of payments support to Zambia?

STEPANEK: No, and, to the best of my knowledge, there is no balance of payments support from any aid donor. I think that all of the aid donors agree that it's a pretty messy situation, created by President Chiluba. Meanwhile, project aid continues.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

PETER O. SELLAR
Reflections on Democracy and Development
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Global/Multiple Regions
(1993, Retirement)

Peter O. Sellar was born in Connecticut and grew up in New Jersey. He graduated from Harvard University with a degree in American History and Literature and later completed a master's degree at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. After joining USAID in 1963 as a Management Intern, he served in a wide range of positions over a 30-year career, including assignments in Guinea, Liberia, and Washington. His Washington postings included senior roles in the Africa Bureau, the Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation, the Near East Bureau, and the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, where he worked on the Central America Initiative and helped develop USAID's Democracy Program. He retired in 1993 after serving as Senior Program Officer in the Office of Democratic Initiatives. Following his USAID career, he consulted on democracy and governance programs in Guyana and Nepal and authored a paper on USAID's first decade of democracy promotion. Throughout his career, he focused on program planning, democracy promotion, governance, and development policy. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on January 21, 1999.

Topical Focus – Reflections on USAID's Democracy Programming and Its Global Impact

Q: Well, let's take a few minutes to wrap up the interview. How do you assess your overall experiences in AID work?

SELLAR: Well, I thought it was, as Kennedy said back in 1963, "a proud and lively" career. At that time, like others, I felt very involved and idealistic about turning the world around in short order. Certainly the work we did was important, and certainly it was interesting. There were always different sectors that one had to try to master to some degree or other. To me, as an intellectual dilettante, I never got tired of that, and I particularly enjoyed things like working with the academics on the democracy strategies. There were arid spells along the way, of course. Certainly I should not have stayed in Near East DP for nine years.

Q: You had a problem with the way the personnel system operated, constantly having to move on in the earlier days before you really got established. You had nine years in one place, but you were locked in there and in the other cases you weren't there long enough. So, you said in one sense that the personnel system was not very effective in using its talented people.

SELLAR: Well, I don't think anybody's ever had anything very good to say about the AID personnel system, but at the same time, they were just responding to pressures that came from

elsewhere in terms of RIFs.

Q: RIFs and the Obey Amendment and one thing or another. And reorganizations and so on.

SELLAR: Yes. I don't think that the personnel system had much to do with reorganizations. That would be a new Administrator or a new theory coming from somewhere. My career certainly does not look like the average Foreign Service Officer's career, where he spends two to four years in one country and then goes to another country for about the same time, interspersed with assignments in Washington.

Q: Your assignments were all very different.

SELLAR: Yes, but I didn't mind that. The Joint Commission job was an interesting one, but I have no passion for the Middle East really. I was happy to move to Latin America when I was moved. I was sorry to have to move out of it and I was glad to get back to it.

Q: Any universal lessons which stand out in your mind after all this time working on all these different kinds of programs in different parts of the world? In terms of what leads to effective programs and so on?

SELLAR: If you're asking particularly about my thoughts on what leads to an effective program, that would have to be a long answer, because there's so much analysis that really needs to go into a development project or program before you can have any assurance that it's going to be effective, especially in the long run. I think the agency itself went through a period of education where it started out really just worrying about project feasibility analysis, particularly in the capital projects, and then moved into the more heavily technical assistance, the softer sides. There were always issues in institutional development: whether one could achieve any lasting change by just taking a piece of the government, one ministry, and making it sort of a shining example of how things should work for a while, but meanwhile you're going to see pervasive incompetence and corruption everywhere else. Eventually that is going to drown out that one shining example, particularly since in many cases, although there would have been provision for indigenization of the project, after a certain point local capabilities tended to diminish. In many cases we put returning participants into jobs too quickly and unrealistically expected that we could withdraw senior, experienced people too quickly.

Q: Essentially, are you saying that you needed a much more long term approach and perspective?

SELLAR: Yes, but we never really got to test that in too many cases, because of some unwritten rule that a project wasn't supposed to be more than five years long. Although it was common that there would be a follow-on project. I think that the agency at one point realized that it was missing out somehow on analyzing the local situation, and at that point hired a bunch of socialists and anthropologists.

Q: To learn more about the local setting?

SELLAR: Exactly. I think that was a step in the right direction. Although the anthropologists, I think, were a lot less useful than the sociologists, because they tended to plunge into one village and say that I need to stay here for five years before I really understand anything, and then it will probably be different in all of the other villages anyway. So, although there may have been some truth to this, it was very hard to build a program on that. The thing that I think we failed to do, most of the time, was to really take into account how ineffectual and corrupt the governments were. That was something I think was brought out by writers like Robert Klitgaard, who was writing on Africa. His most famous book is Tropical Gangsters. That book really laid it out. Those problems are being addressed to some degree by the democracy program now, but in most cases we cannot do full-fledged civil service reform projects. We have to leave it to World Bank, and sometimes they do it and sometimes they don't. I think that's a very important constraint that we did not address early on. I think the projects did work better, certainly if they had local involvement and awareness of the local culture. There was a time when we just dropped things on them from on high.

I remember seeing one project that was particularly bad on my first trip to Central America. It was a training program to teach people, I guess it may have had something to do with sanitation skills. They had a modern American kitchen in there with electric ranges and running water and all the things that 98 percent of the people in the country didn't have. One rather dazed looking Nicaraguan stood in the middle of it trying to explain what it was all about. That was egregiously bad project design, and AID, I think, fairly quickly moved beyond that in terms of sophistication. But it's hard for me to say, because I never looked back at anything I'd been working on, five or ten years later.

I did have a chance to look back at what we'd been doing in Nepal for 20 years in that one evaluation I told you about. But, normally I didn't do that sort of thing, so I honestly can't tell you how much of our program worked and how much of it didn't. Certainly in the human development area the training has to have done some good. Although there's a funny story about how we set up a crackerjack statistical unit to work in Iran when we still had an Iran program, to improve the data that everybody always assumed we had, but which in fact we didn't have. Then Iran had its revolution and the statistical unit disappeared, only however to emerge virtually intact in Turkey. So, our objective was to improve the statistic capability in Iran and wound up being in Turkey.

Q: You mean the people just moved over there?

SELLAR: Yes. Our objective was accomplished, but in another country. Was this success or failure? Also, I don't know how many of the people that we trained were actually able to use their skills and did or did not become part of the problem themselves. I've heard people, even very recently, talk about that problem. I went to a session over in Rosslyn at the Tulane Graduate School's program here. They had some of their students there. One guy from Africa was saying quite candidly, what choices do I have? Do I try to stay here or in the developed world? Do I go back to my country and if I do, you know, I'll just have to become part of the system. So I guess your question initially was, what was my assessment of what had worked and hadn't worked. I'm giving you a sort of jumbled answer, but it's the best I can do.

Q: There are so many issues that are involved and you can expand on it. Would you say, looking back over the AID and the Foreign Assistance Program, that it made a difference in international development or would you say, as some people say, that the money just evaporated and it didn't do anything.

SELLAR: I think it made a difference. I mean, you look at the World Bank statistics on improvement in human welfare over the past three decades: Health indicators, education indicators, per capita GNP, and so forth. There definitely has been a significant improvement in most parts of the world. I guess Africa is kind of the laggard, but there's even some improvement there in some cases now. Nobody knows how to disaggregate how much of the improvement is attributable to the IBRD, to the U.S., to other donors, to the host country and so on, but as one of the major donors, I don't see why we can't take our share of the credit for the improvements. I don't think that our program was noticeably worse than other donor programs. I think it was much better than the U.N. program and different from the World Bank program. They're sort of a big battleship, if you will, or aircraft carrier type program. Huge, but very hard to turn around or change. We are more of a light cruiser or a destroyer and had more flexibility and more agility.

Q: In what areas do you think AID has been most innovative, if any, over the years?

SELLAR: Well, certainly we got an awful lot of credit for the Green Revolution. I think that's deserved; we supported a lot of the research that was done at the International Rice Institute. That had, of course, a very major impact in terms of grain production in India and Bangladesh, and turned them around from being heavy importers to being at least self-sufficient, even exporters in good years. I think that the claims that were made for the child survival program as it was publicized under Peter McPherson, were justifiable. This package that we developed of oral rehydration saved millions of lives, and certainly other medical programs that we did saved more millions of lives in terms of smallpox eradication and huge reductions in measles and some of the other diseases that killed so many children. Those are the two that come to mind. And we certainly have contributed through our family planning programs to reductions in population growth, a very important matter. Then, there are many other smaller examples.

I know that the democracy program, which is much more recent, has had some real impact. There are other donors doing it, but I think we did lead the way. The paper that I wrote on our experience, although used on the Hill to great effect, was actually written for the Development Assistance Committee at the OECD, because they were getting interested in democracy aid and wanted to know what we'd learned. One job I had as a consultant after returning from AID was to assess the validity of the Nepal democracy strategy and recommend any changes, and also to set up indicators for measuring progress of the program. That obviously involved finding out what the other donors were doing, and the Danes had a pretty substantial program. So you would find some other countries doing it. Of course, once the World Bank got over its hangup about political interventions, they were doing things that contributed to democracy. I think it got picked up on by most of the Regional Banks, and private organizations were supported and able to do more than they had done before in human rights and a whole number of areas.

Q: Well, do you have any final concluding remarks you want to add to this in wrapping up your experience or your thoughts about development?

SELLAR: Well, I think that my experience was, on the whole, a positive one. I look back on my career and I feel that I was lucky enough to be at various times on the cutting edge of something, particularly with the PVOs and with the democracy program, which made it very rewarding. Even the routine work of reviewing projects and programs and trying to get them approved was interesting most of the time. I would have preferred to have spent less time in Near East DP and more time in some other places. I think that the Obey experience did affect my career and my attitude somewhat adversely. But I feel that I was moderately successful and have some accomplishments I can point to. I also feel that, when I decided in graduate school that development was going to be one of the great tasks of my generation, that I was right. In fact, I felt we might be done by now, but obviously we're not.

Q: Okay. Well, that's a good thought for us to conclude with. Thank you very much. It's been an excellent interview.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

JAMES MICHEL
Acting Administrator for Latin American Affairs
USAID
Washington, DC
(1990–1993)

James Michel was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. He attended Harris Junior College and graduated from St. Louis University. After completing law school, he joined the Department of State's Office of the Legal Adviser and later served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs. In 1987, he became U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala and, in 1990, Acting Administrator for Latin American Affairs at the United States Agency for International Development. He subsequently served as U.S. Representative to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Throughout his career, he focused on democracy promotion and economic development in the Western Hemisphere and beyond. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 21, 2005.

Topical Focus – USAID Regional Strategy and Goals: Democratic Governance and Economic Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Q: Your next job was what, and you did it from when to when?

MICHEL: OK. I came back and, as I described last session, I was encouraged to take this job as Assistant Administrator of USAID for Latin America and the Caribbean. I guess I was nominated in January or February and confirmed March or April. While awaiting confirmation, I was sitting in the AID bureau advising the Acting Assistant Administrator who had been the deputy and was the deputy again after my confirmation. So I was engaged in learning how AID

functioned as I was going through the confirmation process, and I stayed in that job then until the end of 1992 when I was asked to move up to the front office of AID in connection with the transition after President Clinton's election.

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MICHEL: As a matter of fact, one of the things that was most satisfying about the work at AID was developing management systems in a participatory way to deal with some of those issues. I went through with you the country checklist of issues that we thought about in the embassy. I used that experience when I got back to AID. One of the early things that we did was have an off-site retreat of office directors and senior people in the Latin American Bureau of AID, and we talked about strategic objectives for the program for this region, and we came up with a somewhat simpler set with three objectives. First was support the achievement of broadly based and sustainable economic growth. Second, support the evolution of stable participatory democracies, and three, respond to specific challenges that get in the way of the first two. Things like the ability to work together in regional context, and combat epidemic illnesses, and drugs which got in the way. But within that set of three strategic objectives, we had areas that we would concentrate on: economic policy, the private sector response to policy reform, the social dimension and increasing opportunities for participation, and protection of the environment were all parts of the economic dimension. The democracy dimension had two parts: first, encourage competent civilian government institutions that would operate honestly and, second, encourage pluralism and tolerance and support for democratic values by the non-governmental entities. That was it! The articulation of this came out of a long discussion among leaders, and then we had a meeting of the mission directors, and we talked some more. Finally, everybody was on board with an agreed framework. Then we would look in the first half of the year at the strategic plans which tend to be five year plans of the missions, and their annual action plans for implementing those strategic plans. This was the template. You didn't have to do everything, and it didn't make sense to do everything everywhere, but you had to fit within the strategic framework. "This is what we do here; if you have a country plan, tell us how it fits within that framework." In the second half of the year we had a couple of people who were experts at looking at portfolios. They went out, and they looked at performance and how the missions were implementing these plans that had gotten approved in the first half of the year. The State Department and other agencies participated in the reviews as appropriate. It was a time where people in the bureau and in the missions in that part of the world were pretty happy with the sense of mission that they had, were pretty happy with the support that Washington provided. One of the things we did was ask the missions coming in with their plans, to report on their impressions of programs that AID put money into that were out of the mission's control, such as the grant to the university that is run by the agriculture office in Washington, and grade them A, B, and C. A, it supports your program; B, it's irrelevant; or C, it's harmful. I really offended some of the folks in Washington with the reports back from the missions that I gleefully sent up to the AID administrator saying this research program about how to grow peanuts in a country where we're trying to encourage them to grow something of higher value, is really undermining the mission and not helping it. Maybe it's helping the people doing the research, but it's not helping the country.

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Q: Did you find that there was a pretty good feedback system? In other words, you contracted X university or corporation, what have you, to do something, and maybe they didn't do a very good job. Could you vote either yea or nay or give them their tail or...

MICHEL: No. Look. We had for all of these programs in the strategic structure that I described, we had indicators of performance. Milestones. We tried to insist on baseline data being established whenever any project was initiated so you could then come back and take a look and see if you were making progress or if you weren't. I didn't get into the details, but I would stay on the case of the mission and the mission director to stay on the details because we had twenty-odd countries, maybe, to deal with, and these were very senior Foreign Service officers who ran those missions. It was their job to make sure their portfolios were performing and my job to make sure that they were doing it. So that was the way it worked, and within that year, we did try to look at performance. One of the things that we did... Of course, you have the normal performance evaluation system about how your people are performing, and are your missions doing well or not. We had a technique called the "management review" of a mission. If you had a troubled mission—and I had one troubled mission where we had to move out both the mission director and deputy—but we had the management review by very senior, capable people going in and starting with the ambassador working their way through, how is this mission functioning or not functioning? We did mission management reviews; we did the normal evaluation, and we had something that was objective that was, in a way, sort of a precursor of what is the Millennium Challenge Account approach. We set aside a percentage of the resources that were in our discretion to allocate among the country programs, and we...I think it was 10% that was a plus-up, an add-on, for the countries that were doing the best in advancing these strategic objectives of economic progress and democratic governance. And we had some criteria for measuring economic policies, human rights performance—looking at Freedom House and so on—environmental. And the countries that scored the best got a piece of this 10%. It was interesting because sometimes missions would say, "We in the mission are doing a tremendously good job here working with some difficult issues, and the country isn't performing very well because it's dealing with difficult issues, so we deserve additional resources." And we have to go back and explain that the decisions on supplemental resources was not a reflection on the mission's performance. It's a reflection on the country's performance. And we wanted countries to know. It wasn't a lot of money because we didn't have a lot to set aside like the Millennium Challenge Account does today, but it was something. Unfortunately, before I left that office, we had one of the Haiti crises that periodically comes along, and we had boat people landing in Florida and disintegration and misery and suffering in Haiti, and we had to take away the money that was earmarked for the good performers because you had to scrape up whatever you could to put resources into humanitarian and emergency measures. Understandable, but it's in a way too bad you couldn't have something set aside that was sheltered for the good performers as an incentive.

Q: You were coming to the job—correct me if I'm wrong—at a pretty good time in Latin America because it wasn't this when all of a sudden Latin America was getting rid of the dictators and moving on, or had that happened?

MICHEL: That had pretty much happened. I remember going to a summit meeting of Central American heads of state with Secretary of State Baker while I was in the Assistant Administrator job at AID. It was held in Antigua, Guatemala. The popularly elected Central American presidents were all there sitting around the table, and there wasn't a uniform in the room. I was sort of smiling to myself while I was sitting there looking at that. But that had all happened in the 1980's. Well, I guess Violeta Chamorro had been the last of the elected presidents who were in that assembly.

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MICHEL: I wanted to wrap up if I might two things from the end of my work in AID in Latin America. One is that I mentioned before that my enthusiasm for strategic goals and work plans, and I brought in a copy that I saved of the work plan from the beginning of fiscal year 1993. This was at least something that we set up in the fall of 1992. I just want to read a couple of items to give a texture of the complexity. Program objectives that I mentioned before - the big headings - were Broadly Based Sustainable Growth and Stable and Participatory Democratic Societies. But within that, just a few items we were looking at under Economic Policy area. Measure the degree to which current economic policies restrict prices for key agricultural commodities in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Panama for use in program mission design by December. Organize a conference with leading experts on diminishing systemic inflation in Latin America to develop recommendations to missions in February. Agricultural policies. Using lessons learned in case studies in Ecuador, Peru, and Honduras, assess the effectiveness in financial sustainability of agricultural policy analysis units in order to provide recommendations for improving donor programs by March. In the democratic governance area, just a couple of examples: Strengthen civilian government institutions, electoral process: adequate and timely support for free and fair elections in the following countries: Guyana, October; Panama, November; Peru, November; Paraguay, May; Bolivia, June; administration of justice: assure preliminary studies, design work needed to launch new or revised programs to support administration of justice: Peru, November; Ecuador, May; Nicaragua, June, etc. Management, we had a heading in which we would have, develop and present a three-day orientation program for minority interns and select four minority interns for AID missions.

This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 21, 2005.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

JAMES MICHEL
Acting Administrator for Latin American Affairs
United States Agency for International Development
Washington, DC
(1990–1993)

James Michel was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. He attended Harris Junior College and graduated from St. Louis University. After completing law school, he joined the Department of State's Office of the Legal Adviser and later served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs. In 1987, he became U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala and, in 1990, Acting Administrator for Latin American Affairs at the United States Agency for International Development. He subsequently served as U.S. Representative to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Throughout his career, he focused on democracy promotion and economic development in the Western Hemisphere and beyond.

Topical Focus – The Shifting Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Latin America and the National Endowment for Democracy – 1990s (Excerpt)

Q: You were doing this—I may be a little off—at the time when the State Department was all of a sudden recognizing, or the government was recognizing, that the Non-Governmental Organizations or NGO's were really part of the process as opposed to outside meddlers who were kind of off doing it. Were you feeling that?

MICHEL: Oh, sure! We talked a lot about the push and the pull and helping the finance ministry to be more efficient. Without a pull from the business community for different financial policies, pushing the ministry is not sufficient. You need to have both dimensions. I think I referred to these strategic objectives that we set up. We dealt with it as a part of democratic governance, and the objective was in terms of supporting the evolution of stable and participatory democratic societies which included both more efficient government institutions and support from non-governmental bodies for democratic values including the media and community organizations and business associations and so on. You had a flowering of Non-Governmental Organizations in Latin America. In the 1980's, NGO's often tended to be identified with a political cause, one or another. In the 1990's, there was just a burst of pent up demand for NGO's; there were tens of thousands of them.

Q: I wouldn't have thought that the Latin American environment would have sponsored this. You think of the Latin American environment as, at least the old one, where everything was family oriented and not much in the way of concern about the greater need of the country.

MICHEL: I think these were the elite and middle class entities for the most, but you had environmental NGO's, you had women NGO's, you had human rights NGO's A lot of organizations on those timely themes. Indeed, one of the debates we had. Debate is too strong of a word, but an inquiry we had, a hearing of the Foreign Relations Committee in the Senate about where is all this going about support for democratic governance. Part of the presentation I made at that hearing was, "Well, here are some posters that are the work of some of the environmental organizations. That's fine. Now here are some posters from the anti-corruption organization badgering the government to clean up the public management. Should we support the reform to clean up the environment but not *that* reform? Does this one have more to do with governance than that one?" The work with the NGO's became stronger with more of a pronounced policy with the Clinton administration. White House policy was to have more of the resources going to NGO's and more U. S. programs involve NGO's.

Q: When we talk about NGO's, there are two types: There are NGO's in indigenous countries, and then there are our NGO's. How about our NGO's who were going out? I was in Kyrgyzstan in the early '90's when the places were swarmed with NGO's—American NGO's—who had all sorts of things. It seemed to be very uncoordinated and all that. How did you find from the American side of the NGO exporters?

MICHEL: I guess what really for the most part came after, came more into the middle 1990's, that we saw the real explosion of the U.S. NGO's overseas. We always had those NGO's that dealt with emergency: Mercy Corps and people that...

Q: Case that was a real good...

MICHEL: ...and Catholic Relief Services and some were just part of the scenery that was always there. But we didn't see this proliferation of NGO's in the early '90's that I think....

Q: What about the two organizations that were set up to promote democracy, one on the Republican side, one on the Democratic side.

MICHEL: There's the National Endowment for Democracy which is an umbrella organization, and under that you have four institutes: labor, business, Republican, Democrat. We engaged somewhat with them on electoral programs. They did get some AID money for support, usually election observance and going down months in advance and providing training to the parties. One of the discussions I remember having was, "Now you may lean toward the Democrats' friends or the Republican' friends, but we won't. If you go down there, you have to be willing to work with any democratic party. I learned that they're supposed to operate that way because they're supposed to be 501(c)(3) organizations and not be partisan in their operations and that they were jeopardizing their tax status if they said, "No, we're only going to work with those who think like Republicans," or, "We're only going to work with those who think like Democrats." So I was more comfortable with them, but you'd have to make sure that this was observed and practiced in the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

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(1990–1993)

Peter O. Sellar was born in Connecticut and grew up in New Jersey. He graduated from Harvard University with a degree in American History and Literature and later completed a master's degree at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. After joining USAID in 1963 as a Management Intern, he served in a wide range of positions over a 30-year career, including assignments in Guinea, Liberia, and Washington. His Washington postings included senior roles in the Africa Bureau, the Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation, the Near East Bureau, and the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, where he worked on the Central America Initiative and helped develop USAID's Democracy Program. He retired in 1993 after serving as Senior Program Officer in the Office of Democratic Initiatives. Following his USAID career, he consulted on democracy and governance programs in Guyana and Nepal and authored a paper on USAID's first decade of democracy promotion. Throughout his career, he focused on program planning, democracy promotion, governance, and development policy. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on January 21, 1999.

Topical Focus – Drafting USAID's First Regional Democracy Strategy and Strengthening the Office of Democratic Initiatives

Fortunately, at the time that this happened, the Office of Democratic Initiatives, which by then had become a true office, had gotten so tired of hearing me ask where their strategy was every year, that they said, "How about if you write it?"

Q: Where was this office of Democratic Initiates located?

SELLAR: It was in the LAC Bureau.

Q: In the Bureau, I see. It wasn't the central one?

SELLAR: Right. There was no central one at that time.

Q: Where did they report to?
SELLAR: The Assistant Administrator.

Q: Directly. I see.

SELLAR: Jim Michel. However, it had to go through the same programming process that the Missions did, but if they had a problem with any decisions reached at a lower level they could go to the AA and, in fact, they often did and, in fact, they usually won, because this was his baby. What happened was that DI, as we called it, the Office of Democratic Initiatives, decided that they really did need a strategy. They had a new Director who came in who was a pretty impressive lady in my opinion, Norma Parker, who decided that she needed a strategy and decided that she would like to ask DP if I could spend some time and do it, since I'd been involved with the program. She seemed to think that I could do it. Since I was at that point sinking into obscurity in DP, it was a good time for me and she asked for me to be detailed to her office for a few months to write this strategy, and DP agreed to that. And during the course of that, in fact she was able to get additional ceiling and invited me to transfer into her office, which I did with great relief. So I spent about six months writing the strategy, not all by myself, but with some consultant assistance, particularly on the chapter that had to do with Latin America's specifics. But mostly I wrote it myself and called it a Draft Democratic Regional Strategy Framework for Latin America.

Q: This was all of Latin America, not just Central America?

SELLAR: Right. The idea was that this would be a framework that would be applicable in any of the countries in terms of basic parameters for programs. Defining democracy, trying to define the requisites for democracy, and talking about the assets of and constraints to democratic consolidation in Latin America. There had been this wave already, what Sam Huntington calls the third wave of democratic development, and many of the countries had had elections, but were still very fragile as democracies. Then in the paper I set forth the proposed strategic framework, and the components of a program, which was basically organized into three areas of activities that would be acceptable. Making it clear that we didn't expect everybody to start all of them. In fact, suggesting the only way this fairly long list of activities could be incorporated into a country program would be by analysis of that country and its particular needs and priorities.

Q: What were the three areas?

SELLAR: They were, first, what is now called governance, basically more effective and more honest government. Second, civil society, which was a term that was unfamiliar to most people in AID, but was very common among political scientists and referred to the cluster of organizations that exist in democracies that are not themselves seeking power, not political parties, but that are existing for humanitarian purposes, for religious purposes, or for other purposes. In many cases to try to influence the State...

Q: Not the same as an NGO? We call them non-governmental organizations?

SELLAR: Yes, they'd be part of it, but not the entire thing. That's an actual issue that came up in AID from time to time and people began equating PVOs with civil society. In fact, it's more complicated than that. Civil society would include the press and universities, for example.

Q: What was the third area?

SELLAR: The third area was called improving the political culture, i.e. developing democratic values, which primarily meant civic education and any kinds of programs, including early childhood programs, that would emphasize democratic as opposed to authoritarian values and practices.

That's the way this paper was presented.

Q: Did you do any sort of research on democracy, as well as on the country situations? Were you able to write a strategy?

SELLAR: Yes, I had to. I didn't have any background in political science, although I did have a college major in American History and Literature, so I knew something about the development of democracy in this country. But I had to do a lot of reading. In fact, it took me six months to do that research and produce a draft. Quite a long time, quite a luxury to be given that amount of time as an AID employee.

Q: Did you have a group of people to work with on this?

SELLAR: I had a few people. Just based on the reading I did, I was able to identify a couple of political scientists who I thought were particularly good, and also, who were able to relate their theoretical work to reality in terms of translating it into programs.

Q: How about the Latin American contacts in which you're doing this?

SELLAR: That was in an area in which I was also weak, since I'd previously only had a short stint in the Central American Bureau. Well, I'd had five years in DP, but again that was all Central America. I had no South American experience, nor Caribbean, except I had gone to Haiti for a few days on vacation once. So I didn't even try to write that part of it. I had some thoughts on what it should say, but I sought Latin American experts to do that section. Actually, I only got

it right with the third person whom I hired to take a crack at it.

Q: Who was that?

SELLAR: Her name was Esther Hannah. She teaches at Washington College or one of those colleges further South in Virginia. She was married to a guy who was working in AID/PPC, a political appointee. She was very good, I thought, and really did a good job.

Q: Dealing with Latin American contacts on democracy?

SELLAR: Right. She was a Latin America specialist. So, I finished the draft by May of '91. Interestingly enough, just to show how sometimes AID can operate without the left hand knowing what the right hand is doing, the Asia Bureau at virtually the same time was also preparing a strategy paper, but they were using an outside contracting firm to do it. Their paper emerged just about the same time ours did as the first two Bureau strategies for democracy. There were many similarities in the papers, which was encouraging.

Q: What happened to your strategy?

SELLAR: Well, it got used.

Q: Was it approved and all?

SELLAR: No, it wasn't approved, but it wasn't disapproved either. It created a firestorm of objections within the Bureau from some of our more conservative folks. Some were agricultural officers hopping up and down and complaining that I'd quoted from some left-wing Communist person and that therefore, nothing that that person ever said should be regarded as of value, as true. Again, my old boss in DP didn't like it at all.

Q: What were they objecting to?

SELLAR: Well, they were objecting, I think, in part just to the style of the introduction and to some things that were said in the paper that struck them as being too far to the left. To me, it was just what had happened. I mean, it was just based on reading history, but they found it offensive.

Q: Any particular examples?

SELLAR: I may have not been as totally supportive in some cases of what we were doing in El Salvador and against Noriega as they wanted, but it was minor stuff really. I mean, the interesting thing is it's stuff that could easily have been changed without affecting the thrust of the paper. And we said, "Hey fellows, this is a draft. That's why we're here. We're here to have it reviewed." But the DP Director got sort of apoplectic and felt that it should be taken out of our office and redone by somebody else. But the Assistant Administrator, whose vote after all was the one that really counted, had issues with it. He realized that these other things could be fixed easily, but he had a basic issue with it, because I argued that even though there had been this wave of democratic elections in Latin America, it was clear from the historical record that that

had happened before and then democracy had failed to take root. And, therefore there was no assurance, in spite of the latest wave, that the countries were going to stay democratic. They were fragile and a number of things really needed to be done to consolidate the gains. Michel didn't like that. He wanted to present it as a much more positive picture. His concern was that if Congress read it my way, they would think that any money we put into this could go down the drain and therefore, why do it. I'd argued, and my office argued, that unless we indicated their weaknesses and vulnerabilities and deficits that needed to be dealt with, why have a program. We never agreed on that. He also objected to going into as much detail as we did in terms of our projections of funding levels and so forth. He didn't like that. Okay, fine, we said, we'll take that out. But, actually the paper had already been in use for at least three months before we got to the review, because consultants were going out to the field and saying, "What have you got? Give me a framework for what I'm doing." So, with the permission of my Director I was giving them copies of whatever earlier draft I had when they needed it. Similarly, in the Missions, those who picked up on it wanted it and were using it and we did send it to the Missions, of course, for review and comment before we went to this final meeting, and the Missions didn't have any problems with it. The Missions liked it. Two of them, in fact said that it was the best strategy paper they'd ever seen, which was gratifying, and Michel knew that. So, what he did was say, "Well, just go on working with it."

Q: Not face the issue?

SELLAR: That's right. Just keep calling it a draft. We're not going to approve it, but we're not going to disapprove it. Time to get on with it, let's go ahead; and that's what we did.

Q: Anything more to bring out the issues and substance or the strategy that you were having to respond to?

SELLAR: The first issue was what we should be doing and what we should not be doing. We came up with a list of about a dozen things that we thought ought to be done. The first items were in the governance area. Under strengthening governance, we called for strengthening the competence of political and government institutions, and under that, strengthening the rule of law, which was already going on through the Administration of Justice Program; but we also added to that strengthening adherence to internationally recognized human rights; and implementing new initiatives to strengthen property rights. This focused on improving the legal and regulatory climate for business, and for titling land and property. Now, strictly speaking, that's not really part of the democracy program, but if we're going to have lawyers out there, working on improving the process as a whole, it made sense to do that too. This was an issue: some people felt it was in fact development that would produce democracy. Other people felt that democracy would produce development. That's the way AID argued it, both ways. All the literature said that development would, in fact improve democracy, but there was no evidence for the reverse. In any event, this was really more of a private sector initiative, but just made sense to put it there since it was law. There was a private sector office too and we would try to work with them.

The second item was strengthening the electoral processes by providing technical assistance to the creation of functioning, credible electoral commissions, voter registration programs, and

international observer teams. We worked through established regional organizations as much as possible to avoid too strong a U.S. presence in these activities, which of course not long ago had been unthinkable, too political to get involved in. There was a lot of controversy as the democracy initiative turned into a program between those who felt that AID should get involved in it and those who felt that we shouldn't, since AID had always been thought of, and thought of itself as a technical organization, even though of course any intervention you make has political/economic consequences. AID had wanted to stay out of anything overtly political so they didn't get tainted with being partisan, with being identified too closely with one administration or another, so they could go on developing the institutions, and programs they were trying to develop. So, many people felt that democracy was just something that AID shouldn't get into and particularly working on elections. But, in fact, the election observation teams and related technical assistance were one of the most successful parts of the program. It didn't encounter resistance at all.

The final part of the government activities, very bluntly stated, was improve the honesty and competence of the executive branches through continuation and expansion of a financial management project, which involved putting a GAO-type person into the ministries, and initiation of activities to improve generally the efficiency and effectiveness of government in key areas, which was actually a way of trying to reform the administrative culture. Now, that is an issue too, because that gets you back into the area of public administration, which had been generally throughout the agency perceived as a program that had failed and that we were not going to try to do again. So, actually, part of the strategy paper deals with that issue. It talks about why the earlier effort had failed and how we would do it differently this time and why it was important.

Q: Why did it fail?

SELLAR: Well, my understanding is that it was because it was too academic. We would bring advisors out of public administration schools, or we would set up schools of public administration in some cases that just really weren't focused on the real problems. The real problems were usually much more basic than the rather elaborate areas of institutional development and whatnot, that public administration professors are fond of. Also, I don't think it was ever recognized that in some cases there were successes. I mean, there was a very successful school of public administration in Latin America, as a matter of fact.

But, that was the exception to the rule. A fourth item was strengthening decentralization and devolution of power through expanded assistance to local municipal governments. This was sort of a given in AID that that was a good thing too. In fact, the literature presents mixed evidence; there are arguments for and against it. But we decided that we were for it and that we were going to do it.

Another item was to strengthen civilian control of the military. Again, this was an area where people said, how in the world can you touch that? But we did it in a subtle enough way that it worked, through support of dialogues on improving civilian and military agreement on appropriate roles for the military and new measures to reduce military autonomy. Of course, the big, big problem in Latin America was the power of the army. But by having non-threatening

seminars and so forth, initially you could begin to get at some of the issues.

A sixth item was strengthening legislatures, through technical assistance and training, and to strengthen their analytic and oversight capabilities. For the most part they tended to be very weak rubber-stamp types of organizations.

Seventh was strengthening political parties, primarily by working through the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, and by supporting programs of the National Endowment for Democracy where needed.

This all was what we included under the first element of the strategy: governance. The second element was helping create a vigorous, autonomous civil society. Under that we had first, strengthening alternative opinion and information sources, including continued support for a regional journalism project which had been started, and distribution of textbooks and a new initiative to strengthen think tanks. The next item was strengthening civic, professional and community organizations, and continuing support for free, democratically oriented labor unions. This latter project had been operating for 20 years and was regarded as an entitlement program with virtually no oversight. It was operated out of a regional projects office in LAC/DP. Part of the deal in my going from DP to DI was that the labor project would be transferred with me, and I would manage it. DP saw an opportunity to get rid of it. So that was an interesting part of my job, as well as the customary program officer stuff. The third element of the strategy was strengthening democratic values and leadership. That included expanding support for formal and non-formal civic education programs; continuing support for leadership training programs through CLASP (Central and Latin American Scholarship Program), which was the huge umbrella for participant training programs through various universities; and support of other organizations that strengthen democratic values and skills. Finally we said we would support other innovative approaches on a pilot basis and replicate them when found effective, a sort of "miscellaneous other" category to give us flexibility. That was the substance of the strategy framework.

Q: What areas did you and the Missions work in, commonly?

SELLAR: Well, we got into practically all of them.

Q: Did they have to do a democracy assessment in each country?

SELLAR: Yes. We helped the Missions with that. In fact, we prepared a draft Assessment Handbook, got that done by 1992, which helped the consults and missions ask the right questions under those different categories. It didn't help decide which categories ought to be given higher priority than others. There just wasn't any research that would enable you to do that. In fact, we held a series of seminars with the National Academy of Sciences that coordinated and brought in academics. This was global, not just for Latin America. We engaged with each other and learned about each other, and it was helpful. One of the seminars was devoted to the question, could priorities be created, recognizing that what we had was a framework, but that was all it was. It didn't enable you to recognize or sequence the activities and it didn't enable you to know very much about the causality of problems.

Q: What was the reception to all this strategizing and approach to strengthening democracy by the Latin American country governments?

SELLAR: Oh, I think they were eager to have it. In many cases you had strong reform movements or even reformist presidents as a result of the wave of elections that had occurred. In several cases the military had sort of given up or been persuaded to go back to the barracks and let the civilians try, because the military had done so poorly. So there was receptivity.

Q: Any country that stood out as picking it up and running with it?

SELLAR: I think it was strongest initially, in Central America, just because that's where it had gotten started. There were significant resources to apply there even after the later budget cuts. Most of our South American programs had very little money to work with, but they did get into it also. There was a special program in Colombia, dealing with training police and trying to help them deal with their drugs problem. Guatemala was a program that comes to mind. Not necessarily because they picked it up and ran with it any more than the others, but because it was one of the early experiments, and we did quite a bit to try to reform the judicial system. This really didn't work. You could achieve all kinds of technical improvements and you could give them new desks and word processors and air conditioners and cars and so forth, and get libraries set up and organized, but

Q: I suppose the toughest problem would be dealing with the business of instituting values or changing values and so on. How did you find that worked and what did you do?

SELLAR: Well, yes, that was the toughest challenge, because that's the longest-term part of the program. You can't really expect to see too much impact until you get to the next generation. But we were invited to help them revise their curriculum in their civics textbooks, or whatever they were called. Most of them that I saw were just hopelessly unrealistic. For example, in El Salvador, which was practically like Vietnam, the books had shining, smiling faces describing this ideal system. Nobody would find it credible. In Nicaragua, the history books and texts had all been written by the communist-oriented regime. So everything Communist was good and everything U.S. was bad. That had to be revised and the new government invited us to do that. We had a major textbook revision program there. In cases where we couldn't or didn't have the resources in the Mission to penetrate the formal education system, we tried to do informal courses. There was a PVO program that we got started with Partners of the Americas that was a pilot effort in a few countries to start working on civic education with local NGOs and anybody else they could find to work with. That was very hard to get approved, because again the conservative element in the Bureau felt it was messing with people's values, "social engineering" a pejorative term, and didn't think that such a program would be well received. But, in fact the pilot program caught on like wildfire. The last time I talked with the President of the organization...

Q: Which one?

SELLAR: Partners of the Americas. The initial small grant that started them, a million or two,

had already resulted in over four million dollars in mission add-ons. And that was quite quickly. So there was a need for it and a demand for it.

Q: What did they do particularly in the field?

SELLAR: I don't know, other than develop civic education programs. In many cases, I'm sure it was integrated into things that they were already doing with these local NGOs. You're familiar with the Partnership program: they had extensive contacts in every country. You could go right to work..

So the strategy paper, although formally never approved, was I think successful and useful, as was the Assessments Handbook.

Q: Maybe you want to consider adding it as an annex?

SELLAR: Well, I can attach whatever you want. [See Annexes B and C.] But, these are not short pieces. One other thing that happened was that the Caribbean countries, the British Commonwealth countries who had not been included in the Latin American strategy, asked for their own strategy paper. This was because in terms of generalities, Haiti was a part of the Latin American strategy, and so was the Dominican Republic, but the Anglophone countries had much stronger democratic traditions and very different cultural and historical backgrounds. They were much better functioning democracies. We had Missions in Jamaica and a Regional Mission in Barbados and they both said, hey, what about us. The Latin America strategy is good for all these other countries, but it doesn't apply to ours. So that gave me the opportunity to make a nice trip to the Caribbean with one of my favorite political science consultants. We did a proposed strategy for them which was not nearly as extensive or intensive as the first paper, and didn't really contain any new elements, but tried to narrow them down a bit and place them in the context of democracies that were already thriving for the most part. Although there were some that were a little shaky, like Grenada. So, we did that strategy paper, in a ridiculously short period of time. [See Annex D.]

Q: Was that picked up and supported?

SELLAR: Yes, the Missions liked it and I'm sure they used it. Since it was for the Missions, it didn't have to be approved in Washington. No one raised the kinds of issues that had been raised with the first paper.

So, other than the strategy work, I was functioning as the office's Program Officer, which they really hadn't had before I arrived. And consequently they had been kind of the laughing stock of the Bureau when they got to their program reviews, because they didn't have the numbers right. They would sit there and argue with each other about what the numbers were and just generally didn't present themselves as being organized at all, which they weren't. So I just put in the procedures that one needs to put in to get submissions on time and get the Director to make it clear that he wants material prepared on time, which they really weren't use to doing. And analyze basic financial concepts such as making sure that your estimated expenditures didn't add up to more than the project authorization level.

Q: These were project proposals?

SELLAR: That's right. In some cases, we were developing new regional projects.

Q: You had your own funds, as well as Mission funds?

SELLAR: We did. A number of our activities had started regionally, and it made sense to do a number of them regionally, to provide expertise and resources. Human rights, for example, is one area that comes to mind, where we could have one regional project instead of having a whole bunch of little mini bilateral projects. It was much more efficient to manage. The journalism project was regional, a pretty substantial project.

Q: Then the Missions would draw on it for particular country activities?

SELLAR: Exactly. And they would all have buy-in provisions, so if the Missions wanted to do something larger than the regional project would allow they could just use it as the framework to create their own activity. This was particularly helpful to the Missions that were attempting to start democracy programs with very limited staff time and expertise. We really didn't run into any difficulty while I was there in terms of the usual tension between regional or global and bilateral programs in competing for funding.

Q: How long were you there?

SELLAR: I was there until I retired, which is to say from 1990 to 1993.

I might also mention another paper that I wrote while I was still in DP, but that had to do with DI. Jim Michel needed something that he could use on the Hill to defend his democratic initiatives and to promote the idea of strengthening democracy in the region, so he asked for a paper that would describe our experience to date. I wrote that, based heavily on input from Norma Parker and Roma McKnee, who were veterans in the DI Office. Norma was the Director and Roma was one of the Project Officers. Of course, we put a positive spin on it.

Q: This was an attempt to show that the programs were working, that they were having results?

SELLAR: Yes. Not in every case. I mean, we were reasonably honest. Also, I think we conveyed that it was still too early to say definitively, but the early results were encouraging in different ways, and that we were learning lessons about how not to do things as well as how to do them. We gave some examples of that. So that made the paper appear to be objective, and gave it credibility. Jim Michael was very happy with that paper and used it on the Hill, and said that it helped a lot. He was a very persuasive guy, with or without a paper, but the paper was something you could read when he wasn't around.

Q: Well, maybe it's also something we would like to attach.

SELLAR: Maybe so, since it's not as thick as the others. [See Annex E.] According to Michel, it

was significant in terms of persuading the Hill not to object to and even to support the democracy initiative.

Q: Did it have any particular thrust or was it just covering the whole range of programs?

SELLAR: It covered the range of programs that we had been doing up to that point.

Q: What worked and what didn't?

SELLAR: Right. I went back and started as early as '61 and talked about Title IX a little bit, how that was the precursor to the Initiative. Then the programs from '78 to '96. There actually was an earmark from Congress in '84 for one million dollars for administration of justice in El Salvador, so obviously there was Congressional as well as executive branch interest.

In the three years that I was there, doing the things that I described, I also managed the AIFLD Program, which had about six or eight million dollars a year going into 20 countries when I got it. Much too much money really in relationship to the total program. And we didn't know anything about what was happening or being accomplished.

Q: This was the Labor Program?

SELLAR: Right. They had never really been asked to justify themselves. This was because President Kennedy had reportedly made a commitment in 1963 to a certain annual level of support. So it just went on year after year, with little if any AID influence over it. But in the new environment that we were in, in terms of resource scarcity, and with the winning of the Cold War in particular, a situation had been created in which Labor knew that, since their program was very much to counter Communist influence in the unions, they were probably going to have to take some reductions, and the opportunity existed for me to rationalize their program. So I worked on that, and we actually developed the first logical framework (log frame) for the program, on a country basis, that had ever been done, and we agreed on a slow reduction in their annual funding together with some targets and objectives.

Q: Did the logframe change the purpose of what they were trying to do?

SELLAR: Well, I don't know that it really changed it, but it clarified it, and I think it forced them to do a lot of thinking about what they were doing themselves, that probably changed things to some degree, just in terms of clarifying and possibly narrowing the scope of their activities. I mean, the very act of doing this, as you know, is often helpful to the person doing it, as much as to the person it is being done for. So we got that done, and included targets for increasing local cost contributions, which they had never bothered to try to do. This was all worked out and we were getting compliments about it from the reviewing officers, and everybody was happy with it. Unfortunately, I think in about the second year it just all fell apart when the Bureau's funding dropped precipitously. That was after I'd left.

I also worked on developing some projects. One was the civic education and citizen participation project with the Partners that I mentioned. I also worked on developing a civil-military relations

projects as a follow-on to the initial activity, which was just basically a couple of seminars. I also developed a technical support project, which was something that I'd learned to do in the Near East Bureau. This was extremely useful. It's not really a project, it's a pot of funding for a collection of activities. It enables you to do studies, evaluations, all the kinds of things that you have to do, and pay for them with program funds. We threw everything but the kitchen sink into it. Limited training, limited preapproval project activity.

Q: That was a common pattern in many Bureaus at the time.

SELLAR: Yes, and we did it for our program as well. It was helpful in enabling us to get people out to the field more quickly. Contract people and so forth. And provide more rapid response time. We used it to do a comprehensive evaluation of the AIFLD program, the first time that had ever been done in 32 years. Out of that we formulated a labor development strategy jointly with them.

Those were my main activities. I was also the LAC representative to an agency working group that became known as the Tuesday Group; it met every Tuesday to try to bring some semblance of coordination and similarity to what the different Regional Bureaus were doing in this new sector, democracy. There were all sorts of debates and things that had to be thrashed out. That was fun. We also wrote an Agency policy paper for Democracy and Governance, as it was called.

Q: So, your work was as a pioneer, providing a basis for the overall agency strategy?

SELLAR: It was. Ours and the Asia Bureau strategy. The situation was very different in the different Bureaus. Africa was particularly resistant to getting into democracy work. They felt that, my God, they were dealing with terrible problems of poverty. They didn't have enough money even for that, and they felt one needed to reach a certain level of development before you started concerning yourself with democracy. People had to eat first. There was some justification to this viewpoint in the African context, I thought. Then, of course, Eastern Europe and Russia and the former Soviet Union countries came along.

Q: Was that the kind of strategy that basically you had laid out?

SELLAR: I expect it is, although I'm not sure. I saw something the other day that described a different document as being the basis, an agency strategy paper or something. If so, it has been redone and I haven't seen it. But, I would doubt that it changed too much, because I used to also do training sessions at the Development Studies Program (DSP). They incorporated a democracy and governance section into their overall development studies program. I would go over and do that sometimes, or get two or three people and we'd go over and do it as a panel. I also did a couple of consulting jobs for AID after I retired that were both democracy-related, in 1994, and then stayed in touch a bit beyond that; and whenever I'd see anybody, they'd say that nothing much had changed. In fact, one of them called and said, "We had another major issue between a so-called political scientist and a political economist, and their approach was quite different." Ours was a political science approach. The political economists were looking at things in a much shorter term, but they had the virtue of taking into account what the political economy of the country was, perhaps to a greater extent than we did. It would have been a good idea to merge

the two approaches, except that their conclusions were very different in terms of what program priorities ought to be.

Q: What were they deciding?

SELLAR: Well, having said that, now let's see if I can remember. For some reason, I don't know why it was, they didn't believe in doing civic education at all. They didn't believe that values could be changed, even with a new generation. I don't understand why that was, but I felt that was a real limitation in their perspective. Their perspective was also shorter term, more focused on doing things that would immediately affect the political economy of the situation. That debate never got resolved. I was invited to come and sort of redo the debate for the benefit of one Bureau at a conference for democracy officers, and I said, "Well, I've been gone for three years." The person calling me said, "Don't worry, nothing has changed at all." Now I've been gone for five and a half years.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

MOSINA H. JORDAN
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
and State Department
AID Representative
Mission to Belize
Belize
(1988-1991)

Ambassador Mosina H. Jordan was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. She graduated from New York University and American University Law School. She worked for the New York City's Department of Social Services as a case worker, high school mathematics teacher, Attorney advisor for the Office of Economic Opportunity Legal Services Program, Director of the Office of Civil Rights, Senate Appropriations Committee, Sub-committee on Labor, Human and Health services, Education and Related Agencies, and USAID Director of Civil Rights Office. She entered the Foreign Service in 1983 and served in the Central African Republic, Jamaica, and the Caribbean .

Topical Focus – Democracy Development Programming

Q: Well, have any of sort of the civil wars that have gone on in Central America, essentially between you might say the left and the right, has that spilled over in Belize?

JORDAN: No. Belize is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy. The structure of government is based on the British parliamentary system, and the legal system is modeled on the common law of England. Belize has a functioning two-party political system, the People's United Party and the United Democratic Party. In contrast to the Central American countries, elections in Belize are held regularly, democratic principles are

adhered to and there's an absence of violence. In addition, every four years the Belizeans voted in a new government because they weren't satisfied with the way the old government was addressing their concerns. This provides a constitutional vehicle to deal with pinned up frustration that could lead to violence.

Q: Well, what were you doing?

JORDAN: I was the AID Representative for the development program there.

Q: And was this mostly, I guess come into the general exchange idea of getting people to the States, or were we doing things on the ground?

JORDAN: We were doing things on the ground. In addition to the participant training program, we had a leadership exchange program where we would take government officials to the States to meet with members of Congress and local and state government officials to expose them to the U.S. form of governance.
We had a large private sector initiative to strengthen the private sector, -- basically looking at crops that had strong potential for markets in the States, Europe or elsewhere. We were also promoting the development of private sector companies to market and support the new crops. We were trying to strengthen their export capacity as well as strengthen the management capabilities of the private sector. We were also assisting the Belizeans in doing research in agriculture to improve their current crops and explore "boutique crops " for export. We were focused on developing capacity. What was unique was that you could succeed there. They had strong growth and the potential to grow even more. Once the crops were identified and the private sector entities were established to manage these crops for export, they were successful.

Q: What sort of crops were they –

JORDAN: Papayas, peppers and pineapples. The papayas had strong markets in the U.S. and Japan.

Q: How did the drug trade interfere? I mean was it penetrating into the country or were these just some people sort of at the top using it as a shipment point?

JORDAN: Crime associated with international drug trafficking posed a major challenge to Belize. The government devoted considerable resources to combat trade in narcotics. Belizeans and others participated in the drug trade because of the opportunity for quick profits and because it was relatively easy to move drugs through remote areas that were difficult to patrol. Belize was a producer of marijuana and a transshipment point for

cocaine. USAID built roads to transport produce in support of the private sector initiative and the agriculture export programs. The drug cartel was using these roads in remote areas to land planes to drop off cocaine. They used trucks provided by our garbage disposal project to transport the drugs in country. We constantly protested these nefarious operations to the government and the inappropriate use of our equipment.
Boats would bring in the drugs, in addition to the small planes. Drugs were being used to pay off the little guys on the ground that were involved in moving the drugs within Belize, and a culture of drug use and abuse by these young people developed. We developed youth programs and vocational training programs to help the youth who were caught up in the drug culture to get out of it.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

JORDAN: Robert G. Rich and Eugene Scassa.

Q: How did you find relations with the ambassador and with the embassy?

I had an excellent relationship with the ambassador and the country team. The ambassador and I worked together in dealing with government corruption, misuse and abuse of USAID resources and in resolving project implementation issues. The ambassador was supportive of my demands to the prime minister to fire the minister responsible for the misuse and abuse of USG resources. For the first time in Belize's history, the prime minister fired a minister in his cabinet. The ambassador was very Happy.

Q: And in many ways this had to be a more positive experience than the Cameroon. From what I gather, the whole mission wasn't that effective.

JORDAN: No, if I created that impression, I was wrong. We were effective. As I said, we were in an era, the golden era of Cameroon when there was progress being made on all fronts to accomplish a real national agenda set by the president. In education, health and in strengthening trade, particularly in agriculture and in improving the agriculture sector, we were getting support and cooperation from the government, private sector and Cameroonians in general. That weren't problems. We were making progress and we had significant successes. While we weren't getting the kinds of trade relationships that I thought we should have, USAID's program was on target and we were having impact. The government and the people were very supportive of our programs. The difference between Belize and Cameroon was that Belize was from a development perspective, 25 years ahead of Cameroon. They had capacity, relatively good governance. USAID's, support to their private sector enabled them to provide better products and delivery of

services to the Belizeans. Belize was on a trajectory too of moving forward. Then there was a change in government and the drug cartel began to make greater inroads into the country.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

PETER O. SELLAR
Senior Analyst for Central America and Special Assistant to the Director
Office of Development Planning, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Central America
(1985–1990)

Peter O. Sellar was born in Connecticut and grew up in New Jersey. He graduated from Harvard University with a degree in American History and Literature and later completed a master's degree at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. After joining USAID in 1963 as a Management Intern, he served in a wide range of positions over a 30-year career, including assignments in Guinea, Liberia, and Washington. His Washington postings included senior roles in the Africa Bureau, the Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation, the Near East Bureau, and the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, where he worked on the Central America Initiative and helped develop USAID's Democracy Program. He retired in 1993 after serving as Senior Program Officer in the Office of Democratic Initiatives. Following his USAID career, he consulted on democracy and governance programs in Guyana and Nepal and authored a paper on USAID's first decade of democracy promotion. Throughout his career, he focused on program planning, democracy promotion, governance, and development policy. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on January 21, 1999.

Topical Focus – The Central American Initiative and Birth of USAID's Democracy Program

While I was out there, Bill Wheeler, who was the head of LAC/DP, had a vacancy and asked me to come in as the Senior Analyst for Central America and as Special Assistant to him. He wanted to streamline and improve the management of office operations in certain ways. He was aware that we were doing things in the Near East in a much more streamlined way with regard to certain things then than they were in LAC. He wanted to know what they were and he, I think, needed a counterweight to the opposition to change of the Chief of the Program Division there, who'd been doing it the same way for 25 years. I got there a couple of years after the Central American Initiative had been established. Again, I seemed to have the good fortune to arrive in a program just when it was becoming, or shortly after it had become, a very important program.

Q: What was your understanding of the Central American Initiative?

SELLAR: That it was a major response to the possibility of the Central American countries becoming Communist. It was in response to what had happened in Nicaragua and was basically driven by a sort of domino theory. El Salvador was also very shaky. The initiative was to provide enough aid, and the kinds of aid, needed to keep Central America in the Western camp.

Q: This was in 19...?

SELLAR: The Initiative itself, I think began in 1983. That was when Reagan made a speech and Kissinger made a speech, which were the foundations for the new thrust and to some extent set forth the priorities Kissinger had articulated in a broad way. You know, it takes time for these things to build up. It was still building up when I got there.

Q: That was in 1985?

SELLAR: '85, and the office was still working on strategy papers. It had done one and they were doing a revised one, and I played a role in that and found it very interesting.

Q: What was the strategy you worked on?

SELLAR: I reviewed the whole paper and made my own inputs. Particularly, I debated with the economists what their targets were and whether they were realistic. They were promoting an export-driven strategy. The idea was to find higher value exports, particularly agribusiness, as opposed to lower value domestically consumed crops. Strawberries and cut flowers and things like that had sprung up to some extent and seemed promising for the North American market. The only question in my mind was whether there was really enough of that to create the employment and therefore the income that was needed to make a substantial difference. I don't think it did. I never got a good answer out of the economists on that. But, as in the Middle East, there were a lot of resources being applied to the program.

Q: What scale of program are you talking about?

SELLAR: At its peak, it was over a billion dollars a year, which in fact was about two-thirds of the Latin America Bureau budget. Now, it didn't stay at the peak forever, but it built up to that and began to slowly decline and then at a certain point dramatically declined. But it was fun being involved with such a high-profile program.

Q: What was the money mostly being spent on?

SELLAR: It was mostly spent on development programs with DA criteria being used, except for the balance of payments assistance components. Balance of payments assistance to El Salvador was enormous, since El Salvador was one of the countries in particular that we were worried about. Where in fact there was, I guess, a civil war going on, a low grade civil war. That type of aid was provided on the basis of balance of payments needs and certain growth objectives. Actually, it quite resembled the Vietnam Program in the sense that we were looking for ways to win the minds and hearts of the El Salvador people in the villages. We didn't have people in

every village, but we found ways to put money into every village for village-level projects, as well as doing things at the Ministerial level. And there was emphasis on agriculture and agribusiness and developing the private sector in all the countries. With Reagan coming in, this became a much more important element of AID's program, even though it had always been there to some degree or other. The housing program was still attempting to prove that it could do something.

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SELLAR: It was a broad DA program. The other thing that was interesting about it was that this was sort of the birth of the democracy program, the democracy initiative in AID, which was really kicked off by Reagan's speech in 1983 where he said, "we are going to promote democracy around the world." So, since we had so much money to work with, and since one Assistant Administrator in particular who came in was very interested in that, particularly the administration of justice aspect of it. These projects began to spring up in ad hoc way. This was Jim Michel, a former State Department person, Ambassador to Guatemala, and a lawyer. Election observation teams were sent out, for example, to try to ensure that free and fair elections were held. In some cases there were human rights activities, which had always been around

Q: There wasn't any sort of coherent strategy for this?

SELLAR: Not initially.

Q: Ad hoc opportunities?

SELLAR: Initially. So these democracy strengthening activities were going on, too. In addition to my program review duties, I was given the democracy portfolio. A separate office had been created for this. Not even an office: it was just a staff unit for democracy. It was headed by an AID lawyer who thought this was more fun than being a lawyer, and one or two people. They were developing regional programs, as well as backstopping the field. So there was a democracy program that became a unit like a Mission program that needed to be reviewed. Since most of it was taking place in Central America, I took that on, along with the Central American programs. Every year the democracy office would come in with their submission and every year I would say, "Where is your strategy?" They were so busy, you know, just trying to get projects going, particularly since Ambassador Michel would go home every weekend and think up some other new idea that he thought it would be fun to start, that they never got to the point of being able to develop a strategy until later. In a way I'm getting ahead of my story, because that was what I did next after five years in LAC/DP.

Q: What were the activities that Michel was pushing for?

SELLAR: Mostly in the administration of justice area, initially.

Q: What does that mean?

SELLAR: Improved court procedures; training of lawyers; attempts to revise the legal system where needed, particularly since most of the countries were operating with a Napoleonic code that was inadequate for private sector development. Mostly stuff like that.

Q: Did you have a sense of it having any impact?

SELLAR: It was just too early to decide whether there was any effect. Things were just getting started. And there was an issue of program proliferation, because by this time we were under heavy pressure to concentrate our program, because of overall budget and staff cuts. Yet here was Michel sort of opening up a new sector, so he had to do it quietly and carefully.

Q: It wasn't well received within the agency as a priority?

SELLAR: Eventually it was, but that's a story I can get into a little bit later. First, let me just finish talking about Central America. One of the most interesting things I did while I was there was codraft with the Chief Economist a revised regional development plan for the region. We did this when it became obvious that initially projected accomplishments were way behind schedule because the requested funding had not materialized. In revising the plan we actually did something which I'd never seen any other Bureau dare to do, which was to actually spell out quantified objectives for the Central American Initiative. We said, five years from now, if you give us this much money, we will have accomplished this and this. Sector by sector we established targets, as well as overall growth targets. Though I could never get them to put targets for employment, probably the single most important objective. Basically the thought was, to make a pact with Congress and commit ourselves to try to accomplish these things in the next five years if Congress would commit to providing a certain amount of funding. We went through a whole exercise with the Missions and ROCAP to develop this. The document was very well received on the Hill and helped hold up funding levels for a while, though not for the entire period.

Q: How did you reach these targets? How did you decide what the targets were?

SELLAR: Well, we would start by asking the Chief of each Technical Office to work with field Missions to establish them, so that in training it would be such and such and education would be such and such, and health would be such and such. Then, if they appeared inconsistent or if we thought maybe there were better indicators, we would suggest changes and go through an interactive process, finally reaching agreement. The economists did the work, the macro work. I spearheaded the work on the sectoral level objectives.

Q: Do you think the targets were realistic?

SELLAR: I think they were. They were somewhat conservative, because we really didn't want to be left hanging out there, you know, showing that we'd only achieved half of them. But the whole thing sort of fell apart before it was finished, because the funding collapsed. So we were ultimately never held to account for them.

Q: How did the funding collapse?

SELLAR: It was because we won the Cold War. When did the Berlin Wall come down?

Q: 1988.

SELLAR: '88, exactly. I had always thought that winning the Cold War would be a wonderful thing and that AID would get more money to work with, because we'd be spending so much less on military and security assistance that we could do more on development assistance. But, of course, it didn't work that way at all. It turned out that the Congressional support for AID had depended very heavily on the security rationale. We'd always thought that it was a combination of the security-oriented people on the right with the humanitarian-oriented people on the left that enabled us to get a bill every year, but when the Wall came down and the Cold War was won, our budgets dropped drastically. Overnight, Congress wasn't concerned about the Soviet menace in Central America anymore, and the budgets reflected that.

Q: What do you mean dramatically? From what to what?

SELLAR: It would probably be, oh, from a peak of a billion to no more than two or three hundred million dollars. We had a phasedown schedule associated with the plan anyway, but we probably only got about half as much money as we had asked for and projected in our plan.

Q: Do you have any feel for the impact of the program for all that money?

SELLAR: I think it did have an impact while it was going on. There's no doubt about it.

Q: Was it just short term or did it have any lasting results?

SELLAR: You know, that's hard to say, because you know how it is in AID, when you go on to the next thing you never look back. There's bound to have been some lasting effects, but I never went back and tried to assess it. I never had the opportunity to do that.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

MARSHALL D. BROWN
USAID
Development Resources Office
of the Latin America Bureau
Washington, DC
(1971-1981)

Marshall D. Brown was born and raised in Southern California, and studied political science at Stanford University. After starting his career in the Peace Corps in 1962, Mr. Brown served in USAID for thirty-one years with a focus on economic development in Latin America. He held positions including Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Latin America Bureau, Director in

Egypt, and Mission Director in Egypt. Marshall D. Brown was interviewed by W. Haven North on December 4, 1996.

Topical Focus – Effects of Alliance for Progress Program in Latin America

Q: During this time in DR you had opportunity to see what some of the effects of the Alliance for Progress because it was phased out I guess by that time. Did you get any sense of what it did or accomplished?

BROWN: I think its accomplishments are similar to those of the Kennedy Administration overall-that is, more myth than reality. I always ascribed great things to the Kennedy Administration but it was because at the time I thought that Kennedy was a great President. However, I think the Alliance energized and excited a lot of people, particularly Latins who were working in mid-level positions in planning, finance, education, health and other ministries around the hemisphere, and who ultimately emerged as ministers and even presidents in later years. They had been exposed to, and in many cases imbued with, the Alliance reform vision and framework, though it never really took off in the 1960s. Unfortunately, the first thing that happened within a year or two after the President launched the Alliance was that most of the countries suffered military coups. That ended the democratic goal of the Alliance, and posed an embarrassment for the U.S. Administration. The Alliance did reaffirm the importance of the countries in this hemisphere, increase the level of U.S. assistance and get the Latin Americans to look at themselves and their problems and to acknowledge the need for reform.

Q: What were the reform concepts we were promoting?

BROWN: As I recall, there were political reform goals supporting democracy; macroeconomic goals supporting economic stabilization and growth; and goals encouraging the countries to provide more assistance to and improve the standard of living of the lower income population. We promoted the latter with our sector assistance programs.

Q: I see.

BROWN: The goals may not have been accomplished, but the development problems and the poverty problem were clearly highlighted, and an increasing number of the Latins acknowledged them. I think the Alliance provided the framework and mindset for many of the things we and the Latins have undertaken over the past 30 years.

Q: But you were saying it perhaps influenced a new generation of leadership?

BROWN: Yes. A new generation of Latin thinkers. Many had been caught up in the excitement of the economic and political reform idea. I have heard Latin leaders say, after they came to power, "You know I worked on the Alliance when I was just a young officer in the planning or finance ministry and that was an important thing you tried to do with us." It gave them a framework and a sense that the U.S. cared about their development, and in many cases made them more receptive to working with us in later years. That doesn't mean there weren't a great number of Marxist oriented, anti-Yankee leaders as well. But overall, the Alliance was a very

positive initiative in terms of creating a common intellectual framework. Unfortunately, the timing was not quite right to achieve dramatic results in the 1960s. The irony is that you had Kennedy come out with this bold reform plan and increased assistance in 1961, and shortly thereafter most the countries suffering right wing coups and dictatorships. Twenty-five years later, after the conservative Reagan Administration again sharply increased assistance for Latin America and launched a new Central America Initiative, democratically-elected governments emerged throughout Central America and in most of South America!

Q: Well, maybe the impact was slow in coming.

BROWN: I think it helped to lay the base for many important developments which were long in coming. Many of the Alliance goals were only realized 30 years later.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

MARSHALL D. BROWN
Government Entity
Deputy Assistant Administrator
Latin America Bureau
Washington, DC
1981-1987

Marshall D. Brown was born and raised in Southern California, and studied political science at Stanford University. After starting his career in the Peace Corps in 1962, Mr. Brown served in USAID for thirty-one years with a focus on economic development in Latin America. He held positions including Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Latin America Bureau, Director in Egypt, and Mission Director in Egypt. This interview was conducted by W. Haven North on December 4, 1996.

Topical Focus – Caribbean Basin Initiative and Central America Initiative

Q: Let's talk about the Caribbean Basin Initiative. That came at that time, didn't it?

BROWN: Yes, it was the first major initiative of the Reagan Administration in this hemisphere, and it focused particularly on the smaller states in the Eastern Caribbean, which were economically and politically weak and unstable, threatened by the left and with a very limited resource base. The concept of the CBI was to attract more investment into these small states, increase exports and jobs. It had a major trade component opening up our markets, giving them special preference. It was a precursor to the later, and larger, Central America Initiative, which was largely an effort to prevent the spread of Communism in the region.

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Q: Were they really threatened at that point?

BROWN: The political leadership was generally weak, particularly in the Eastern Caribbean states; they had almost no revenue base, and as I mentioned earlier, were accustomed to having the British provide for their needs. The political parties were weak and, of course, in those days, the Marxists, were actively looking for opportunities. A Prime Minister could be ousted and a Leftist take over without much difficulty. Grenada was an example. The countries had no armies. The police forces consisted of a few men with pistols. There was a real fear in the White House that a couple of these small states could be taken over by the left and start a chain reaction. The CBI was very sensibly conceived as an effort to promote private sector-led, sustainable economic growth and development, but the impetus for the initiative was US national security.

A central objective, led by the White House and actively support by State, AID, Commerce USTR and other players, was to get US industry to make investments in the region, particularly in assembly industries. Early on, Haiti was a success story in this area. Rawlings Sporting Goods was making baseballs, soccer and basketballs, and hockey equipment actively collaborating with the US Government effort to attract more firms. Sperry topsider boat shoes were also made in Haiti. Jamaica and Barbados attracted garment assembly plants and had contracts for voucher and data processing.

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Q: Then you were there during the time of the Central American Initiative.

BROWN: Yes. That was the most exciting experience I had in Washington, I played a role, albeit a modest one, in the formulation of the Initiative, its advocacy before the Congress, and directed AID's effort to implement the program. It was an enormous program..

Q: How much are you talking about?

BROWN: We ended up requesting 8.4 billion dollars from Congress.

Q: 8.4 billion dollars!

BROWN: That was the total commitment over a five year period. Initially, we wanted ten billion! Henry Kissinger had been named by the President to chair the commission to develop a plan, and very early on he asked Peter McPherson what AID thought was needed. McPherson asked me and I tasked Peter Askin, my creative and conceptual Office Director for Central America, to come up with a cost estimate and framework to put Central America on a self-sustaining growth path. We estimated ten years and a US contribution of $10 billion would be required to undertake such a social, economic and political transformation. We reviewed our proposal with McPherson and he OK'd it. At some point McPherson, Askin and I went to see Kissinger in a small conference room on the west side of the State Department. Kissinger, in his gravely voice said, "What do we need?" And I said, "Well, we need a ten year program supported by $10 billion dollars." Kissinger's reacted negatively. "Too long!" he growled. He scoffed at our proposal and said Congress would never put up with a ten year plan; they would lose interest much sooner than that. "Three years," he said. We said that three years was unrealistic, that you couldn't hope to accomplish such an undertaking in three years. So we went back and forth and

finally agreed on five years. That was half as much as we thought was necessary but much better than three. In retrospect, it was really all we needed.

Q: Five years and how many billion?

BROWN: $8.4 billion. That was the price tag that was eventually worked out and requested from the Congress. Kissinger was right, of course; Congress did lose interest within three years, but by the end of five years we had set in motion the positive economic and political forces necessary to propel the initiative toward success. And it actually did take ten years to reach what could be considered successful. Of course, several of the countries still have long way to go in economic terms, but they are moving ahead on a sustainable growth path.

Q: How many countries were involved?

BROWN: All of Central America. Panama through Guatemala, including Belize. (Of course, Sandinista-controlled Nicaragua, which had been the threat which led to the Initiative in the first place, did not share in the benefits.) And it was designed to restore and strengthen democratic government and to bring about sustainable, private sector-led economic growth and development.

Q: How do you do that?

BROWN: Well, the countries were all experiencing similar economic problems. After borrowing excessively from the commercial banks in the ‘70s to live beyond their means, now they couldn’t pay their debts and were facing a financial crisis. Internally they also had large budget deficits due to domestic over spending, plus the economies suffered from overregulation and overregulation and involvement by the governments. So the first part of the US plan focused on economic stabilization, through massive balance of payments support and some modest reform conditions. And then as the stabilization took hold, the economic liberalization reform provisions became more rigorous and the disbursements were harder to get as we moved into the economic growth period.

In parallel with the macroeconomic stabilization effort, we were also targeting resources on basic human needs: education, health, agriculture, and small enterprise and private sector development. We had designed investment and reform programs for each of these sectors in each country. We also carried out labor-intensive infrastructure construction and repair programs to reduce unemployment in the short run, particularly in El Salvador. We also had all kinds of training programs, increased credit for agriculture and increased credit for small business lending throughout the region. So we really had large scale infusion of resources. And in some cases, such as Salvador, it was absolutely crucial because Salvador was on the suspension list of the World Bank and the IDB. We were the only source of money they had. And had we not been there, they would have certainly collapsed.

After having been away from the region for six years, I was delighted to see when I came back in 1991 that the Central America Initiative, now renamed the Program for Peace, Democracy and Prosperity, or something like that, was working. You had freely elected democratic governments

in every country. You had economic stability. Countries were financially solvent. They were able to meet their balance of payments requirements and were moving along at various degrees of growth. The standard of living for the lower income groups had improved; local government programs in agriculture, education and health were reaching out and benefitting an increasing proportion of the population. The levels of private sector investment, exports-and particularly nontraditional exports-and employment were up sharply. And the threat of Communism was long since gone and the Sandinistas had mellowed and been voted out of office. To my delight, and some surprise, the effort had worked.

Q: Who got the most money? How did the money get allocated?

BROWN: Salvador got the most money. Because they were the country that was most politically vulnerable-and engaged in a civil war. It wasn't just a threat there, it was an insurrection. Both the IDB and World Bank had suspended new lending to Salvador.

Q: What was the strategy for El Salvador in terms of use of the funds?

BROWN: To win the hearts and minds of the people, to coin a phrase. The idea was to provide employment and increase incomes for the people to undercut support for the insurgents and to gain support for the government. Fortunately, there was a populist leader from the Christian Democratic Party who was president at this time, Napoleon Duarte. He was also a graduate of Notre Dame. He came out of the labor movement and was able to combat the left quite effectively. Unfortunately, his party was rather corrupt. Nevertheless, the US supported him strongly, and he got the masses voting on the democratic side. Duarte died of cancer after a few years in office. But the left had been undercut and eventually its candidates were defeated in the presidential elections in the mid-80s and the right-of-center candidates were elected-and reelected.

Q: What about some of the other Central American countries? Costa Rica had graduated by this point. How did they get back in?

BROWN: They got back in because they were the most financially over extended. Per capita they had borrowed the most from the commercial banks-because they were everyone’s favorite democracy. They had the reputation for being the most advanced, enlightened Central American country, with the brightest people-the Salvadorans would rightly challenge that, the best democracy and no military. So, during the 1970’s gogo years of US commercial bank lending to Latin America, all the banks wanted to lend them money. Well, it turned out that the Costa Ricans were not the best economic and financial managers. And by the early 1980s they were facing massive foreign debts that they could not pay. They had to seek rescheduling from their creditors. Bank of America was the lead bank.

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Q: Guatemala was one of the countries? What were you trying to do there?

BROWN: Guatemala was the most resistant of all the countries to social change. And until very recently, the most recent election, the government has always been run, directly or indirectly, by the military. It has been a repressive society. They have never taken AID very seriously nor cared much about AID objectives in their country. If AID wanted to spend its money to help poor people that was fine, but it wasn't going to change how the country governed itself. Essentially the elite ran the country for the benefit of the elite. They viewed their indigenous Indian population as a nuisance at best. So, Guatemala was not a major recipient. They had a problem of leftist guerrillas, but given the resolve of their repressive regime, the threat there was fairly minimal. With the recent very positive change in the government, and in the general political atmosphere in the country, Guatemala has become one of the largest AID recipients-but of a much reduced budget.

Q: And then Nicaragua?

BROWN: Nicaragua was the enemy. The Sandinistas were the ones who provoked the Reagan Administration to conceive of the initiative in the first place. If it weren't for Nicaragua you wouldn't have had the Central America Initiative. Similarly, I think it's fair to say that without the threat of Fidel Castro, 20 years earlier, you wouldn't have had the Alliance for Progress. Perhaps, they were a mixed blessing.

Q: So we were supporting the Contras, were we?

BROWN: The US government certainly was. Honduras was the pivotal country because that was where the Contras were being trained. Here I have used the passive voice to avoid revealing any state secrets. Honduran President Suazo Cordova was a physician by training and a professional politician by vocation. Essentially he was prepared to do anything the US would say as long as we paid the bill. He was not one of Honduras' most distinguished presidents. When Peter McPherson and I visited Honduras, probably in 1983, we met with Suazo to talk about the AID program and pending ESF disbursements. Suazo almost got down on his knees and begged McPherson for more money. He had no dignity; he just wanted more assistance. He was not a great statesman. In fact, he wasn't a statesman at all. He was an earthy, former country doctor turned venal politician.

Q: What kind of program were we trying to promote?

BROWN: We had a program that was focused on helping the poor, strengthening the private sector and sound macroeconomic policy. Honduras had been a priority country in our Latin America program for years because of its poverty level. So we had a relatively large program in Honduras even during the BHN years of the '70s, with major efforts in health, education, agriculture, and small enterprise development. So in the 1980s we expanded and increased much of what we had been doing. We added a large farm to market roads program to provide access to market for small farmers throughout the country. We undertook an extensive village water supply and sewage disposal program, addressing a principal health problem. We had a big rural health outreach program, stressing preventive care. So, despite the fact that the Central America Initiative had been inspired by the threat of the spread of Communism in Central America, in

Honduras we were working hard and with reasonable success improving the lives of and creating new employment opportunities for the poor.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

CHUCK COSTELLO

Head of Democracy Office
Global Bureau
Washington D.C. (1994-1998)

Chuck Costello was born in Detroit, Michigan. He served in the Peace Corps and as an Associate Attorney prior to joining USAID in 1975. Costello served in the Near East Bureau, Bolivia, Kenya, and Guatemala. This interview was conducted by Marcia Bernbaum in 2024.

Topical Focus – USAID's Center for Democracy and Governance

Q: *Today is Wednesday, January 22 and this is my last interview with Chuck in his role as a USAID [United States Agency for International Development] employee. He capped off his career as being the head of the democracy office in the Global Bureau, or rather from 1994 to 1998. So Chuck, please share with us your story.*

COSTELLO: As usual, I will start by sketching the environment into which I stepped in this assignment to provide a better understanding of what was expected of me and what I set out to do.

As I mentioned in my last interview, I left my post in El Salvador on medical leave in the middle of 1994. Technically, I was without an assignment. After about a month on leave, I took on a special assignment in the Caribbean office to examine some issues that the assistant administrator wanted more information about.

At some point, I met with Sally Shelton, AA/Global, at her request to discuss possible work in the Global Bureau. Interestingly, while I was in El Salvador in 1993, I had received a call from Sally's deputy, Ann Van Dusen, who was trying to recruit me for the newly established Global Bureau. At the time, I declined. But as it turned out, a year later, I ended up working there after all. To set the stage institutionally—because that context is important to how I fit in—there was a change in administration following the 1992 U.S. elections. The presidency shifted from Republican to Democrat, and Brian Atwood, who was then president of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), was appointed as the administrator of USAID.

Atwood had already been named Deputy Secretary of State for Management, and he also had a legislative background, having worked on Capitol Hill. Early in his career, he was a Foreign Service officer at the State Department. However, there was a behind-the-scenes struggle over

who would lead USAID. Two prominent women were vying for the Administrator position, but no resolution was reached—perhaps it would have taken a decision at the presidential level. Ultimately, neither of them got the job, and instead, Atwood was asked to take the position.

I believe that was a fortunate outcome for USAID. Atwood was deeply interested in development work, and he brought firsthand experience in democratic development programs from NDI. He was also fully aligned with the Clinton administration's foreign policy, which emphasized the support of democracy worldwide. As part of this new direction, USAID underwent a bureaucratic reorganization. While not a drastic overhaul, it was significant. The administration made a policy decision to consolidate most technical officers—those working in fields like health and education—into a central bureau. USAID had always had central bureaus of one kind or another, and there had long been a tug-of-war between regional and central bureaus over their respective roles. The decision was made to establish the new Global Bureau as the focal point for technical expertise within the agency.

This reorganization meant transferring some technical officers from regional bureaus, but more importantly, it designated the Global Bureau as the primary hub for technical work in Washington. Atwood had a particular interest in the Center for Democracy and Governance, which was one of five new centers created within the Global Bureau. This was the first time

democracy and governance had been given such recognition and a formal institutional home within USAID.

Q: *Chuck, this is fascinating. I was not aware of this, having come up as a techie and been in education, but by this time, I was outside of education, and I was clueless about this.*

COSTELLO: This was a big shift. So, having a professional background as a lawyer and having worked on democracy and governance programs in El Salvador and Central America—regions that, in modern USAID, were essentially the laboratories for that kind of work—I had relevant experience. Central America was ahead of much of the rest of the agency in this area, with the possible exception of the bureau created to handle the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent states in Eastern Europe.

From the outset, it was agreed that a major focus of U.S. assistance to those countries would be to help build democratic political systems and the necessary institutions. That included work on the rule of law, as well as technical areas like bankruptcy laws and securities regulation. More broadly, the efforts included elections support and judicial strengthening—areas that otherwise weren't prominent in USAID's portfolio.

I had some experience with rule of law programming in Ecuador and El Salvador, as well as with elections, which was another area of interest. At the time, I was technically unassigned but was a senior Foreign Service officer. I believe there was a preference to have Foreign Service officers lead these new Global Bureau centers, though that wasn't a strict rule. The group of center directors ended up being a mix of Foreign Service officers, political appointees, and civil servants.

When I spoke with Sally Shelton, she acknowledged my recent health concerns and said, "Do you really think you're up to this? I've talked about it with the Administrator, Brian Atwood, and we both think you'd be a great fit. He wants to know if you feel ready and if you'd like to do it. And I have the same question." My answer was yes—I wanted to do it. I had long supported the integration of democratic elements into USAID's objectives, and this was a good senior-level assignment for me.

So, sometime in mid-1994—probably in the fall—I took over as Center Director, with the title of Deputy Assistant Administrator, Global Bureau. A small office had already been established, mainly by a few people who had joined USAID under Atwood, particularly from NDI. One of them was Larry Garber, who was, in a de facto sense, leading the center. For a short time, the deputy general counsel, John Mullen—who was on his way to retirement—was officially in charge, but he was essentially just warming the chair. There were also a few non-career staff members who had been brought in under USAID's administratively determined (AD) hiring authority. This hiring mechanism, originally meant for bringing in specialized technical expertise, had over time also become a way to appoint political personnel. Some of these AD hires had been in the Europe Bureau and then moved over to the new center.

Atwood's special assistant from NDI, Jennifer Windsor, also joined USAID. She was deeply interested in democracy and governance and became involved with Garber and the others in getting the center off the ground. When I arrived, the office was still in its early stages, with just a few people in place. One of the Foreign Service officers already on board was Deborah McFarland, who had experience in rule of law programming and a background in the Latin America Bureau. My first task was to fill out the staff, as we had several unfilled positions.

Q: *So if we go back historically to the time I joined USAID, there was always a Central Bureau, Education Office, It just came under a different nomenclature. Was there a democracy office, a central democracy, office of any sort, or did you build from scratch?*

COSTELLO: No, that was a new creation, which, in fact, will be part of my narrative. I interviewed candidates for the deputy position, and I took a chance—a gamble, if you will—that I think turned out well. I chose Jennifer Windsor to be my deputy, even though she was quite young and inexperienced. However, she was deeply interested in democracy and governance, had worked on the Hill, and was clearly brilliant and energetic. She had graduated summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, from Harvard.

I felt that since this was a relatively new and different initiative within USAID, it would be beneficial to bring in someone with more of an outsider's perspective. Meanwhile, I would provide the reform-minded, innovation-driven career officer's perspective. So, we set about getting the office fully up and running. We identified people within the agency who were interested in transferring in, and Jennifer had a close working relationship—and, really, a friendship—from outside USAID with the Deputy Administrator, Carol Lancaster.

For the historical record, institutions often operate based on personal connections, for better or worse. Carol Lancaster, a professor from Georgetown University, had been teaching courses on democracy and governance within the political science field. She studied democratic institutions extensively, and Jennifer leveraged that connection to navigate the system and bring in talented, energetic—but relatively inexperienced—staff to our office.

She worked the system very effectively. We secured White House Fellows, Presidential Management Interns, PASAs (Participating Agency Service Agreements), and RSSAs (Resources Support Services Agreements)—essentially using every available hiring mechanism to bring in staff, even when we didn't have officially allocated personnel slots.

Q: *Can I ask you a question: did you have any U.S. direct hires, GS or FSNs in your office, or was it primarily people from the outside?*

COSTELLO: No, we had a good mix. We were able to staff up the office much faster than I expected and with a lot of unexpected talent. The agency wasn't particularly deep in talent in this area, simply because there hadn't been much work done on the subject within USAID. We ended up with several Foreign Service officers, a couple of very strong Civil Service officers, and a well-structured center. We divided the center into four offices, and while I go into a lot of detail

on the bureaucratic aspects of this, I think it's worthwhile because it established our specific objectives and fields of work.

We operated on what I called a team approach. We had an elections and political party team, a rule of law team, a civil society team, and a governance and local government team. With these four specific work areas in place, we set out to develop strategies—not just for our office, but for the agency as a whole. This aligned with the new agency leadership's policy of creating strategy guidance documents for both Washington and field missions. We developed strategic plans for elections and political parties, rule of law, civil society work, and local government. While we took a strategic approach, we were still a relatively small and new office, so the process may not have been as participatory as I would have liked. However, discussions were always open for input.

For the historical record, I want to stress some of the managerial aspects, as these reflect key lessons learned and the best ways to operate an efficient and effective unit. I implemented a matrix management system that structured our work around two key objectives. Technical leadership for the agency – This aligned with the decision to concentrate technical expertise within the Global Bureau and Field support – I strongly advocated for this because, having worked in a regional bureau, I had often heard complaints that central bureaus didn't provide much support to the field. I wanted our Democracy and Governance Center to be different. I made it clear that, while we were based in Washington, one of our core responsibilities was to support field missions, since that was where the real work got done.

I believe that's one of the reasons they wanted a Foreign Service officer—someone with field experience—to lead the center. This focus on field support came naturally to me, and I was insistent on making it a priority. To implement this, I layered a regional bureau matrix over our four technical teams. Each regional bureau had at least one democracy and governance officer or, at minimum, a technical office that housed their specialists. I met with assistant administrators to explain our approach and later held discussions at the deputy assistant administrator and office director levels to coordinate with regional bureaus.

There was some resistance, as not everyone in USAID was convinced that democracy and governance should be a core focus of the agency. Additionally, some regional bureaus were wary of the shift, especially if their technical functions or personnel had been transferred to the Global Bureau. However, because democracy and governance were newly identified as a priority for USAID, there was generally less territorialism compared to other sectors, such as health or education. That said, some skepticism remained in certain quarters.

Q: *I believe the LAC Bureau has a history, right? Wasn't it one of the stronger ones in terms of its activities and democracy?*.

COSTELLO: The new Europe Bureau was very active in supporting the political system transitions there but had no history in the countries and had to improvise a lot. As I mentioned earlier, part of the reason I was chosen for this role was that we had already done some of this

work in the LAC countries and the technical officers in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Bureau had shown a lot of initiative in this field.

There was a woman in LAC—her name is on the tip of my tongue. It's going to come to me. You probably know her. She was very active in this area and had close ties with another woman at the State Department, [Note: Norma Parker, AID and __, State.] In Central America, political interests overlapped with issues like human rights, death squads, and judiciary reform, so the State Department had a strong interest in these topics as well. There was also an outsider brought in—Bill Davis, a lawyer with experience in California, particularly in working with bar associations and the judiciary.

I wanted to demonstrate to both the regional bureaus and my own staff that we envisioned a close working relationship. We weren't going to operate in isolation as a central bureau. We wanted to stay in touch with our regional bureau counterparts in Washington and, beyond that, reach out to field missions. But we also wanted to do this in a way that wouldn't create jealousy or resentment. The regional bureaus were, after all, overseeing many of these same Mission activities.

Everyone in the Global Bureau had both a technical and a regional bureau assignment. That meant that, even if someone was working on elections and political parties, they were also responsible for maintaining contact with a counterpart in a regional bureau—say, the Africa Bureau. That connection would serve as their entry point to missions in the field.

I wanted our staff to be known—literally, face-to-face—in a way that hadn't historically been the case. Traditionally, regional bureau officers didn't have direct relationships with missions. But in our setup, if someone was in the Civil Society office of the Democracy and Governance (DG) Center and had a regional focus on Africa, they were expected to stay informed about all democracy and governance projects happening in that region. This wasn't a one-person responsibility; we structured it as a team-based approach, with ad hoc teams blending technical expertise across four areas.

The goal was for regional bureaus and field missions to understand that we were drilling down into the details of every field mission and its programs—not to take control but to provide technical support. That support could come through technical assistance contracts, temporary duty (TDY) assignments, or even in-person visits. We encouraged field officers to stop by our center whenever they were in Washington so we could review all the elements of programming they were involved in. We saw ourselves as a teaching resource for field officers, offering guidance on best practices and innovations.

Beyond management strategy, the larger goal was to mainstream democracy and governance programming within USAID. While it may have been a stated policy priority, the reality was that outside of Europe and Latin America, the rest of the agency had little experience with it. In some cases, there was outright resistance. Many of the countries we worked in had undemocratic governments, and democracy and governance programs tended to ruffle feathers. These programs also pushed country programming into new and sometimes uncomfortable territory,

where missions weren't sure how to proceed or whom to work with. For example, we placed a strong emphasis on civil society development, supporting NGOs that sought to participate in public policy dialogue. These groups were often not well-received by governments in power. As a result, some missions and regional bureaus saw us as troublemakers.

We structured ourselves to provide project-level support as well as strategic guidance. USAID required field missions to submit Country Development Strategy Statements (CDSS), which had to be reviewed and approved in Washington. However, many of these strategies did not include democracy and governance programming. We decided to exercise some muscle and carefully track these documents during the Washington review process.

Under the agency's new structure, the Global Bureau had the authority to object to regional bureau strategy statements. If we felt a country's strategy was inadequate—let's say it focused on economic development but ignored entrepreneurship—we had the ability to flag that issue and push for changes. I'll give you an example. One of the country strategies under review was for Ghana. The mission director was in Washington, defending their strategy, which deliberately excluded democracy and governance programming. By the final review meeting, I realized the Regional Assistant Administrator for Africa was prepared to approve the document as it was. So I spoke up and said, "*Global objects. We formally object to this strategy statement and its approval*."

Bureaucratically, that set off an explosion. The assistant administrator was well-connected to the front office for other reasons, so an immediate appeal was made. The next thing I knew, the official in charge of the Management Bureau, who seemed to think he was running the agency, got involved. What was his name?

Q: *Larry Burns.*

COSTELLO: Larry Burns. Yes, Larry Burns. Larry Burns was the head of the Management Bureau and was supposedly the chief advisor—not just for budget matters but also for how Brian should best manage the agency. When we blocked the approval, he went wild. *How could we stop this approval?*

So, I wrote up a formal objection. Ultimately, we won the battle. It went up to the administrator, who ruled in our favor. He confirmed that the centers in Global did have the authority to object and that democracy and governance was a priority. If it wasn't included in programming, it at least had to be discussed and analyzed. And if it wasn't programmed, there had to be a justification.

I dwell on this particular case because it was a real bureaucratic battle—one that had substantive implications for the agency's work. And it showed that we had support. It helped that the administrator came from a democratic development background at the National Democratic Institute. Who knows if a different administrator would have backed us?

Jennifer Windsor, my deputy, had maintained a strong relationship with the administrator, and I had built a good one by that time as well. Sally Shelton, who was leading Global, was also supportive. So, we defended our position. It was a tough fight, but in the end, a clear decision was made in our favor.

That battle set the tone for the next four years. One of my major objectives was to ensure that democracy and governance programming became fully institutionalized within USAID. It had to be recognized as legitimate development assistance, not just a niche initiative, a passing fad, or something that could be ignored.

Looking back, I think we succeeded. We built up a strong staff, we had good people, and we developed credibility. Missions came to see us not as troublemakers but as a valuable source of support. Over time, mission directors—who were often far removed from Washington politics—began to understand that democracy and governance weren't just Washington's latest obsession. This was serious programming.

We introduced democracy and governance strategy assessments and developed strategic guides for rule of law, civil society, and local governance. These became important tools for integrating democracy and governance considerations into mission programming. Now, I've spent most of this talking about bureaucratic structures, but the key takeaway is this: Bureaucracies are functional organizations. They can run poorly, or they can run well. It depends on the knowledge and effectiveness of the people leading them—on their ability to get results in a government setting.

It also depends on how well they focus on technical objectives and ensure that lessons learned from the field are integrated into the agency's work. At the time, democratic development was still a relatively new field academically, and much of the knowledge existed outside of USAID. Our challenge was to bring that knowledge in and make sure it was understood and applied.

By the time I left at the end of 1998, I felt I had achieved my primary goal: making democracy and governance programming an integral part of development assistance thinking and action. Full stop. Now, shifting gears a bit, I'll talk about some of my experiences in the role. I enjoyed the job because it gave me global responsibilities, and I saw it as my duty to get out into the field—to show the flag, to see firsthand what was happening, and to support missions in their work. By this time, I had reached the highest rank in the career Foreign Service—Career Minister—and I had served as Mission Director in three different countries. That gave me credibility.

When I visited the field, I could sit down with mission directors and deputy mission directors and be seen as a peer—or even as someone senior to them in terms of status and experience. That allowed me to make the case for democracy and governance programming in a way that was persuasive and practical. So, I traveled a lot. I wanted to see the work for myself—especially outside of the Latin America Bureau, where I had the most experience. I visited Asia—Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Bangladesh.

I went to Africa—South Africa, Mali, Ghana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe. I went to Europe—Ukraine (twice), Albania, and Croatia. I attended conferences in Israel, the West Bank, and Egypt.

We also organized regional Democracy and Governance conferences, bringing together DG officers from Washington and the field for two-day workshops. These conferences helped institutionalize democracy and governance programming across the agency. For the record, I want to emphasize something important, we were very careful not to use the phrase "promoting democracy" or "exporting democracy."

Our goal was to support democratic development—to assist those within these countries who were working to build democratic systems. We weren't telling them, "Here's how you need to do it." Yes, we had expertise to share, but we never took the approach that, "We've done it all in America, so listen to us." Instead, we said, "Look at the conditions on the ground. What are your cultural and institutional realities? What are your limitations? What's feasible in your context?" So yes, we supported the development of democratic practices and institutions, but our focus was on empowering local actors—those within these societies who were already fighting for democracy and human rights. That was an important distinction, and I wanted to get that on the record.

Anyway, on a personal note, I was having a lot of fun. I had squared away my marital difficulties, so I didn't have problems on the home front anymore. Then, sometime in late 1996 or early 1997, Brian approached me with an opportunity, "Would you like to be Mission Director in South Africa? Go back to the field?"

South Africa was one of the best Mission Director jobs in the entire agency. It was a high-priority post in a fascinating country. At the time, I don't remember exactly who was there—maybe Aaron Williams had already returned to Washington. It might have been Stacey Rhodes. Either way, when Brian offered me the position, I said, "Gee, I'd really like to do this, but given my family situation—with my kids in Washington, at the ages they were, and already separated—I just don't think I can go overseas alone. And I couldn't take my kids overseas just then."

So, I had to decline. Brian accepted my decision, but it made me realize something: I needed to start thinking about retirement. One of the best parts of being in the Foreign Service and an AID officer is the opportunity to serve overseas while rotating back to Washington from time to time. I wasn't one of those officers who tried to hide out overseas permanently—some people did that. I believed that Washington rotations were valuable both for the agency and for an officer's own professional growth and learning.

But if I wasn't willing to take another overseas post, then how much longer was I going to stay in the Service—even though I was still enjoying my job? Then, Sally Shelton-Colby, the Assistant Administrator for Global, asked me to become her Senior Deputy in the front office to replace Ann Van Buren, who was moving to the Asia Bureau as a Deputy Assistant Administrator.

By that point, I had seen how things worked in the front office in Global. Whether you liked it or not, that role was all about managing Washington relationships—it was more about dealing with bureaucracy horizontally than about running actual development programs. I didn't want to give up my direct involvement in programming—in actually doing development work. It was rare enough to have a real hand in programming while based in Washington, and I felt we were making progress in mainstreaming democracy and governance programming. So, I declined that position as well.

That made me think even more seriously about moving on. By then, we were approaching an unknown political transition in 2000, following a presidential election. No matter the outcome, transitions are always difficult. I didn't know what the future would hold, and frankly, I didn't want to go through another one. So, to make a long story short, I started exploring post-retirement options.

I was still young and energetic. Including my Peace Corps time, I had over twenty-five years in government service. I had joined AID in 1975, which meant twenty-three years with the agency. I was—wait, was I sixty-six? No, I was fifty-six. Still young, healthy, and energetic. One of the great things about the Foreign Service is that after twenty years of service, you can retire early with full annuity benefits. That gave me flexibility. I started looking around at possibilities. I spoke with several consulting firms. I even considered returning to law practice in some form. I thought about leaving Washington and moving back to California, where my family was.

I was still just poking around when I bumped into a State Department colleague who worked in the Office of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL). We had collaborated on a few projects before. I casually mentioned, "Hey, I'm thinking about retirement." She said, "Well, there's a job opening up at the Carter Center. You should check it out." That caught my attention. "That sounds interesting. I'll look into it." And so, for our next interview, I'll pick up the story there—how I retired from AID in December 1998, moved to Atlanta, and started working at the Carter Center.

Q: *Great. Well. Thank you very, very much, and we look forward to the next period of your life*.

COSTELLO: I hope I didn't give short shrift to Global or DG.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

SUSAN FINE
USAID
Policy Bureau,
Director, Office of Development Cooperation
Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator
Washington, D. C. (2016-2017, 2017-2019)

Susan Fine was born in New York City and attended Colby College before joining the Peace Corps and receiving her master's degree from the Harvard Kennedy School. She joined USAID

as an intern in 1992 and served in several different positions thereafter in Uganda, South Africa, Senegal, Washington, and Sudan. Mrs. Fine retired from USAID in September of 2019.

Topical Focus – USAID Transformation

Q: Okay. Can I ask you a question about another part of the transformation that you alluded to, that is the Development, Democracy and Innovation bureau. I know some people did not want democracy in that bureau; they thought it would be best in the bureau with conflict and stabilization. Was that an issue that you were involved with?

FINE: Well, I worked on a daily basis with Jim Richardson because at a certain point he was named as the assistant to the administrator for PPL.

Which was not a Senate-confirmed position. Because Raj Shah, when he created PPL, didn't have enough Senate-confirmed positions, so the Assistant to the Administrator for PPL is not, to this day, Senate-confirmed. So Jim was appointed the head of PPL, I was his senior DAA and so we did PPL stuff, but he was also dual-hatted as the head of the transformation. So, yes, we interacted on pretty much a daily basis about a lot of things. There was a senior leader council that was set up to provide guidance to the transformation process, so I was part of that. And so, yeah, there were conversations— the council was involved in discussions about DDI and about whether Democracy should be part of it. I think my concern was more around the scope of the DDI bureau. It just seemed unmanageable. It was set up with something like five or six DAAs. I mean, from a management perspective I really questioned how you could have coherence across a bureau of that scope. One of the rationales for DDI was to strengthen the linkages between the various sectors that were part of DDI, including education and, of course, democracy and economic growth and trade and environment and a bunch of other things. And while I am very much a supporter of linking and finding synergies and whatnot, I guess I also think that—and it also was going to incorporate most of the lab, so to sort of mainstream innovation. But I also think that you just have to look at management practicalities and yeah, to me it didn't. And then, there was a concern about the visibility of the democracy work by subsuming it in this other bureau, was it somehow going to be less visible. I think there's maybe validity to that.

GERALD F. HYMAN
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
Democracy and Governance

Gerald F. Hyman was born in Chicago in 1942. Hyman has a B.A. in philosophy and a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Chicago and a J.D. from the University of Virginia. He is a senior associate with the Office of the President at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as well as a member of the Advisory Council to the Center for International Media Assistance of the National Endowment for Democracy. He conducted democracy and governance assessments for USAID in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Serbia, South Africa, South Sudan, and Ukraine. Gerald F. Hyman was interviewed by Ann Van Dusen on November 16, 2016.

Topical focus – Organizing Democracy and Governance Programming and Partnerships with USAID

HYMAN: So, all of a sudden there was this cache of funding and the need for working in this area. So, our first job was to think through how is this going to be organized. The organization was just Tom and me. So, I sort of came up with this four-part distinction which was elections, which is what we called them, elections and political processes, still called that, still called that; the Rule of Law, and we didn't call it AOJ (Administration of Justice), we called it the rule of law.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: Because it should have been broader than just the courts and the administration of justice. It should have included and did human rights, other kinds of things. How do you organize a society that's truly law-determined and based on a rule of law with integrity? So, it was Rule of Law was the second one. Again, we just didn't choose AOJ.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: The third was civil society.

Q: Yes.

HYMAN: And the fourth was governance. And that is basically still the same four areas, at least at AID.

Q: Now did you and Susan and Tom hash that out over time or did you get to that pretty fast?

HYMAN: Susan was pretty junior and her area was FM. I mean she was at Syracuse, she came from Syracuse. I think it was Syracuse. Or Maxwell. So, she was definitely, absolutely in the conversation. But the distinction is the one I came up with and we talked about it and they said okay. But we didn't have a big bureaucracy. This was just two of us and the third guy was doing other things, education, etcetera. Tom was not fully on this.

And so we organized ourselves that way and we put out grants that way. And the organizations that responded to this were small. So, NDI, which existed as a NED core grantee, IRI which was also a NED core grantee; small, very small. The AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), which was then divided, they had one, this goes back before us, way before us, so they had a Latin America operation, they had an Africa operation,

they had an Asian operation and they created a Europe operation. It was many years later that they combined them in to the Solidarity Center. And there were big fights about that.

Q: I'm sure.

HYMAN: Because all these guys had their own turf and they were ancient guys who had built these programs.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: Okay so there was the Solidarity Center and then there was the Chamber of Commerce. These were the four NED grantees. And IFES. Those were the only ones really around that did this kind of stuff in any serious way. So, NDI, I doubt if they had more than 20 people, maybe 30. It's now like 3,000 or something like that. And Brian Atwood was the president and Ken Wallach was the vicepresident. And there were other people there, Tom Melia and so on and so forth but they were just a tiny organization.

Q: Just doing their thing.

HYMAN: Yes. Just scraping by with NED grants mostly and some AID grants but not very much because Latin America didn't have these programs. So, we were big, and this was a big shift for them in those days because it was a big increase in money. So, I got to know these people reasonably well because there weren't that many of them, including Brian. So, when Brian came in I should have left AID.

Q: I'm sure.

HYMAN: And Brian kept saying I'll see if we can keep you on. Because I had known him, I was responsible for probably by that time 60 percent or more of NDI money. And so he said well I think you should stay. Let's see if we can't keep you on. And so there were many pink slips and finally I stayed on as an AD. Then I think because they wanted the job for a real Democrat he asked me to convert to the Civil Service. I would never have done that in a Republican administration and certainly not in a Bush Administration because that burrowing in I find repugnant.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: I figured well if the head of the agency and a Democrat is saying he wants me to stay on I don't know if burrowing in is exactly the way to think about this. So why don't I stay on for a while. And I did in the Europe bureau.

Q: As an AD?

HYMAN: As an AD. But then converted to Civil Service later on because then he created the Global Bureau, about which I don't need to tell you. So, he created the Democracy and Governance Center in the Global Bureau. I went to him more than once and I said Brian, I don't know; Europe is still up in the air, do you want me to stay in Europe or do you want me to go to the Global Bureau. What do you want me to do? And he said well I don't care, why don't you decide. And I said well I'm here at your service, I'm an AD so I think you should tell me which of these is more important to you. Anyway, he didn't so finally I was sort of persuaded to go to the DG Center and we created it from scratch, of course. So, it was unlike health and economic growth, where these people all knew each other. But you remember that the technical offices were all in the regional bureaus.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: So, Brian's view was well, if you're going to do something in Morocco and they already tried that in Bolivia why don't you learn from each other. Why are we geographically stove-piped? Of course, there was huge resistance from the regional bureaus.

Q: Tell me about it.

HYMAN: For turf reasons, right? Yes, so the usual bureaucratic brouhaha. So, he was starting this new Democracy Center and I felt well, I really owe it to him to see if I can contribute to that because he's the guy that's keeping me on, so I did. And I became the sort of head of the strategy part of that new Center. Chuck Costello was the director of the Center and after a while Jennifer Windsor was the Center deputy.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: But you know Jennifer was only able to take that role because she too converted into an AD. She was way too junior. She was a PMI in the Africa Bureau. Well as a GS- 12, you can't move to an assistant deputy division chief if you're going to follow the rules. That's how that job became political and it still is because once it's in the plum book you can‟t get it out.

Q: Can we go back to when Europe was just setting this program up and for the first time there was money and a lot of it for democracy and governance programs. Did you have to fight within the Europe bureau for your share of the funding for democracy?

HYMAN: Not really.

Q: Because I don't think it was earmarked specifically for democracy programming.

HYMAN: No. But first of all, Carol [Adelman] wanted to do the program. Secondly, there was enough money. So, we had enough money; the problem was to figure out what to do with the money.

Q: Yes, okay. Because after a while I'm sure there must have been some elbows thrown.

HYMAN: Absolutely. But as I said when we first started I'm a bit iconoclastic about this sort of stuff so I just didn't feel it was worth our time to get into a brouhaha about a half a million dollars.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: Our problem, I thought, was how do we do this well. I don't want to spend a lot of time sitting around here arguing with some other office about how much money they're getting and we're getting. We've got enough to do what we need to do; how do we do it?

Q: So, related and I'm really interested in making sure we tell the Washington side of all of these stories. You must have had to go to the Hill to explain or did Carol do all of that?

HYMAN: She did most of it, she did most of it.

Q: So, I'm interested in your interaction with the Hill, dealing with outside interest groups, dealing with the press if you had to. How did that happen?

HYMAN: And dealing with the State.

Q: And dealing with the State.

HYMAN: So, first of all, the SEED program was only supposed to be three to five years and it was only supposed to be for those three countries. Then all these others came out and so they never changed the title but Bulgaria is not supposed to be part of this.

Q: Right, yes

USAID
(1989-2020)

Susan Kosinski Fritz studied at Rutgers University and American University before entering USAID as a Presidential Management Intern in 1989. She served in many different positions in several countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. She was interviewed by Carol Peasley in May 2024.

Topical Focus - DRG Program Management

USAID/Central Asia, Director Office of Democracy and Governance, 2001 - 2005

FRITZ: My husband really wanted to serve in Central Asia – that was his dream job. As a tandem couple, it's not always easy to find places to serve together which was really important to us. There was a deputy mission director position open for him and there was a DG office director position open for me. That was our first assignment as a tandem couple. We went out to Almaty to manage programs regionally for the five former Soviet Central Asian Republics -- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. And we were there for four years.

Q: And this was 2001 that you went out. I believe the mission opened in 1992 or 1993, so it was an established mission by the time you got there?

FRITZ: Definitely. It was an established mission, but the challenge was in overseeing technical officers – both PSCs and FSNs – in each country that both reported to me in Almaty and to their Country Representative in the country in which they were working. It was a kind of matrix management which can be difficult. They had two bosses, and sometimes that worked and sometimes not so much. But other than that, it was an established mission and those were established country offices and staff and so forth.

Q: Who was the mission director when you went?

FRITZ: Glenn Anders was the mission director when we first arrived. When Glenn left after a year George Deiken replaced him. And then in our last year there, George left early to go to India. So my husband, Mike became the mission director and that created some issues. Then I had to report through the Europe and Eurasia Bureau DG Office in Washington after that to address the nepotism issue.

Q: I was going to ask what your reporting arrangements were because obviously that's one of the challenges for tandem couples.

FRITZ: I reported to the mission director until the mission director was my husband, and then I reported to the DG team and E&E in Washington after that. It was just the last six months of our time there.

Q: Okay. Can you describe the DG program for Central Asia? Were they all umbrella projects that were then implemented in different countries, or how did it work?

FRITZ: Yes. We had, what I would call more of a civil society approach, more grassroots programming. We had a large, multi-country civil society program implemented by Counterpart. We had the party institutes, IFES, and Internews active in Central Asia at the time. We had a local governance program implemented by ICMA in Kazakhstan, but I don't believe it was active anywhere else. And ABA CEELI was also active in each country. We had some anti-trafficking work. And yeah, that's mainly it.

I would say most of our funds were concentrated in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, particularly towards the end of our time in Kyrgyzstan, when the democratic transition began. There was a democratic election with a reformer elected at the end of our time there. There weren't a lot of democracy partners or civil society activists in the other countries.

We did have human rights work going on as well, but it was very challenging. When I look back at my time there, I learned a lot and the experience changed my beliefs in democracy assistance and what can be achieved.

If you look at Freedom House's Nations in Transit democracy indicators, I think there's seven that they measure: media, local governance, national governance, elections, civil society, judiciary, and corruption. For the five countries I worked in for four years, only one indicator went up one year and that was for national governance in Tajikistan. The sad part is that I didn't even agree with the reasoning behind it. They had improved on national governance because the central government had more control over some of the areas of the country (it had recently come out of a civil war). I really believe in democracy as the best form of government possible and I believed at the time in our ability to help. But to leave after four years and feel like you didn't make a difference was really hard. It was a hard tour from that perspective.

It made me think a lot about the conditions you need to move the needle on democracy, when does it make sense for us to provide DG support, and what kind of assistance makes sense in a country under which conditions. Looking at it with 20/20 hindsight, I felt like we wanted democracy more than the people with whom we were working. There weren't champions like we had in Eastern Europe who, with a little support, moved the needle.

But in Central Asia we had authoritarian governments and most people have never experienced democracy. There was also a fondness for the Soviet Union under which these countries developed with the building of schools and hospitals, and all kinds of infrastructure. When the Soviet Union fell apart these countries weren't like, "We want democracy, we want to be part of the Western world." It was a very different situation. We did get a plus up of some conflict mitigation funding after 9-11 so we were able to do some community development work, very grassroots in the Fergana Valley, which is located in three of the Central Asian Republics. I felt like that work was maybe more impactful and more important than the other democracy work we had been doing.

Q: That's interesting and important. You can't push a string on democracy.

FRITZ: No, no, no. It was hard.

Q: Did you also have community-based partnership programs that brought together Americans and Central Asians? I know that these kinds of partnership programs in Russia were doing a kind of grassroots democracy development. I'm wondering if you had any of those in Central Asia.

FRITZ: Yeah, not really. I think that Peace Corps really played an important role in that way, linking particularly the youth that worked with Peace Corps with some of the State Department Public Affairs programs, the Muskie fellowships and the like. I am on the board of the Eurasia Foundation and learned yesterday that the head of business development had gotten his start running a youth camp with the Peace Corps volunteers in his community. He learned English through that, and ended up doing some of the educational programs through the State Department in the United States. He worked for me in the USAID Office in Kyrgyzstan and then eventually emigrated to the United States. I think these types of programs were much better geared towards the environment in which we were working and more impactful.

Q: Can you talk at all about how you coordinated with the State Department in Central Asia? It must have been complex with five different countries. Did you have to do a lot of problem solving with embassies?

FRITZ: Yes. Yes. Yes, to all those questions. It was challenging. It was very challenging. I talked earlier about matrix management. I won't mention the country or the ambassador, but we had a problematic employee who was a locally hired PSC. His main job was to review and provide for his country, input on implementing partners' regional work plans and to monitor the programming being implemented in his country. And he wasn't doing it, but he was a great assistant to the ambassador. This, as you can imagine, was problematic. I discussed the issue with the USAID country director and he fully agreed with me, at least when we discussed it. We

decided that we needed to have a sit down with the employee, which we did. When the employee didn't improve we did not give him his step increase so he quit. The ambassador blamed me – the one and only time that an ambassador read me the letter that each ambassador receives when they are deployed to a country. It was humiliating.

I also had a problematic contractor in another country that was using the resources of the contract for their own personal use. Somehow it came to our attention that this was happening. We looked into it, the Inspector General (IG) looked into it and it wasn't big enough for the IG. I went out to the country and gave the ambassador a heads up that I was going to have to talk to this partner. The partner's spouse was a doctor and the Embassy didn't have one so I knew that was important to this ambassador. I gave him a heads up. The implementing partner did not quit so they didn't lose the doctor, but the ambassador wasn't too pleased with me. I thought I was diplomatic, but I learned later apparently not. So it was challenging. It was really, really hard. But you do the best you can, right?
Q: Yes. Were there other donors working in this space as well? Or, were we alone trying to push the string?

FRITZ: On some of the local government strengthening programs we coordinated with the World Bank because they were interested in decentralization. Other than that, it wasn't a crowded field. The Soros Foundation had some money for civil society but there weren't a lot of other donors out there doing this work.

Q: And you'd mentioned after 9-11 there was a big increase in your program. Was that also in the DG budget or was that in other aspects of the program? Just wondering if you got more and more pressure on you.

FRITZ: There was definitely pressure. We got a plus up of this conflict mitigation money which funded both DG and EG work at the local level. There was definitely pressure to program this new money and quickly. Initially we created an intra-mission working group to design a program under the leadership of Mike Harvey, who was the Tajikistan country office director. Mike led the effort, but the various offices also contributed. Once all the programmatic pieces were put in place, the conflict mitigation work was put into the DG office to manage. I believe there was a microcredit program that complemented the community development work but that was managed by the Economic Growth office.

Q: One of the questions I was going to ask you was which elements of the program you thought might have been most successful. But I think you've just answered that.

FRITZ: None.

Q: But I think that there's an important lesson here that people need to take more into account, that is to be realistic in our expectations.

FRITZ: For sure. The community development and civil society work is so foundational. And just trying to find partners that want it more than we do is important.

Q: Right. Is there space? Even then if a country is not committed to democracy, is there still space for things like the independent media? Can an Internews operate to strengthen independent media even if a country is not so committed to other aspects of democracy?

FRITZ: I think it's hard but doable. We had a situation in Kazakhstan where one of the partners that Internews was working with had criticized the president's son-in-law so he went after the Internews in a pretty public way. That was a difficult problem for us. We had to get the ambassador involved and he wasn't too pleased about having to do that. So I think it's really challenging. And it depends on the country, obviously, but in smaller countries like in the Balkans, the media can bleed over the borders, so you can do a lot more. And I think nowadays with the internet, there are a lot more opportunities outside of traditional media where you can have an impact. You can impact the information space in a way that wasn't available back then.
Q: Other things to say about your time there? It doesn't sound like your favorite posting.

FRITZ: No, but my husband loved it. Yeah, and you know, it's an isolated part of the world too, so that was hard. You learn something from everywhere you serve. Probably most importantly from that assignment, what I took away from that time living in Central Asia were the friendships, the friends that I made, the colleagues I had that I'm still friends with. I just organized a Central Asia get together a couple of months ago, and saw some of my old colleagues. I think because it was so far away and the countries were so undeveloped or underdeveloped, there wasn't a whole lot to do. You could ski, but aside from that, I think in those kinds of places, and I suspect you've experienced this as well, this is where your strongest friendships develop. And so I think that was probably the best part of Central Asia for me.

Q: Just one final question, were you able to talk to the DG Center about some of these thoughts as you were leaving and feeling the sense of frustration? Were you able to talk to other DG folks about this philosophically? Does it make sense to continue to try to push the string in countries like this?

FRITZ: I don't recall that I did. When the DG Center was created, the idea was that all the DG staff from all of the geographic bureaus would be housed in the DG Center but that was not the case for E&E. E&E kept a large part of its technical staff. So certainly we had lots of conversations in the DG office in E&E, but not so much in the DG Center as much.

Q: Okay. Anything else? Because then you went off to a somewhat unusual assignment.

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USAID/Serbia and Montenegro, Mission Director, 2010 - 2014

Q: Okay. So, given the time, can you talk about Montenegro first and then we'll come back to talk about Serbia?

FRITZ: That sounds great.

Q: Because the Montenegro program also started later didn't it?

FRITZ: This is one of the things I wanted to circle back to. You had asked in the last interview whether it was hard to work in Serbia and I was talking about the staff. I forgot to mention that several of the staff in the mission had worked for OTI. OTI had a program in Serbia, but we didn't have a mission. OTI was working out of Hungary and supporting activities within Serbia from Hungary. When NATO bombed Serbia during the Kosovo conflict, those Serbian staff working for OTI (along with embassy local staff) moved to Budapest where they continued to work for OTI (and the embassy, respectively). So today we still have people within the mission who worked for OTI before Milosević was ousted and who were committed to democracy and change in Serbia. And, you know, it's always easy to work with people like that. Fortunately the mission hired some of the OTI people and not only our staff, but some of our partners hired OTI staff as well. So there was a good starting basis when the mission opened.

Q: What had OTI been doing during that period?

FRITZ: I don't know everything, but I know they had a big information program, which supported an independent radio station called B92. It's since been sold and it's no longer what it was. But B92 in those days was both independent and anti-Milosević. And so OTI was helping B92 to expand its reach around the country and to get its information out all around the country. The transition in Serbia started with democratic elections which resulted in the opposition winning municipal elections. Eventually, Milosević was overthrown. But from what I remember OTI was mostly in the information space. I'm sure they were doing a lot more than that, but that was probably the most important thing that they were doing was getting unbiased information out.

Going back to your original question, at the time Montenegro was still part of Serbia. It did not secede until 2006. So OTI programming included Montenegro. And then when the mission opened, it included programming in both Serbia and Montenegro which continued to be managed by the mission in Belgrade after they became two different countries. We had an office and a small staff in Podgorica, Montenegro as well.

So in my Washington briefings before I went out to take up my post in Belgrade in the summer of 2010, I learned that Montenegro's budget for 2012 had been zeroed out. I had to go out to the mission and tell our Podgorica staff that we were closing in two years. I understand it was a rash decision by Raj Shah, administrator at the time. There was no looking at the data, the close-out criteria, or anything.

Unfortunately, we had two procurements underway, one an omnibus DG project and one EG. This was in August and we were finalizing two five-year multimillion dollar contracts. We signed the contracts because we had to obligate the money but then immediately had to amend them to make them two-year contracts, because we only had enough money for two years. And I had to shut the program and close down the office.

Q: Wasn't this unusual to do on such a short timeframe? Most of these closeouts were on a five-year scaling down period. Was this because of sudden budget shortages within the Bureau?

FRITZ: No, I think that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) was requiring USAID to graduate assistance in several countries. Raj Shah came to E&E, which was not his favorite region. I think he didn't understand that the work we were doing was also a form of development, but maybe different than in some of the poorer parts of the world. He asked E&E to name a country that could graduate. During discussions Montenegro came up and apparently it stuck. Nobody thought it was going to stick, but it did. And the budget was zeroed out just like that. And it wasn't based on anything from a DG perspective. They had not had an alternation in power. Still today, they have governance issues, problems with political parties and the political system. So it was a rash decision and it was taken without any forethought.

Both the program and OE budgets for Montenegro were zeroed out. Our OE budget was provided by country, so much for Serbia and so much for Montenegro and they were not transferable to one another. We closed in 2013 because we had to spend the money down, we had to close out the project, we had to close the office. There were things we had to do, but we needed the money to do it, including a closing ceremony in 2013. But we had no OE for Montenegro in 2013. It was really hard to manage the closeout because there had been no forethought or planning. It made it so much more difficult. The Bureau did yeoman's work in sweeping up money from odd places here and there to allocate to us for a closeout ceremony and to offer our foreign service nationals some training, some help in preparing resumes and getting them ready for life after USAID. So that was not the way to do things. We lost so much in doing it that way.

My former deputy from Kazakhstan went over to work for INL in the State Department. INL came in and started making grants to all of our DG sub-partners in Montenegro after we left. In a way it was good because they were able to pick up where we left off but if the goal was to close

the U.S. government assistance program, that's not what happened. It was USAID that closed. And we encouraged INL to build the capacity to make grants, basically replacing us.

Q: No, very counterproductive move. Did the ambassador squawk a lot about this premature closure? I'm just curious how State reacted.

FRITZ: She wasn't happy. Nobody was happy. Moreover, the State Department Coordinator's Office did not agree with the decision to close out Montenegro, so they did everything in their power to continue assistance through other means. Nobody was happy.

Q: I have forgotten to ask you questions about the coordinator's office. The E&E Bureau worked closely with them, including heads of the office like Bill Taylor and Tom Adams.

FRITZ: And Larry Napper before that. I think Bill may have been just the NIS Coordinator. Anyway, yes we had had the coordinator's office and by that time, it had grown much bigger than it was in the early days. In the beginning they had maybe a total of five people. Now they have parallel staff to the E&E Bureau. I would say in Kosovo, they were not much of an issue. We kept them informed of what we were doing, but we were pretty lockstep with the embassy. It wasn't an issue in Serbia because we worked well with the DCM. We teed everything up for him to make decisions. But, as I said, in Montenegro they weren't happy with the closeout decision. Nobody was happy with it. Maybe Raj Shah was happy, who knows?

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Q: Today is June 13, 2024, and this is interview number three with Susan Fritz. When we finished up last time, you had been assigned as Mission Director for Serbia and Montenegro, and we covered the Montenegro portion of that work early on. If you have any final thoughts about Montenegro, please offer them, but otherwise let's go on to Serbia.

FRITZ: Yeah, let's do Serbia. So, Serbia was not in a much better place in that it was a challenging assignment because I came in at the high point of the budget. The Mission had received about $50 million a year when I arrived. By the time I left four years later, it was about $18 million.

Q: When did the program start? Was it right after Milosević left?

FRITZ: Yeah, yeah, the mission came in after Milosević departed. And so it was much later than the rest of the Balkans, but as I mentioned earlier, OTI came in before the mission was established. And before Yugoslavia broke up, there was a small USAID Representative office in

Belgrade headed up by Mike Zak, though I don't know how much funding there was and what the programming was like.

After Milosević, the main program was a grassroots community development program across the country. And there were something like five implementing partners, each one geographically separate from the others. And they were doing community development work, small grants to basically involve people in democratic processes at the local level. The program was called Community Revitalization Through Democratic Action (CRTA). And it was a lot of money -- I want to say something like $40 million which was a lot of money for the country's size. So it blanketed the country with a lot of small projects that were supposed to build goodwill after we were seen as leading NATO to bomb Serbia. So it was really important. The masterminds behind that program were very smart because by the time I came in, anytime I traveled, people talked about their experience, our partners and beneficiaries, people involved with us or maybe just people that I just came across. They remembered when USAID built a small bridge, a road or a green market with stalls and refrigeration -- just small projects that engaged citizens to decide on which projects would be done. We provided the money to finance what they prioritized as citizens. Everywhere I went I saw plaques with USAID logos all over the country. And that was a good way, I think, to start in a country like that where we were seen as the aggressors.

Q: Okay, so by the time you were there, the relationships with the U.S. and USAID was seen in a favorable light.

FRITZ: Yeah, I was pleasantly surprised that because we delivered and because we were fast – even though we don't have that reputation within the U.S. government – compared to other donors, we were the "go-to" donor and we were well-respected. Our Serbian government interlocutors appreciated us and came to us and asked us for assistance, which I really didn't expect. And civil society, too, and some other partners that we had been working with for a long time, yes, but it surprised me that we had such a good working relationship with the government. And as I came to appreciate more after I left, our ability to work in the country was so much easier compared to Ukraine, where the registration process for USAID projects takes months. In Serbia, we just updated our list of partners, sent it to the government each year. It was very easy to engage and we were very well-respected. It was easy for all donors; it wasn't just us. But as a lead donor that can deliver, that bought us a lot of respect and goodwill.

Q: Okay, great. I interrupted you to get that background, but you were talking about the budget being at its high watermark when you arrived.

FRITZ: Yes. So, we had $50 million. That was cut in half within two years and then reduced even further, so we had to quickly reduce the portfolio, downsize programming. And then, we didn't have clear direction from Washington as to where the Mission was going. And if you

remember how the decision to close Montenegro came about, you can imagine there was a lot of concern that we could be next, or any mission in E&E could be next, particularly in the Balkans.

Q: And this was budgetary reasons, or was there something with regard to the relationship with Serbia?

FRITZ: It was purely budget. Well, I would say purely budget, and there was a push from the USAID administrator at the time to close missions. And I think because we weren't doing traditional development, we were ripe for the picking, if you will. And if you travel to Eastern Europe, if you travel to the Balkans, you say, oh, why is there an assistance program here? But quite honestly, a lot of the most important work we were doing was on the democracy front. And so there was a really good reason for us to be there. And you look now, there's been so much backsliding in all the countries in the Balkans. I think the budget cuts were short-sighted. They've come back up since then. But we had to plan for the eventual closeout because we were maybe scarred from the Montenegro decision. And so we started doing some scenario planning and the budget was so uncertain as well. We said, "Okay, if we get this much, this is what we would do if we get less or more, or we're zeroed out in two years from now, this is how we close out the Mission." And we actually put those plans together.

Q: I did look online and found that it was around this time that the European Union put Serbia on its candidate list for EU membership. And it seems odd that we would be cutting the program at the same time that they were beginning to discuss accession to the EU. Was that considered by Washington at all? You would have thought we might've wanted to accelerate the program then to help.

FRITZ: Well, that's one way of looking at it, Carol. But I think decision makers in Washington saw it as, "Oh, we can pull out because the Europeans are here." We argued that the European Union is not a development agency. They have a lot of money that they make available but they make the acceding country get their systems in place before they release those funds. Usually the first program they establish is for agriculture support and those funds go through host government systems that have to be certified. There's an assumption that the countries will be able to manage the assistance. Quite honestly, we knew differently. We knew that you needed to build up the capacity before you do that, but that's not how the European Union operates. I think they're better now, but in the early days, it was just a lot of money out there, but without the absorptive capacity. What we've seen over and over again, and I saw it very distinctly in Serbia, was that we could develop the capacity for these countries and these institutions to then absorb the European Union funds, particularly host government institutions.

Because we had been working with civil society and media for a long time, they had the capacity. When I went back to Serbia on a six-month PSC after I retired, some of our local partners were getting direct funding, so the localization process did happen. We started that

process when I was in Serbia. I don't know if you remember that Raj Shah wanted us to put, I think it was 50% of our funds through local partners. The way we had approached it from Serbia was that we put the administrator's directive aside and did as much as we thought could be absorbed responsibly. In the end it added up to 50%, but not because we said we will do 50%. We did it smartly.

In terms of Government to Government (G2G) assistance, we worked with a regional development agency to provide economic development assistance to small and medium enterprises. We started by getting them ready and certified to be able to absorb funds and manage them. We had a really great FM office and our controller worked with the NGOs that we had supported through U.S. implementing partners, whether they were media related or civil society more broadly to prepare them for receiving funds directly. Again, when I came back, I learned that we have granted even more funds directly to local organizations. So that process has progressed, but we started it back then and it was successful.

I think one of the challenges of localization is that when we move from funding programs through big U.S. organizations with higher overhead costs, to directly funding the same activities through local organizations, we're not going to spend the same amount of money for the same program. We were nervous about overdoing it, giving them too much money. It wasn't only a concern about digesting the money, managing the resources and implementing the programs, but also not creating a large organization with lots of staff that can't be sustained after USAID funding ends. I think that's a risk that we need to pay attention to in localization.

Q: A very important point. You were doing this scenario planning. You had a lot of different issues that you were trying to grapple with, localization being one of them, as well as selecting the priority sectors and work. But just on localization, when you went back later, have these local organizations become more sustainable over time? Do they have multiple resources that they're tapping into?

FRITZ: Yeah, definitely. They have become more sustainable. One is an election-related organization that monitors elections, including electoral laws, and they advocate for more democratic approaches to elections. They are called the Center for Research, Transparency, and Accountability (CRTA). They now receive direct USAID funding. When I came back to Serbia, I met with them and they were very appreciative of not only the funding, but also all the organizational capacity building we provided. They commented on how helpful it was to go through the USAID certification process to be able to receive funds directly, even if it was painful at times. They said handholding and support from the controller's office really helped them. But the funding side is more challenging particularly for DG organizations. Where is that funding going to come from?

Q: To go back again for a moment to the work the controller's office was doing, was there a special unit within the controller's office that focused on doing these? Because that's what they had in the Russia mission, an internal audit unit that did that.

FRITZ: No, we used our financial analysts who were part of the controller's office. We had two really strong financial analysts and they were the leads on it and they were excellent.

Q: Okay, that's the same as Russia; they were financial analysts in the controller's office.

FRITZ: We didn't staff up for localization. And here's the thing. Because we didn't know which direction we were going in terms of funding increasing, decreasing, or saying the same, localization actually helped our mission in two ways. One was as our funding was going down, it addressed the issue that I was talking about earlier about not giving too much money to nascent local organizations, but also within the staff, we were trying to build skills for direct assistance, for consulting, for mentoring, things like that, skills that they could use outside of USAID if they if the mission closed. So we thought through some of that in a way that furthered our mission, but also thought ahead about how can we help these folks get jobs if we were to close.

Q: Okay, that's super. So as you were doing this scenario planning and basically re-looking at the strategy for the mission, did you have to prepare something for Washington or were you just doing this on your own?

FRITZ: We were just doing it on our own. We decided that we needed to, and it was a really helpful thing. It was reassuring to staff that we were thinking through the options. We had an excellent senior team and we brought in Bill Granger, a retired, very experienced EXO. Bill was really helpful in teasing out from us what that could look like programmatically and financially and so forth and, and put together the plan for us. It was really reassuring to us and staff that we had something that we thought through, what made sense so that we weren't doing everything on the fly. Going back to Montenegro, nothing had been thought through so that we wanted to avoid that. It was a really good way of thinking ahead and getting ready for whatever might hit us.

Q: And so how did you define the priorities?

FRITZ: Well, again, the biggest need was the DG side, the biggest gaps if you looked at the Freedom House Nations in Transit gaps were on the DG side. Economically, Serbia was doing much better than politically, so we prioritized DG. But we felt like we couldn't do DG programming alone, that that wouldn't sell in Serbia, so we did keep some economic development work through the central regional development agency that we assisted. We had had large agriculture and competitiveness programs. We had a lot of money going into both of those programs that we phased out. And we had had a local economic development program previously and worked with some of the local offices of the regional development agency. So we

decided to focus on economic development, but by directly funding the national regional development agency that worked with the regional development offices around Serbia. We still had a hand in economic development, but more at the local level.

On the democracy side, one of the areas we prioritized was judicial reform because we had been working in the area for a long time. Also, the EU was just getting its feet wet with developing programs in the judicial sector. Here is a good example of collaboration. And so we had had a successful, actually quite a nice program with the misdemeanor courts, which was the level of the judicial system that most citizens came in contact with. We were doing things like automating the case assignment system, cleaning up and scanning all of the paper files, and making the intake system more transparent and welcoming. We actually had a good judicial strengthening program before that, but when the EU came in, we were working with these misdemeanor courts which are all over the country. So the EU saw that program and said, "Gee, that needs to be done with all the courts in the country." They had money so they asked us to design their program for them. We hired an expert to work with our DG staff to design the program. I would say we were half successful. My EU counterpart was all in, but I wouldn't say the EU bureaucracy was all in.

USAID works with multi-year, three- to five-year contracts or grants. We incrementally fund those contracts or grants. That's not how the EU works. When they design a program, it's only for two years maximum and all the money is obligated up front. And then it takes them forever to actually spend the money. Or by the time they get the program up and running, it's been so many years that they have to redesign it before they can start implementing it. So what we were proposing was very different than the EU bureaucracy was used to. We designed a $20-$25 million program to work with all the other courts around the country. It was nearly a "copy-paste" of what we were already doing with the misdemeanor courts so it wasn't anything very risky or unique, untried. It's something we've done all over the Balkans.

The head of the EU in Serbia wanted to push the envelope. He had an ulterior motive. He was managing way more money than us with about half the staff. If he could change the way they did things, it would be enormously helpful to him. The maximum length of program they could do was, I think, four and a half years, so that's what we did. We proposed a four and a half-year program. However, when it hit the EU bureaucracy, they said, "No, it can't be that long." I remember distinctly my EU counterpart brought in representatives of all the EU member states to review the program that was being proposed. I was shocked to see nobody wanted to see a four-year program, they didn't want to see that much money. So it wasn't only the bureaucracy that rejected it. I think in the end it was like $12 million over two years. It didn't end up being what it could have been, but it was a good way of us working together. And I don't know what happened, but I'm hopeful that they were able to follow on that two-year program with another one so that it ended up with maybe a four- or five-year program to complete what needed to be

done. It was an attempt to collaborate in a real way with another very important donor. And it was worth the effort for us to try. It didn't end up as good as I wanted it to be, but it's interesting.

Q: Did they actually think that you could do capacity building more quickly, or was it just that they didn't want to make commitments longer term? Is it more of a financial thing or a naivete about how you do capacity building?

FRITZ: I don't think it related to timing of capacity building. I think it was just a very different approach, not wanting to make financial commitments that far ahead. And they don't incrementally fund projects so maybe a concern about tying up resources. Maybe they do now, but back then it wasn't in their toolbox.

Q: Okay. Those are important points, but actually really fascinating that you all worked that closely with the EU and that they asked you to design a program for them.

FRITZ: Yeah. And I think some member states didn't like that, actually. That was another piece of it – I didn't get warm and fuzzy vibes from them. That's my own interpretation.

Q: You've referred to some policy reform work that you all did related to the World Bank's "Doing Business Report" that you did some work on labor law and construction permitting. Can you talk a bit about that and how you started?

FRITZ: We had an economic policy reform project that was focused on the business enabling environment, so we did continue that work when we downsized because there was still a big need for reform in that area. The contractor, which started about the same time that I arrived in Serbia, came in with their work plan which was not pushing the envelope at all. I pushed back asking them "What are the biggest constraints to doing business?" They pointed to construction permitting and labor law, which were not part of their work plan. They said that it's too hard, high risk, low probability of success. Thinking that we may have only four or five years left in Serbia, or maybe not even that much time, I thought (and asked them), "Do we really want to make a difference or do we want to just work at the margins?" I told them that I had their back and that we at least needed to try to tackle these two reforms. If they didn't advance by year two, we would pull back. But we had to try to really make a difference in these key areas that could change the business enabling environment. And so they did, and they did a great job.

The contractor started with a lot of analytical work. We got to the point where we needed to identify champions in the government. It was different for each reform. On labor law, we had to be very careful because it was so politically sensitive. Advising a country that it needs to raise its retirement age because its pension system is not sustainable is sensitive. Telling them that they need to close the gap on all the reasons that people can retire early – all that needed to be tightened up, but USAID couldn't come in and do that. We could do the analysis. We could say

this is what the European Union standard is, or what many European Union countries of your size do. We could bring people together. So we quietly brought the labor unions together with the government and businesses for tripartite discussions. It wasn't a public thing. I wasn't really involved. It was our implementing partner quietly analyzing and then organizing and informing these discussions so that they could come to an agreement on whatever was politically feasible. So that's the way that process worked for the reform of the labor law.

We had a dinosaur as the Minister for Infrastructure. Construction was a hugely corrupt sector, but there was a lot of potential. At the time, you didn't see any construction going on. And for a country that came out of a war and so many years of neglect from the communist system, it was falling behind on infrastructure compared to other countries in the region. Construction could be the engine of growth for a country like Serbia. That's the analysis we did, but we couldn't get anywhere with the Minister who was just stringing us along. So I went to the ambassador and said, "We really need to get to the prime minister and have him help us on this. If we don't have the political will, we need to pull back because we're going nowhere right now. We're wasting a lot of money." He brought me to one of his regular meetings that he had with the prime minister. I made the pitch and he said, "Yes, it will be done." And it was. The parliament passed a new construction permitting law. Now there's a lot of construction going on in Serbia. On the down side, there is also a lot of corruption in the sector so it didn't pan out the way I think we would have liked to have seen but it was an engine of growth. Certainly, it's achieved that.

Q: Right and I do think that's a sector that probably has corruption in every country.

FRITZ: Yeah, probably. I may be naive, but yeah, you're right.

Q: So, in the first example on labor law, the team did a lot of analysis and brought different interest groups together for dialogue. Champions evolved out of that and then led the process for change. So, it was two completely different techniques that were used, but both successful.

FRITZ: Yeah. And I give so much credit to our implementing partner. Joe Lowther, the chief of party, was phenomenal, just so smart and a great leader and was able to navigate two very different types of reforms successfully. I give a lot of credit to Joe and his team, his deputy chief of party was really great too. So they really did this in a way that I credit them.

Q: Was an evaluation ever done of the program? Because it sounds like a really very interesting case study.

FRITZ: So I don't know that an evaluation was done. Joe shared with me after I left Serbia a nice write-up of the success story but I think that was the contractor pulling that together. I don't think USAID did that. I'm sure we touted our successes, but you know, on the labor law, I think we had to be careful too. We didn't want to take credit for something that's fraught with criticisms on all

sides. But it was good that it happened. I think that's one of those cases where USAID can quietly stand in the background and take credit internally, but not really tout it.

Q: Right, but I think there's some important internal lessons from how you all did it, particularly in doing it in a very quiet way and allowing people to debate those issues internally without a lot of public attention. In your CV, you mention evaluation in the mission. Did you all do some special efforts on that front as part of your contingency planning, not knowing what the future would be?

FRITZ: No, we did an evaluation of our elections programming. Honestly, my memory is terrible, so I can't point to much other than to say that it was a time in the agency where we were starting to improve our internal capacity for evaluation and to develop tools. Missions were being encouraged to do more evaluations and we were being given the tools to do them better. I think we were just part of that process. When I arrived in Serbia, we had done an evaluation of our agriculture program, which was a really good program. The evaluation came back very negative and I didn't feel like it was fair or that there was a lot to back up some of the opinions that were expressed in that evaluation. I would just say that when we went into the next evaluation, we were very careful from our side to do it better, to draft a better scope of work. We learned on the first one that we asked too many questions, so for the next one we reduced them. Now that's common guidance in the agency, but in those days, we were winging it. That's one of the things we did for the elections evaluation and shared that tip with Washington. Raj Shah touted our evaluation in his annual report that year. But that's about all I can remember from the process.

Q: Right, those are important lessons. Your CV also talks about offices located in Belgrade, Niš, Novi Pazar. Were these OTI offices or were these different USAID offices? Or project implementation offices? Were there any direct hires assigned outside of Belgrade?

FRITZ: So these were offices set up to monitor the first program, the country-wide community development program. I think we had four or five offices around the country. So we had one up in the north in Vojvodina. And then these three in south Serbia. When our funding went down, we decided to focus our economic programming in the more depressed regions in the southeast and southwest. Ethnic Albanians populate the southeast and ethnic Bosniaks populate the southwest. Both of those ethnic groups and regions were being ignored by the central government. They are very difficult to get to, especially Novi Pazar. And the infrastructure is just awful. We were concerned about instability if you have dissatisfied, disaffected ethnic minorities in an economically disadvantaged region in a country that has a history of ethnically driven wars.

When I first got to Serbia we had the Niš Office south of Belgrade, another one in Vranje in South Serbia, the ethnic Albanian region, and one in Novi Pazar, which is in the Sanđak region where Bosniaks live. As our programs moved further and further south, we closed our Niš office

because it isn't that far from Belgrade. But the other two offices were in places that are very hard to get to, so we kept them open as long as possible. We closed them by the end of my time, which was a hard thing to do because of the terrain of the country, the focus of the program, and for a lot of other reasons. We had eyes and ears on the ground, which the embassy also really appreciated. Anytime anybody from the embassy went down to these regions, the FSNs staffing each of the offices were the go-to because they knew what was going on in the regions. So they informally supported other parts of the embassy.

Q: Okay; so they were staffed with FSNs and were formal offices doing program management and oversight?

FRITZ: Oh yeah.

Q: It's interesting because USAID doesn't often have those kinds of subunits although I suspect there's great value to them.

FRITZ: Well, I tried to open up a field office in eastern Ukraine for almost two years and I know it was worked on for another year after I left and then Russia's all-out war started, It's impossible to do now with the embassy infrastructure and, you know, the security requirements, you couldn't do that today, but we were lucky that it was done at a time when you could. They were a legacy that we really benefited from. I was heavily involved in trying to open up that field office in Kramatorsk in eastern Ukraine. I spent a lot of time on that and it just inched forward. And I had the ambassador's support. We had $120 million in new programming in eastern Ukraine which was a six-hour train ride from Kyiv, which was the reason we needed this field office, to better monitor our programming. It was taking too much time and then the war happened. It is much harder to do today.

Q: Okay. You've mentioned the ambassador some, but I wonder if you could talk a bit more about relationships between USAID and the embassy more generally in Serbia.

FRITZ: It was good. The relationship was very good. I think in smaller posts, it may be easier, but no, it was very good. We had a good working relationship with the political section, the economic section, well, it was PolEcon together because it was so small. Public Affairs as well -- they were one of the only other agencies that were implementing assistance programs. We also had INL and the Department of Justice (DOJ), that was a little bit harder. It was a little bit harder to coordinate with DOJ. But yeah, we worked well with the embassy, the ambassador. Both ambassadors, I think appreciated USAID for what we brought to the table. And during the summer of my third year I was the acting DCM between DCMs and that gave me a good opportunity to see some of the other work of the rest of the embassy in a way that I don't normally see it. So yeah it worked really well but we had ambassadors that respected what we did and so that helps.

Q: I assume they were career ambassadors as well. Did you have VIP visitors to Serbia while you were there? Any secretaries of state or others?

FRITZ: No, there was always the Kosovo dialogue going on. So, there were always people from State coming in for that, but that never really involved us. It was more on the political side so we didn't get involved. That was the big issue and continues to be.

Q: Yes; we had talked about this a bit before, whether going directly from Kosovo to Serbia created any challenges for you. I think you indicated that you managed it, but I'm just sort of curious.

FRITZ: No, you know, it's interesting. Just comparing the two, there used to be, or probably still is, a weekly DVC between Embassy Belgrade and Embassy Pristina. The idea behind it was to get everyone on the same page and to have a U.S. position, rather than taking the sides of the countries in which you are stationed – which I think is easy to do when you're working in this part of the world. What's interesting is that USAID was so heavily involved in Kosovo because we had a lot of money and we had our fingers in everything. Any big issue, whether it was energy or anything else – issues that were important to the embassy and important to the United States, we were involved. So we were an important part of that country team and that DVC. On the other hand, USAID was not usually included as a DVC participant from Belgrade. Sometimes we were included but we didn't have much of a role because the work that we were doing did not have a lot to do with the Dialogue between the two countries or even contribute to the Dialogue, even indirectly. There was just nothing. For example, I told you about how we were helping to stand up the new municipalities in Kosovo. That was a big deal for both country teams. We weren't doing anything like that in Serbia. So it was just a very different relationship between USAID and State and just the nature of our program, the nature of the country. Again, we participated, we were part of it, but it was in more of a listening mode than anything else.

Q: And were there any DG programs related to conflict resolution or, you know, Search for Common Ground or any groups like that working in Serbia?

FRITZ: No, no, not at the time.

Q: That's interesting. I'm going to ask a question and you may not want to answer it so we can just delete it from the transcript when it comes. But you had mentioned last week that you were an introvert and that it took time to learn how to play the external role. And I'm wondering if you have any thoughts about that transition that new mission directors have to make. Any advice you might have? I ask because I had seen in the past Myers-Briggs profiles for USAID mission directors. And there were a surprising number of introverts who became USAID mission directors. Any thoughts on that subject?

FRITZ: I think part of my challenge as well was the fact that I was a DG officer in closed spaces, so you don't do a lot of events in those kinds of environments, right? As I was coming up through the ranks, I think I did one event, it was a community development event in Central Asia when we did the conflict mitigation program in the Ferghana Valley. So I didn't get a lot of experience there. And then I went to this regional job where it wasn't my role to do any of that. Then I went to Kosovo where I was the inside manager, not the outside manager. I didn't have a lot of opportunities moving up in my career. So my advice to an introvert would be to seek out those opportunities or jobs that give you that. Or even if your job doesn't have those types of components, talk to your supervisor about creating those opportunities. When we had these big community development programs, a lot of times we were looking for people to represent us to go out and cut the ribbon, to "spread the wealth." We let anyone do the ribbon cutting for us – embassy political officers, economic, anybody who wanted to get out and see the country, see our projects, see our work, because there were too many for us to have the mission director do all of them. So make it a conscious effort to take advantage of those opportunities and to push for them as well because sometimes they won't come up. If I could do it over, I would build that into my own professional development plan to seek out those opportunities and to push for them and be conscious of making that happen as I was moving up through the agency. The training that USAID did at the Federal Executive Institute (FEI) was enormously helpful. They did the specific training, I don't know if you did it, but there's the one where they videotape you and then everybody critiques you.

Q: Yeah, no, I never did that, but I've heard people say that it was very valuable.

FRITZ: So that was helpful. I learned the things that I shouldn't do, like play with my papers that were in my hand. But also, I couldn't tell how I was coming off, and I actually received positive feedback. Even though I was a mess inside, I seemed confident when I was speaking. So it was helpful both ways, because I needed a little bit of that confidence boost. But then I learned these other little things that I was doing that were distracting. So that was a good training that I would encourage. Even if you can't do the FEI training, missions sometimes bring in training—that would be another thing to push for in your mission. And practice makes perfect—the more you do it, the easier it becomes. The other thing that I realized, too, for myself was if I got a speech two days before, if I had two nights to practice it, I was so much better than if I only had one night to practice it. So that it just came across much more naturally. It was just a whole lot better.

Q: Okay. That's all good advice. Did you have any other training? Was there any kind of training to go into senior management either for deputy director or mission director? I think they're doing some of that now, but when you were there, was there any kind of special training?

FRITZ: No, no, there wasn't. The FEI senior course was seen as preparation for mission directors so that's what I did.

Q: Okay. You were there for four years, and you said when you arrived, you were surprised at the pro-USAID and-American attitudes. Did that remain throughout the time you were there, or did it change?

FRITZ: I would say that the pro-USAID attitudes were quiet and behind the scenes. There were definitely parts of Serbia that were not pro-American. But the good working relationship with the Serbian government remained throughout the time I was there. I was shocked to see how things had changed by the time I came back in 2021. I left in 2014, so seven years later. It was consistent throughout the four years I was there. When I came back in 2021 it had done a 180. The prime minister then is now the president, Vučić, and the prime minister now is a woman who worked under several USAID programs, Ana Brnabić. So she knows USAID, she knows us. She was always a good partner. I don't know what happened to her, but when I came back, she was saying some pretty awful things about USAID, that we were undermining the government, that we were trying to undermine her, all kinds of things that were false. We weren't doing anything like that. And I was shocked, but also hurt because I knew her personally. I knew Ana and I know that she knows we don't do that. That's not part of what we're doing in Serbia. So it was a shock to me, but nobody in the mission or the ambassador seemed to be too upset because it apparently has become par for the course. The United States is a punching bag. The kick in the head was that she came to our 25th anniversary event and talked about how USAID changed her life. And just a week and a half before, she was saying these awful things publicly about us. So it was just a really bizarre thing. I don't know.

Q: Did you have a chance to talk to her?

FRITZ: No, I didn't. I wanted to, but it wasn't appropriate. You know, you don't want to get out in front of the embassy on some of these things. And she's the prime minister now.

If she was out of the prime minister's office, I would have said, “Let's go have coffee.” People had told me that she had changed a lot in the intervening years, so I guess that was just evidence. So it's changed a lot. And the government has become more authoritarian. I think it's become more challenging for the U.S.-Serbian relationship. So that plays into it.

Q: But USAID remains there, right?

FRITZ: Yeah. USAID remains there. The budget's gone up somewhat, so it's more stable. We're in a much better place as a mission. And yeah, things are okay.

Q: And they're primarily working on DG-related stuff, I would imagine.

FRITZ: Yes, to the extent they can.

Q: Some EG.

FRITZ: Yeah, there's some EG programming, competitiveness and innovation work going on in the EG sector, but more money in DG.

Q: Okay. So, you were there for four years and then you were looking for an onward assignment? So, how did that process go?

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AID/W, Europe/Eurasia Bureau, Deputy Assistant Administrator, 2014 - 2016

Q: It was the perfect job for you.

FRITZ: Yeah, it was a good home to come back to. And I had worked with Paige before. She's wonderful. It was a great opportunity. I was pleased that I was able to do that. You know that working in Washington has its pluses and minuses. I loved Washington. Before I went overseas, I didn't mind working in Washington. I always loved it. I didn't have the dread that I think some field people do, but it's also not that easy to do. It's a challenging job and you're not as close to the projects and the results of what we're doing, so that part's hard, but it was good. I was glad to be back in the bureau.

Q: So, was Paige Alexander the Assistant Administrator throughout the period that you were there?

FRITZ: No, she left. So she abandoned us to go to the Middle East Bureau. I think it was right after Christmas. So I was working with her for about five months before she left to be the AA of Middle East. Then I moved up as acting AA until about a couple months before I went to Ukraine, when Tom Melia came in. I was acting AA for the interim between Paige and Tom.

Q: Okay, so you were acting AA for an extended period of time. I was going to ask how you and Paige divided up responsibilities and whether you focused more on the Europe side? But, it sounds like you were acting AA for much of the time

FRITZ: Well, we did divide it up. Ukraine was front and center back then, because this was during the Maidan revolution and she had been following it. When I was in Serbia the revolution had just started, I guess. I wasn't focusing on it at all in Kenya. Ukraine was very political and at a very high level. So Paige was on top of Ukraine and we had a political DAA who also led things on Ukraine more on the working level. I took the Balkans and then of the Caucuses, I took Azerbaijan. That was my responsibility until Paige left and then I got up to speed on those other countries very quickly.

Q: Since you were overseeing the Balkans, was there still a program in Bulgaria or had it phased out or graduated?

FRITZ: Bulgaria had graduated when I was posted there. But that was also where one of the legacy foundations was established with funding from the Bulgarian American Enterprise Fund – it is called the America for Bulgaria Foundation.

Q: Right, and so you were doing some work from Washington with the foundation that had been created while you were there. You helped with the creation, but now you had to do some work related to its work?

FRITZ: Well, I didn't help with the creation of it at all, actually, I don't want to take credit for that. I don't know what year that happened, that transition, but it was the folks managing the enterprise funds in E&E, David Cowles and some others. They managed the transition, the process by which we approved transferring the money from successful enterprise funds and putting them into some kind of legacy foundation. My understanding is that's not possible anymore. When I was acting AA we were trying to get Congress to agree to doing that with one of the other foundations, the enterprise funds, I can't remember which one, but they wouldn't approve it. But back then, the economic growth folks managed that process and the approval to establish these foundations.

Q: Were you involved with the issues with the Congress concerning the Russian foundation? I believe that Treasury was repaid for the original capital and then everything above that was to go into the legacy foundation, which I think was created, but never got off the ground.

FRITZ: Yeah, I think the record for the longest hold on a CN is the one for the U.S.-Russia Foundation establishing the legacy foundation. Paige did a lot of negotiations on that when she was AA. And quite honestly, it was not going anywhere, but the political DAA took that on when Paige left, and we still couldn't get anywhere, unfortunately.

Q: In a senior level job in Washington in a regional bureau probably took you into a fair amount of interagency work as well. Were there NSC issues that you had to deal with yourself? Or others that you had to keep the Administrator's office informed for their participation?

FRITZ: There was a lot of Kosovo work related to a coal-fired power plant they were trying to build. They have two, Kosovo A and B, and there's been discussions ever since I was in Kosovo many years ago for building Kosovo C. The World Bank was taking the lead on that and just wasn't going anywhere so there was interest in USAID being involved in that. But recall that we're now in the Obama administration. The president had just been at COP (Conference of the

Parties) and the idea of doing this was not very popular, so we went back and forth and had a series of interagency meetings and got agreement that we should move forward on it.

Q: So, you beat up the environmentalists?

FRITZ: I don't like to say that because I'm an environmentalist, but it would be much cleaner. And for Kosovo's independence, it would be really important. And not only that, linking Kosovo's energy production with Albania's, which has a lot of dams that create hydro energy that would balance things out for both of those countries and it would make the grid more stable and the supply more stable. There's a lot of good reasons for it. I don't remember my other talking points, but those were some of them.

Q: Okay. I was just trying to tease you. I assume you also had to spend a lot of time with the coordinator's office as well in the State Department during this time or were you able to delegate that to others?

FRITZ: Yeah, we had a weekly call with the coordinator's office. It was challenging. I'll just leave it at that. Very challenging.

Q: In part because budgets were going down for Europe during that period?

FRITZ: We liked to joke back then that Russia saved us. So yes, as we were talking about earlier, the trend in the region was going down until the Maidan revolution and Russia's little green men invaded Ukraine. Then the region again became a priority again. The challenge was that we were trying to cobble together funds to help stabilize the financial system in Ukraine. Right after the Maidan, we were putting together three $1 billion loan guarantees. We have to put up an amount of money based on the calculated risk which changed over the three guarantees. There was no money for that within our budget. The agency cobbled together money from Afghanistan, from Iraq and I forget from where else it came. Initially, it was hard because there was no extra money and we had to pull together these loan guarantees. When the budget process kicked in, it got easier because I think people were more willing to accept higher budget levels and Congress appropriated higher budget levels for the entire region, not just Ukraine, but Ukraine got the bulk of it. So it breathed new life into the rest of the region.

Q: Historically, career DAAs have often been brought into broader agency debates about where the agency's going. Some administrators have used DAAs to ground truth issues and to identify morale and other issues. Was there any of that during the period that you were a DAA? Thinking about how the agency goes forward?

FRITZ: I can't remember a specific discussion about the agency in general, how the agency goes forward. But certainly we were involved in different issues, specific issues, and were brought

into the discussion. I reported to the deputy administrator, Al Lenhart, and I've got to tell you, I don't think I've had such a high-level person pay so much attention to me and wanting to know my input on things. We would have one-on-ones periodically. He encouraged me – he said I was too quiet in those bigger meetings. I'm just not one of those people who's going to talk a lot. I think a lot. And I mull things over, but I'm not going to be out there, particularly if it's a brand-new issue. I'll think about it. And I may have some ideas a week or two down the road. I don't think on my feet that well. So I wouldn't speak in those meetings. He gave me feedback that I had to speak up in meetings, told me that I have valuable input, that they wanted to hear from me. I was shocked to hear that from the deputy administrator and that he even noticed whether I was speaking or not, but also, like I said, he asked for my input. We met from time to time and he asked for my input. And he encouraged me to provide that input at broader intra-agency meetings.

I also was part of the group that led the effort to overhaul HCTM (Human Capital and Talent Management). I participated in a number of off-sites with Deloitte that identified the areas of focus for that reform.

Q: Ambassador Lenhart had a military background. Is that correct? So he knew how much attention the military gives to training and preparing future leaders to perform well.

FRITZ: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I appreciated it. He was honest. He didn't paper things over. He was very straightforward. I needed to hear it.

Q: You had mentioned earlier that one of the reasons the Serbia budget went down was because the administrator, Raj Shah, was looking for places to close out missions. He wanted to focus more on certain development countries. Were you able to have further discussions with him about that? Or was he still there at this point? I can't remember how long he stayed as the administrator.

FRITZ: He stayed for a little while longer. I had a short discussion about Russia with him and briefed him on a topic for a National Security Council (NSC) meeting. He was going to a principal's meeting and he said, “That's great, but I don't agree with you and I'm going in with a totally different viewpoint” and left the meeting. I felt like Paige had a magic touch with him. He did listen to Paige and I don't know whether it was because I was not a political or that Paige has a way about her that she can convince people. I think she was just much better at it so he listened to her in a way that he just totally dismissed me. So that's the only conversation I had with him was on one topic. And he clearly didn't agree with the bureau and dismissed our recommendation. But other than that, no, I didn't really engage with him, except the East Africa mess which was before that. He was involved in the whole East Africa thing, but that's another story.

Q: Right. There were other big-ticket things during his time as administrator, for example, creation of the innovation lab and the food security initiative. From your platform in the E&E Bureau, were you involved in any of that? Or was that just something else the agency was doing?

FRITZ: So we tried to be, we kept saying, "We are here. Pick us! Pick us!" Anytime something came up that we thought would be good for Serbia, we tried to get selected to be one of the countries and we just couldn't get the attention of Washington. I don't know why that was, maybe we were too small, we were the wrong region. I remember feeling like Serbia had a lot to offer related to agriculture, so Feed the Future. Serbia also had good scientists. I thought we could be a good learning lab here but just couldn't get the attention. So no, unfortunately we weren't involved in that and in any of the special things that came up, the initiatives by that administration.

Q: Okay, Are there any things during that time as senior DAA that you'd like to highlight? It's hard to ask questions since there was so much going on during that time. It's hard to know what exactly you were involved with.

FRITZ: As you know, there are a lot of ongoing processes that are grinding, the budget processes and all that, where you're advocating for resources—that is what I was involved in. I highlighted the Kosovo power plant issue which was time consuming and ultimately, well, at that time successful, I think they pulled back. I don't think Kosovo C is moving forward anymore. For the Ukraine sovereign loan guarantees, Paige managed the first one and I think Jonathan Katz, our political DAA, handled the other two after she left, but I also helped. Those were big deals and hugely important for Ukraine and did help stabilize the country. Those were all done from Washington in partnership with the mission and the interagency in both Kyiv and DC. We insisted on some conditions precedent, in areas in which our mission was heavily involved. Although we did everything to prepare them in Washington, they were actually signed in the field. But we managed the interagency process for making them happen and the budget to get the money and so forth.

On the legacy foundations created from the enterprise funds, those are a tough nut to crack and they're very different. The enterprise funds themselves were created at a different time and place with different USAID responsibilities with respect to oversight. That meant that I could only work at the margins. I helped a little bit on the Bulgarian one, but they didn't want our help nor saw any benefit to it so that was a lot more challenging. I wouldn't say it was a huge success, but yeah, that's about it. And I was only there for two years, too.

Q: Okay. So, you went off to a really exciting job. I guess you were in the right position to be able to identify that as a good possibility.

FRITZ: Yeah. Well, I'm ashamed to admit that. As you know, you're supposed to be in DC for three years so I was not even eligible to bid nor was I thinking about bidding. I was trying to find a good mission director for Ukraine and was coming up empty. I ran into Paige in the elevator one day and I said, "I can't find anybody for Ukraine. I don't know why. I would love this job." And she said, "Well, why don't you take the job?" I responded, "Because I'm not eligible to bid." She said, "Well, why don't you just see?" And so I said, "Hmm, okay."

You have to get permission to bid out of cycle. You send a memo to the deputy administrator to get approval to bid. I never got the memo back, but I put in my bids and the rest of the paperwork. I still didn't know whether I was eligible because of that paper, I don't think it was ever signed. But I got the job. So that happened. And it was a great way to end a long career in USAID. It was an important place where we could make a difference. We made a huge difference in Ukraine. We didn't have a lot of money to begin with, but huge money was coming down the pike. That's an exciting time to be in a mission to be planning for big important projects. We had a lot of money, but also a lot of good people as well. We had a great staff mostly there when I arrived and then more good people came in while I was there. So yeah, it was an exciting time.

Democracy and Election Subject Reader

SUSAN KOSINSKI FRITZ
USAID
(1989-2020)

Susan Kosinski Fritz studied at Rutgers University and American University before entering USAID as a Presidential Management Intern in 1989. She served in many different positions in several countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. She was interviewed by Carol Peasley in May 2024.

Topical Focus -- DRG Programming Development

Q: Where was this office located? Was there a chief financial officer for the agency? And were you operating out of that office? Or who was the person, the chief honcho?

FRITZ: I think the chief honcho was Bob Bonifant. I worked for Wayne McKeel and Bob Kramer.

Q: Yes, I recognize those names.

FRITZ: It was in an annex across the street from the State Department -- not in Columbia Plaza, but on the other side. Now it's part of the George Washington University campus.

But the great thing about the PMI program is you rotate to different jobs during the two years you are in the program. Early in 1990 I was looking to do my first rotation and it was right as the Berlin Wall fell. There was a position open in what was then the Asia, Near East, and Europe Bureau (ANE) in the Office of Development Resources under the Office of Technical Resources. Jerry Hyman was a political appointee in that office, had no staff or anything, and he was leading democracy work for the Bureau. They were looking for a PMI to help him. So I was again at the right place at the right time.

Eastern Europe was already developed – these were not Third World countries. So the programs we were doing were not traditional development, and democracy programming was also very new. So you didn't have a lot of people within the Agency clamoring to do this kind of work. And so again, I was at the right place and the right time. I started working with Jerry and I knew immediately that this is where I wanted to be. I found my life's work. And it was just so fortunate that I was able to fall into it. Then I made the ANE Bureau my home base for the rest of my PMI program. I did other rotations as well. But I eventually came back to ANE and worked there until I went into the Foreign Service.

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AID/Washington/Eastern Europe Program, Democracy Officer, 1991 - 1995

Q: Okay. So, then you were in the democracy office of the Asia, Near East, and Europe Bureau? Was there a technical democracy office at that time? Was it your home base as a PMI? And you were there for several years?

FRITZ: Well, different iterations. It was Asia, Near East, and Europe Bureau (ANE), then it became the Europe and Near East Bureau (ENE), and then it became the Europe Bureau. Then the Newly Independent States (NIS) Task Force merged with the Europe Bureau and I think the Bureau was called Europe and the Newly Independent States (ENI). It went through many different iterations. I was there until we joined with the NIS Task Force, and Gerry Donnelly became the head of the combined Democracy and Governance Office. I headed up the local government work in Eastern Europe so when we merged, I headed up the combined local governance team. By the time I left I was the deputy of the Rule of Law and Governance division.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about those early democracy programs that you were helping to develop in the early 1990s. I assume Washington played a major role.

FRITZ: Absolutely. We had the Mission for Europe in Washington that worked just like a Mission in the field, but we were not based in Eastern Europe. That was the first interesting aspect of it. Programmatically, the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act had been passed in 1989 and it included up to $12 million for democracy programming for Poland and Hungary. There was some sort of gentleman's agreement that those funds would go through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). So we made a grant to the NED. By the time I joined the Bureau, the first grant had been made. And we kept amending that grant to add funding, usually for the next set of elections in one or another Eastern European country. But the interesting thing was that this gentleman's agreement was with one member of Congress while another objected. So every time a Congressional Notification (CN) went up to the Hill to notify the next tranche of funding to be added to the NED agreement, the objecting member of Congress would put a hold on the CN until Jerry went up and explained what we were doing, was told that they didn't agree, and but then they would lift the hold.

Let me take a step back. NED was established with four core grantees, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the Free Trade Union Institute (FTUI), and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). NED would bundle proposals from each of these four core grantees along with a number of direct grants it had planned to make to Eastern European nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These were part of each amendment we did to the original NED grant.

Q: So, they were even giving grants to NDI and IRI.

FRITZ: Yes. NED would submit a pretty detailed proposal or application for what sub grants they would make. "NDI would get this, IRI would get that. We'd make these grants for these purposes." Then we'd send up a CN and it would say, we're going to grant these funds to the NED for these purposes and subgrants. And as I mentioned, one Congressman was happy about that, but others weren't. And so the CN would be put on hold. Jerry would have to go up and justify why we were giving the money to the NED because they were getting their own appropriation. Every single time it was this back and forth, back and forth, and eventually the hold would be lifted and then we'd obligate the funds.

We knew that that wasn't a long-term approach to funding democracy building programs in Eastern Europe, but it was a good way for us to get our feet wet, to learn who the players were. As we were monitoring the grant, we would go out and meet—more Jerry, not me, but we'd go meet the partners and some of NED's sub-grantees. And it was really, again, a great introduction. If you think about it, in those early days there were elections coming one right after the other so our ability to respond at that point as an Agency was limited. We just didn't have any programming to respond to these. This was a really good way for USAID to support democracy building in Eastern Europe in the early days. That was the beginning. By the end of the first year, I would say we were well aware that we had to be designing our own projects and doing our own

procurements. So we did. Jerry is very strategic and he was really great at giving us the strategic framework under which we would develop these so-called projects.

Now if you remember those days, the Agency had PADs (Project Appraisal Documents) and PIDs (Project Identification Documents) that were very thick. We "designed" six projects, the documentation for which were five to ten pages each max: civil society; elections and political processes; media; local government; rule of law; and parliamentary assistance. We also had an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellow, DeAndra Beck, who, when I was rotating to other jobs, was honchoing all of this. So I shouldn't take credit for this because really it was Jerry and Deandra. And then I supported as well. We just wrote up from the top of our heads and from what we learned in the first year through working with NED and its grantees. These were regional projects that we authorized money through and then we started doing the procurements. The two that I could speak about in more depth are local government and parliamentary assistance. We put out a Request for Applications (RFA) for local government assistance and ended up making grants to a number of organizations. One was to the University of Southern California (USC).

Q: So you did an RFA that allowed you to select multiple implementing partners?

FRITZ: Yes. We had one for Poland, one for Hungary, one for Czechoslovakia (later the country split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia), and we had one for the Baltics.

Q: Okay. So, it wasn't one implementing partner for the region. It was individual implementing partners for countries. Okay. Sorry for interrupting. So one was USC.

FRITZ: So USC did a pilot in a community in a town called Szekesfehervar – it's a mouthful. Jerry used to call it Boston. USC was also working in Budapest at one of the universities. They were supposed to be training local government officials based on the lessons learned in the pilot municipality. It didn't quite work that way, but it was a nice idea. Unfortunately, their Chief of Party, a well-known Public Administration expert, only wanted to teach undergraduate students. In Czechoslovakia, we had the U.S. Institute for Public Administration as our implementing partner. They were working with state public administration agencies, which we didn't know much about. We learned pretty quickly that they were very old school, not interested in reform. They were bureaucrats from the communist system. Nothing really came of that program. It was not one of our more successful ones. In those days, it was a lot of throwing things at the wall and seeing what sticks, what works and what doesn't.

In the Baltics, our implementing partner was the International Executive Service Corps (IESC). President Bush had made his famous thousand points of light speech and shortly after that, I believe IESC was set up. And while initially they were focused on the private sector, they recruited volunteers with public sector experience to work with local governments in the Baltics.

I wouldn't say that was one of our more successful local government programs. I remember going out to monitor one of the activities and found one of the IESC advisors sitting at a local government conference where he did not speak the local language and there was no English translation. He was totally lost and in over his head. A stand-alone short-term advisor with no international experience and no programmatic infrastructure such as interpreters, no matter how good willed, can't be expected to have much of an impact.

The most successful program was in Poland through Rutgers University. A disclaimer: I didn't have anything to do with the selection. Jerry and DeAndra selected Rutgers while I was out on rotation. Rutgers had a professor by the name of Joanna Regulska. Joanna was a Polish émigré. Her dad, Jerzy Regulski, was the Minister for Local Government Reform. They set up this Foundation in Support of Local Democracy (FSLD), a local nonprofit organization in Poland. Rutgers would bring experts to come and help build their capacity. The Foundation had offices all over Poland that were providing training to local governments. At that time Poland was going through a pretty significant decentralization reform. So I think that combination made it one of the best programs, one of the more successful ones with which I was involved.

Jerry and I would ask ourselves, "Why was that one so good? What made that so successful?" And really it was a combination of things. We had Joanna, who is just a dynamo herself, and she knew so much and was just so smart, well plugged in and committed. And then you had her dad, who was the minister of local government reform at a time when decentralization is happening, so the government's committed to it. They were able to find really good people to run the foundation and their training centers. The project had all the perfect pieces. And it wasn't the kind of thing that you could replicate.

Coming full circle, I finished my career in Ukraine where I served from 2016-2020. At that time Ukraine was also undergoing a significant decentralization reform. It was very much under the radar which was an advantage because nobody really was paying attention to and thus, undermine it (common in Ukraine at that time). I went for a briefing on the program with the contractor and one of their subs was FSLD, which was helping Ukrainian municipalities design economic development plans. How great is that – the organization still exists and now provides assistance to others!

Q: That's the poster child for localization.

FRITZ: Absolutely, absolutely. But you know, it's funny because we weren't pushing to directly fund them and, particularly in those early days, supporting it through Rutgers was the best way to do it, but it didn't mean that localization didn't happen just because we weren't granting the funds directly to them. So I think there are many ways to look at localization.

Q: Now that's a wonderful, wonderful example. I've interviewed a couple of other people who have talked about the importance of decentralization and local government in democracy. And yet, if one steps back and looks at what USAID has done and its priorities in democracy building, that very seldom jumps out as being one of the key priorities. I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on that. Is it something that we need to look at more aggressively than we do, or perhaps it is now the norm to do it. And maybe it was just in my day that we didn't pay enough attention to it.

FRITZ: I don't know. When I started managing that grant in Poland, USAID had the Housing and Urban Development Office that, as you know, was very strong.

Q: And that's what they were focused on. Yes.

FRITZ: Well, not always. They had such a housing focus but there were a lot more resources going to local government more broadly, particularly in Eastern Europe. I think some programs were more successful than others. I think for some places, it's a way of bringing decision-making closer to the people in a way that is very tangible.

So when we were designing those projects and thinking about public administration, we focused on the decentralization and local governance aspects. But what happened? Initially, opposition parties made up of dissident groups won the first elections in these transitioning democracies. But they had no experience governing and let's face it, there was no roadmap for them on how to go from closed societies and economies to free market democracies. And there was a backlash in the next elections because life didn't all of the sudden get better for people. In many cases, the communists that were rebranded as social democrats were voted back in which caused a lot of hand-wringing in Washington. People were asking, "Oh my gosh, what did we do wrong? How did this happen?" We scratched our heads and Jerry opined, "Maybe we shouldn't have ignored public administration at the central level." Maybe we should have been focused on reform at the central level, because you had bloated bureaucracies that were draining the budget and were not so reformist. You had people who came into power that didn't know how to manage. Maybe we should have been helping them do a better job of managing. And maybe that would have helped them stay in power to advance reform. But 20-20 hindsight is easy, right?

Q: Right, well, it's probably a good field for future PhD research. Just another question on early democracy programming. The Latin American Bureau had started doing some democracy and rule of law work in the 1980s. Did you all in the Europe Bureau have discussions with the Latin American Bureau on any of their experience? Was there much cross fertilization across the agency?

FRITZ: Absolutely. There was something called the Tuesday Group of which Jerry was a member. I didn't go because I was pretty junior. The Tuesday Group included people from each

bureau managing democracy programming so that was a venue for people to exchange ideas. And I remember when I was in the DG Center looking at some of the rule of law work that had been done in Latin America and some of the lessons learned in that sector. For example, one study that was done on rule of law programming in Latin America found that the most successful programs included not only judges but also prosecutors and courts. So although the State Department International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) Bureau usually focused on support for prosecutors, I made a special effort to ensure that we were linked up in advancing rule of law. So yeah, there was a conscious effort to cross-fertilize through that Tuesday group. And then, as the Agency learned and documented more and more through the Democracy Center, I think we definitely learned from each other.

Q: Okay. Now, when you started talking about local government, you said there was another area that you were heavily involved with at the outset?

FRITZ: Yes, parliamentary assistance which was implemented by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) with oversight by the Frost Commission led by Congressman Martin Frost. So as you can imagine, managing that program, you have to be very careful. But fortunately, CRS did a great job. One of the bigger programs was with Hungary. They went into each Eastern European parliament and they computerized everything with huge equipment drops. They set up a research service and all that, things that they're really good at. And yeah, so it was an interesting program. It was very unique for USAID to do things that way, but it worked. And for what it was meant to do, it was a good program. The down side was that the range of programming was very limited because CRS was not really an implementing partner per se. And I think there were questions about sustainability and the ability of these parliaments to repair and replace the equipment as time went on.

Q: Who were some of the other major implementing partners across those early six areas? Do you recall?

FRITZ: Oh gosh, rule of law programming was implemented by the American Bar Association Central and Eastern European Law Initiative (ABA CEELI). We granted funds to them for several years. Initially, we did a 632(a) transfer to the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) for media programming. However, that did not really work out because they tended to implement small efforts – a study tour here, a small grant there – rather than comprehensive media assistance of the nature that would really have an impact. So eventually we started granting funds to Internews and IREX. Internews was more focused on broadcast media while IREX was more focused on print media, at least early on.

Elections and political process programs were implemented by the usual suspects, NDI, IRI, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). For civil society programming, we made a grant to the German Marshall Fund which was already doing work in Eastern Europe,

making small grants to civil society. Their key person was Deborah Harding and she was very well plugged into local civil society organizations throughout Eastern Europe. We granted funds to them to do more of what they were already doing. And that was also another great way of supporting democracy actors in Eastern Europe at the time. That was the best way for us to support civil society because, again, we were working out of the Mission in Washington. There was no way for us to get out there and really get to know the lay of the land in a way that they were already knowledgeable about.

Q: I'd always heard that there was a lot of interest from the U.S. in the early years of the Eastern European program, especially from the diaspora in the U.S. Did you see any of that from your perch on the democracy front?

FRITZ: Not really—at least compared to in the former Soviet Union where, for example, the Armenian diaspora was very active or in Ukraine. There was some interest from the Albanian diaspora and a little from the Lithuanian diaspora, some of which worked through IESC.

Q: Okay and it may have been less in the democracy programming. After the fall of the former Soviet Union in 1991/1992, a new office was set up. Did you remain on the Europe side throughout that period?

FRITZ: Yes, I was on the Europe side there. My understanding was there were some intra-agency battles going on. And for some reason, there was a decision way above my pay grade to keep Europe out of the NIS which was a shame, I think, a real loss. We had learned a lot in a couple of years in Eastern Europe and we had programmatic vehicles that might have been helpful to getting assistance out to the NIS more quickly.

Q: Did they come and talk to you all about what you had learned? I know that early on they said we're not going to have a mission in Washington; they were going to operate out of the field, although they did still have a heavy operation in Washington.

FRITZ: Sure, so Gerry Donnelly was the head. Gerry Donnelly and Jerry Hyman had a great relationship. So they were definitely talking, but we were bureaucratically separate.

Q: Okay.

FRITZ: But we were separate until they merged.

Q: Right; they did merge in 1993 or so after Brian Atwood became Administrator.

FRITZ: Yes, they did merge. In those days, we had very small missions. There were maybe one or two people in each USAID Representative Office—we had AID Reps, not Missions – in the very beginning.

We don't work this way anymore, but I would set up my entire schedule from Washington and then go out to the field. I would meet with whoever was in the AID Rep Office and I would invite them to join me for my meetings but usually they were too busy. And then I would go out and meet with my partners. For example, I went out with FSLD staff in Poland to see several of their training centers around the country. I met with local government officials. I went to Szekesfehervar, Hungary more than once. We were a small staff so if Jerry went out, he would meet with my partners and vice versa. Between us, we tried to monitor all of our grantees. Jerry was covering elections so he was mainly going out during elections for election monitoring and to meet with our partners and some of the election monitoring groups that we were supporting. And so that was mainly his responsibility, along with civil society, and mine was local government and the parliamentary assistance.

Q: So, you really were a mission running the programs overseas. I know at some point, Poland became a regular mission. What was that transition and when did it happen?

FRITZ: I can pinpoint the moment of the transition -- in my mind anyway. I had gone out to Poland to design the local government and public administration follow-on program. Don Pressley was the Mission Director-designate and was in Poland learning Polish but had not taken over as Mission Director yet so he kind of engaged in the project design a bit.

Q: Was he actually the first to be called a mission director?

FRITZ: I don't know. They were USAID Reps in the beginning, but Don was definitely a Mission Director. I had designed this central government public administration program rather than a local government-focused effort. When I came back to Washington, I had to defend the project design at a Bureau-wide meeting. Peter Orr was the Program Office Director. I remember he proposed that the project should not be managed from Washington, that it should be managed by the Mission. And everybody agreed so the project went to the field to manage. That was when I realized that we in the Mission for Europe in Washington were no longer in the driver's seat. This is how development should really work, but I remember at the time being so heartbroken, like here was my baby that I had designed, that I had to give away. But it was a maturity thing, a learning moment.

Q: Do you remember the year that would have been? I am curious about how long it took before that transition?

FRITZ: About 1994.

Q: That's interesting. And then it began to change everywhere.

FRITZ: Then it changed everywhere.

Q: I know that Budapest became a regional center, although it had begun as a bilateral program. Was Hungary one of the first to graduate? Was there a timeframe for graduation?

FRITZ: So the original idea was that the Northern Tier countries—Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia—would graduate within three to five years. That's why the Mission was set up in Washington and why we didn't staff up too much in the field. We were going to be in and out in three to five years. I don't remember exactly when Hungary graduated. I know Poland was the first to graduate and I think it was 1999 or 2000. So it was more than three to five years. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, graduated early on. Slovakia graduated a little later because it had kind of a shaky beginning but those three were early on – but in more like ten to twelve years.

Q: You initially spoke of Czechoslovakia and then you just mentioned Czech Republic and Slovak Republic. Since you were doing local government work, did the split of Czechoslovakia affect your work at all? Or, was any of that local government work instrumental to the split, or would that split have happened regardless?

FRITZ: Oh, no, the split happened regardless but it didn't affect our work because we had actually been working with two different institutes of public administration, one in each republic. It was quite easy to manage the program after the split because of that.

Q: Okay. So, it was always quite separate then?

FRITZ: It was. The guy who managed the project was Czech. I remember the first time I went out, I didn't realize political sensitivities between the two republics. I had a conference in Poland in Krakow and then took a train to Slovakia, to Bratislava. I went to monitor the local government project in Bratislava, Slovakia first and then went to Prague, the Czech Republic second. And this was when it was still Czechoslovakia. Apparently it was a big deal that I went to Bratislava first. Luckily the people in Prague didn't give me a hard time, but the people in Bratislava were just so honored that I would start there.

Q: That's a nice example. Well, it really sounds very exciting. You mentioned the expectation being three to five years and it was roughly that for several of the programs. Were there discussions of criteria? Because I know ultimately the Bureau ended up picking EU accession criteria as being an important graduation factor, but I suspect that wasn't at the outset. Were there any criteria defined? And if so, were any relating to democratic indicators?

FRITZ: Absolutely. Yes, the Europe Bureau started pretty early on by funding Freedom House's Nations in Transit. One of the reasons we funded it was to give ourselves a way of measuring progress or backsliding. We were hoping it was going to be progress, but sometimes it was backsliding on these different democracy sub-sectors. So on the DG side, it was the Nations in Transit, but they had a different set of economic indicators that they were tracking as well. The Bureau Program Office, under Ron Sprout's leadership, developed the criteria for closeout. I am not sure that we had anything initially but at some point it became where the Northern Tier countries—Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic—were on different indicators when they graduated. Every year, we looked at how each country was doing on these indicators. I don't know when it came into effect—probably in the mid-90s.

Q: So, they helped to define what the criteria were?

FRITZ: And then it changed. It became where Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia were on different indicators when they joined NATO or maybe the European Union. So for the countries that still had not graduated, that's what it was up until when I left the Agency.

Q: Okay. Obviously, you were working on one of the highest U.S. government foreign policy priorities. Did you have many dealings with the State Department? I know there was a State Department coordinators office on the allocation of funds, but I'm wondering how much involvement you had with State on the democracy front?

FRITZ: Sure, so the Coordinator's Office, which is huge now, had about five people in it. So the discussions in those days were much more substantive and less nuts and bolts micromanagement. So it was definitely more, higher level discussions. Those were taking place between Jerry and the Coordinator and/or the lead democracy person in the Coordinator's Office. Because the number of people working there was so small, it wasn't at my level. I did have the opportunity to join a meeting with Ken Juster who was a Special Assistant to Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger. Jerry brought me with him when he went to discuss the American Bar Association's CEELI program. So there were high level discussions going on about specific programming, surprisingly.

Q: Was there a specific issue related to the ABA CEELI program or was it just generically briefing them on it?

FRITZ: I think it was just briefing them on it. I don't remember there being an issue – I think I would have remembered if there were a big issue. They were very interested because the Eastern Europe program was high profile in those days and I believe that the ABA was very well connected politically.

Q: Similarly, when you were dealing with parliamentary reform and parliamentary strengthening and local government, did the embassies want to talk to you about your impressions of what was going on to help their understanding of the local situation? Or did state desk officers ask you about your perceptions of what was going on? I'm just curious because you were in a rather unique situation.

FRITZ: I would say not so much in those early days. A little bit. We were based in the State Department back then.

Q: Oh, that's right. Of course.

FRITZ: Again, we were in the State Department, so it was a lot easier. It was a lot more give and take. So I don't think there were special meetings to brief people, but of course we talked. There was a lot of just talking in the corridor about what was going on.

Q: Okay, I was just curious what it was like in those days. Was there any significant change from the George H.W. Bush administration to the Bill Clinton administration in 1993 and the arrival of Brian Atwood as the new USAID Administrator? Did you see changes in approaches?

FRITZ: Well, certainly democracy became an equal part of the development equation. And it became more important and better coordinated across the Agency. When Brian Atwood came in, they set up the Democracy and Governance (DG) Center, which was led by Chuck Costello. When Jennifer Windsor took over for Chuck – I think she started as the deputy director -- Jerry Hyman moved over to be Jennifer's deputy. There was an interest in bringing together within the agency, all of the democracy practitioners under one roof so that we could learn better from one another. And so I think we were elevated in terms of a respected part of development, whereas before it was, I don't think a lot of people within the Agency really saw it as development. And I think when Brian came in, it became much more a regular part of our development portfolios and approaches and so forth.

Q: Okay. But there wasn't any substantive change in priorities or anything that you noticed? Other than democracy being more important.

FRITZ: Yeah, no substantive change. Maybe more resources for democracy programming, so I guess that's substantive in a way but I can't point to one thing to say all of the sudden we started doing differently.

Q: Are there other things we should discuss? You spent five years as a Eurasia democracy officer. When Jerry Hyman went over to the democracy center in the Global Bureau, were you then the sole democracy officer left in the mission in Washington?

FRITZ: No, so by then the Mission for Europe had dissolved. And although all the other geographic bureaus had to move their staff into the Center, we were exempt. The Europe Bureau and the NIS task force had merged. When Gerry Donnelly became the head of that combined office, Jerry Hyman was the head of one of the divisions in the combined office -- civil society and media, I think. This was before the Democracy Center was created.

Q: So, once the merger of the Europe Mission and the new Former Soviet Union Office (NIS) took place in the new Europe and Eurasia Bureau, you saw some of the early work then in the former Soviet Union as well?

FRITZ: I did. I saw it from afar. Initially I was responsible for leading our local government work but I never actually got out to the NIS to see it. There was a local government program which had pilot cities in three locations in Ukraine and I think two in Russia including one in Nizhny Novgorod. I don't know how we thought we were going to make huge changes within countries of those sizes with five pilots. In Ukraine there was some early local government work that was done in Lviv, Kharkiv, and one other location. I never got to see it on the ground.

Q: You were overseeing the rule of law work as well then?

FRITZ: Not at that point -- it was just the local governance work. Subsequently, there was a merger of the rule of law and governance divisions and I became the deputy in that office. Interesting enough, that's actually how I ended up in Bosnia. I assigned each person in our division responsibility for overseeing our rule of law and governance programs in a particular country or countries. Nobody wanted Bosnia at the time because it was in the middle of a war. I missed managing programs (I was managing people now) so I took responsibility for Bosnia.

During the war, the State Department forged a peace agreement between the Croats and the Bosniaks called the Washington Accords. Because the United States was instrumental in negotiating that agreement, USAID focused its local government work on implementing it. The Washington Accords established ten cantons within the Federation. The idea was to get the Croats and the Bosniaks to stop fighting each other so that they could unify against the Serbs. The program was implemented through the International City Manager's Association (ICMA). I had been trying to get out to Bosnia forever and could never get approved by Diplomatic Security because there was an active war going on. I was supposed to go out to Kazakhstan for a TDY but at the last minute got approval to go to Bosnia so I went to Bosnia instead. I flew into Split, Croatia and drove into central Bosnia to the city of Zenica in a low-riding armored sedan. USAID had a field office there with one American and one Foreign Service National (FSN), and it was they who came to Split to pick me up.

I met with some local government officials and talked about the kinds of assistance we could provide. I was travelling with folks from ICMA to start to get the program going. There was

supposedly a ceasefire, but there really wasn't. There was shelling going on so I was a bit scared because I had never been in a war zone before. We heard that peace talks were going on at Dayton, but that it didn't look good for a settlement. People were thinking it was going to fail.

I got back to Washington, and a couple of weeks later – on November 14,1995 -- there was a peace agreement agreed to by all sides. And on December 14th, the Dayton Peace Accords were formally signed. Craig Buck was designated to become the Mission Director of a new USAID Mission in Sarajevo. He called to ask me to come out to head up the Democracy Office. I told him I was flattered to be asked but that I couldn't do it because I was not a Foreign Service officer, I was in the civil service.

I had, before then, decided to stick with the Civil Service after my two years as a PMI because I would not have likely stayed working on or been assigned to a Mission in Eastern Europe. Our missions there were very small with usually one FS-1 or FS-2 level Foreign Service Officer. I decided at the end of the PMI program not to go into the International Development Intern (IDI) program, which was an option, because I knew I wouldn't be able to stay working on Eastern Europe. I knew I would have been assigned to another part of the world where there were lower-level positions. So I decided to not do it.

So now Craig presented me with the opportunity to go out under a limited career appointment in the Foreign Service Office. Given the TDY I had just done to Bosnia, I was not sure that I wanted to go live there – I didn't know if it was something I thought I was capable of doing. I asked Craig if I could do a TDY to check it out and he agreed. So I went to Sarajevo for the first time in January 1996 and after that, agreed to do the limited appointment to work in Bosnia for two years. But it was in the middle of the big Reduction in Force (RIF) that the Agency was going through at the time. Thus, if I had been given a limited career appointment, I would have been the first to be RIFed. However, I would have had reemployment rights in the Civil Service so I would just have had to go back to Washington to work a Civil Service job. So I went out to Bosnia in May on TDY until the RIF was done and then converted in July to the Foreign Service under a limited career appointment. I was just going to do it for two years and ended up extending for a third year. I met my husband after a year in Bosnia and decided it was easier for us to stay together if I converted into a career Foreign Service position because he was in the USAID Foreign Service. When I decided to try to convert, which I guess was not that common because there was no real process for it at the time, between Human Resources and the DG Center, they made one up, and I converted successfully in July 1999. And yeah, that was it.

Q: Another well planned career move.

FRITZ: Yeah, right.

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USAID/Bosnia, Democracy Officer, 1996 - 1999

Q: No, that's great. So, you were in the first group that went out to Bosnia and helped to create the Mission along with Craig Buck. When did Craig get there, and was he there for a couple months before you got there then?

FRITZ: Oh, absolutely.

He called me in December. I don't know if he actually went out in December, but I knew he came through Washington from Kazakhstan. I think he may have gone out in December 1995. And so I went out right after.

Q: A few months later. So how large was the Mission? How many people were there setting up? What was it like going to a country that had just gone through a terrible war?

FRITZ: You know, it was the best of times and worst of times. It was a small core group. So it was Craig, Gary Mansavage, a retired Foreign Service Officer, came out as a PSC to help get things running. People like Bill Granger, who was an experienced Executive Officer, came out as well. Jim Ahn, who had worked as a Controller for Craig in Kazakhstan also came out to get the Mission established.

Q: But it was a small group.

FRITZ: Small group to get things going. When I went out in January, the Mission was in one room in the embassy, just one big room with desk after desk lined up. No cubicles, no nothing. And I would say there were probably 10 people. It was small, it grew, but even then, when we eventually moved into an office it wasn't a huge Mission for the amount of money we were managing at the time. Our first office was in the old trade union building – Dom Sindikata (Union Home) -- which had been shelled and whose columns out front were crumbling. Thankfully, they weren't structurally required to hold up the building. But when you walked in the building every day, there was this destroyed column that was a reminder of the violent war that had taken place.

When I first got there, the Disaster Assistance Relief Team (DART) was pretty big because they were still delivering a lot of humanitarian assistance. There were a couple of Foreign Service officers, Merritt Brody, who managed all the infrastructure programming, rebuilding roads and electricity and all that. Then Erna Kerst came out as the Deputy Mission Director and Mike Kerst came out to run programs in the economic development sector. Yeah, so it was a very small staff and eventually we built up, hiring local staff. Before I got back out in May, I had been working remotely with Gary Mansavage, who was helping to staff up the Democracy Office. So by the time I arrived in May, we were interviewing and starting to hire people. In the beginning, we

hired two FSNs, and that was it for a long time. Then I hired a local Personal Services Contractor as the Deputy Office Director – she was fantastic. And then eventually from there, built up the staff.

Q: And you were doing the democracy work. And what was the program? You said it started with working with the cantons on local government, but what else?

FRITZ: Yeah, that was part of it. I became an elections expert after three years there, because we had four elections in three years. The Dayton Peace Accords, which were signed in December, required elections to take place within six to nine months after Dayton was signed. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was designated to administer the elections. The State Department had appointed Ambassador Robert Frowick to head the OSCE Mission in Bosnia. In those days, the OSCE was basically seconded diplomats, still is to a certain extent, but not election experts. So we were tracking the organization of elections in addition to providing assistance to political parties. Larry Garber, who was now working for USAID but came from NDI and had quite a bit of elections experience, came out to Bosnia quite a bit to check in on the preparations for elections. We were looking at each other saying, "This election is not going to happen -- there's no way for this to happen by June 14 (which would have been 6 months after Dayton was signed." But we knew it had to happen by September 14.

We decided to bring in a group of election administration experts through IFES. I wrote up a scope of work for a small team of six people – the Director General for elections, an outreach person, an IT person, and a logistics person plus a few others. We basically hired this team that USAID paid for and embedded them in the OSCE under Ambassador Frowick's command. And they pulled off the elections by September 14. It was pretty hairy, because there was so much to do and trying to pull off an election in a war-torn country was pretty hard to do. But IFES did it. They were amazing. They pulled it off.

Q: Yes. And I really like the idea of embedding them in the OSCE mechanism. It sounds like that worked well? Do you have thoughts about making it less directly US?

FRITZ: It did work well at the time. I think there was a universal understanding that the OSCE did not have the technical expertise. The team that we brought in was so good at what they did. They were respected experts. So it made it a lot easier. Even though they were paid for by the United States, they were not seen as a USAID and USG team – precisely because they were embedded in the OSCE.

I think now the OSCE obviously has a whole lot more experience. In those days, OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) did election monitoring, but that's a separate arm of the OSCE and monitoring is not the same as administering an election. I think they have that now. In terms of a model for the future, I think there could be issues if, for

example, we wanted the team to do something different from what whoever is leading the organization wanted. I think it could be difficult because you have dual command, but given that we all had a common goal, which was to carry out the elections on a very tight timeline, it was a lot easier.

Q: Was there also a Bosnian authority that was involved with organizing elections, or was it an internationally run election?

FRITZ: Internationally run. By the fourth election we were training poll workers and helping to set up a Bosnian-organized election commission and poll workers and all that. My understanding is that it still exists today and administers elections for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Q: Okay. Was Ambassador Holbrooke involved at all in what you all were doing? Or did you have contact with him? And what was it like?

FRITZ: No, I didn't have any contact with him, unfortunately, or fortunately. No, I never met him. He definitely was very involved in Bosnia, but he was at the highest levels. I was in the nuts and bolts and the lower levels, making sure things worked at the operational level.

Q: So, you were there for three years and managed elections. Were we trying to do anything else on the DG front? Or, did the need for electoral support overwhelm everything else?

FRITZ: The elections were definitely overwhelming. We were doing, again, local government work. We were helping establish new institutions such as cantons which is a level of government between the municipalities and the Federation. That was an important part of our work. We also were working with civil society, with NGOs, helping to build civil society. The war started in Yugoslavia right about the time of the transition from socialism and communism to democracy in Eastern Europe so Bosnia never had the opportunities that some of the other countries we worked with in the region. Day to day, as we were implementing programs, we would be confronted with that aspect of their transition in addition to rebuilding after a war. So it was a dual transition that was happening. And while we did have to focus on elections, we started to help civil society to develop and grow and media was an important part as well, because the media was a tool for division in the country. We did a lot with the independent media that were not incendiary, that were not sowing divisions.

Q: Were there significant movements of people out of Bosnia afterwards? I mean, did Serbs and Croats leave or were there Serbs and Croats that remained within Bosnia?

FRITZ: Yes, those who could get out did, but a lot of people stayed. What really happened was a lot of population shifts within the country. For example, there are two towns next to each other, one's called Travnik, the other one's Novi Travnik. Travnik is mainly Bosniak and Novi Travnik

is now mainly Croat. But they had been mixed before. And so what happened? If you were a Croat, you got out of Travnik and if you were a Bosniak, you got out of Novi Travnik. So you had these population shifts and swaps.

That's what made the initial elections so interesting and scary at the same time. You could vote where you currently lived or where you were from. Many people wanted to go back to see their houses, their apartments, their towns and this was an opportunity under NATO protection for you to do that. If you wanted to go vote where you came from, you could do that. There was a lot of hand-wringing and people were very nervous that election day would be fraught with renewed fighting. Some of the war was on a very individual – neighbors shooting at neighbors. So there was this concern that you'd see huge numbers of people coming and going and therefore greater opportunities for conflict.

Q: But it didn't happen?

FRITZ: It did not happen. I had this wonderful woman on my staff, a Bosnian Croat, who was a chess grandmaster in Bosnia. She did an analysis of these population shifts that had happened and what we might encounter on election day. We wrote several cables including her analysis on elections because she was just so smart and everyone was trying to anticipate what we might see on election day. Luckily, nothing happened in terms of major violence and the elections did happen and people voted, and it happened by the Dayton-mandated deadline. So it was, from those perspectives, a huge success.

Unfortunately, all the parties in Bosnia were at that time monoethnic. You had (and I believe still have today), for example, a Bosniak party, the Party for Democratic Action (SDA). If you're a Bosniak, you're also Muslim, so you're only going to vote for the SDA, right? Your political representation is religiously and ethnically homogenous and it's the same with the Serbs and the Croats. There was one political party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) that I had high hopes for but unfortunately, they've become hugely corrupt and not the multi-ethnic savior party that I had hoped they would become. It was the one party that was multi-ethnic and reformist and said all the right things but in the end, it didn't offer anything different.

Q: So today it remains the three. Okay, interesting. You mentioned the important work done by one of the mission's FSNs, a Bosnian Croat. What was the composition of the FSN staff and how much of that was taken into consideration in recruitment of staff?

FRITZ: You know, it's funny, we didn't take that into account. We advertised the jobs and whoever was good, we hired. So I think we were just fortunate that we got people who were multi-ethnic or were not only of one ethnicity -- Bosniaks. I think it'd be a lot harder today because Sarajevo has become much more monoethnic and inhabited primarily by Bosniaks. The other person we hired had an ethnic Serb dad and an ethnic Bosniak mom. Her dad was stuck on

the Serbian side during the war. He had a garden in Pale and he went to get onions when the fighting started so she didn't see him throughout the entire war. A lot of people saw themselves as Yugoslavs, not one or the other ethnicity – that was what Tito was all about and tried to inculcate. It wasn't until the war that I think that changed. But before the war, what I was told is that people saw themselves much more as Yugoslavs.

Q: Very interesting. You also mentioned that the woman working for you, who was the chess grandmaster, had done this great reporting in cables. So I assume that the embassy really valued the USAID mission and its ability to work at the ground level and to write cables and to do reporting. I have always thought that USAID was in a great position to do that. And yet most USAID missions don't do it very much. Do you have thoughts on that?

FRITZ: Yeah, I think Bosnia was the high point in that regard. We had a great working relationship. I think it had a lot to do with the fact that we were a very small staff and so was the Embassy. Given the situation you couldn't have large numbers of official staff. When I first went out to Sarajevo in January 1996, people were living in the Embassy and there were quite a few still living there when I went out in May. I think Craig Buck was one of the first Embassy staff who lived in a house. But during the war, people lived and worked in the Embassy—and it was not a big building. Remember, Bosnia was a republic of Yugoslavia before that so we didn't have embassies in each republic. So it was a little bit weird in that people would come to country team having just rolled out of bed. Yeah, it was a little too much.

I think that, if you have smaller staffs, then you rely on one another a little bit more and that builds trust and cooperation. For the first election, we were not allowed to go into Republika Srpska (the RS). It was just too dangerous. It wasn't until later in my time there that we were able to travel to and work in the RS. The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) went in first and then we gradually expanded democracy programs managed by my office to the RS. I did joint trips into the RS with some of my Political Section colleagues when we went for the first time to eastern Bosnia and it was a bit scary. Actually, it was probably the most scared I've been in any situation.

Q: And this is part of Bosnia.

FRITZ: It's part of Bosnia. Bosnia and Herzegovina includes two entities, Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We were living and working in the Federation initially and then eventually we got permission to work in the RS. First off, we were exploring assistance related to the elections. I went with my Embassy colleague to meet with some political parties in a very small rural town, I think it was Han Pjesak which is northeast of Sarajevo. A little further east is Srebrenica. We had driven across the inter-entity borderline and we had a driver who was a Bosniak. Actually, we had a two-car convoy, so we had two Bosniak drivers. When we arrived at the political party office, we walked in and the drivers came with us

inside, which was not what usually happened. Drivers usually stayed with the cars. There was a small waiting room or office just outside the conference room in which we were going to be meeting. I could see our driver was shaking. He knew what these guys that we were meeting with were capable of. And then I got scared. We were going into the conference room for the meeting. I knew our drivers would not be comfortable sitting out there, that they would feel vulnerable, so I said that they needed to come into the meeting with us. So they sat in the meeting just to keep them safe. I'm sure nothing would have happened, but they were scared. I was
scared for them because these weren't good people. While you don't know for sure what they had done during the war, you could make an educated guess and it wasn't good. We did not offer political party assistance to them.

But I did travel quite a bit with Embassy colleagues for that election. If one or other of us was going to go out, we'd grab the other one and say, "Hey, I'm going to go see so-and-so, do you want to come with me?" So it was a lot easier back then.

Q: That's a great story of collaboration in the way it should be. Each helping the other's perspective. I really can't imagine what it must have been like those days. Was there much communication among the USAID missions in the former Yugoslavia? There was a USAID mission in Belgrade. There was a USAID mission in Zagreb and a USAID mission in Sarajevo. Was there one in Slovenia?

FRITZ: No, we never had one in Slovenia.

Q: Was there much communication among the former Yugoslav countries?

FRITZ: During my time in Bosnia we did a joint retreat with OTI which included the OTI folks from Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia along with people working on DG programming in each place. I think for Serbia it was Kathryn Stratos who came from Washington. All of the OTI representatives were field-based. And we compared notes and shared information with one another at that meeting which we organized in Zagreb.

Before the war, there was a USAID Representative in Belgrade, Serbia, Mike Zak. During the early days of the programming in Eastern Europe Mike used to say,
"Yugoslavia needs vitamin D – Democracy." And he was always trying to get Jerry Hyman out to the region and to bring programming with him. So Jerry did go out at least once and it was during this time that he actually had met with Radovan Karadžić, who was later convicted of war crimes. Jerry still has this doodling that Karadžić did during the meeting where he was explaining where the Serbs are and where the Croats and Bosniaks are. And it looks like somebody just scribbled a lot because he was very animated. I keep telling Jerry, he needs to send that to the diplomacy museum in the State Department.

There was no office in Kosovo because Kosovo wasn't a separate country at the time. Croatia had a small USAID Representative Office run by Chuck Aanenson. A lot of the humanitarian assistance for Bosnia was being run out of Croatia. In order to go into Bosnia you had to go either through Zagreb or Split (Croatia) and get accredited by the United Nations. So absolutely there was collaboration in the beginning and during the war. When Craig Buck was named Mission Director for Bosnia they became two separate missions. There was also a small program in Macedonia that started early on.

Q: Yes, I think it was run out of Croatia initially too.

FRITZ: Actually, I don't think so – Macedonia started on its own with a USAID Representative Office.

Q: Other donors. I assume the European Union was very big. Were there other donors there and was coordination an important part of what you had to do? Were there ever any dramatic differences of opinion on what should be done and how it should be done?

FRITZ: Yeah, so again, this is still pretty early days for democracy assistance so the EU's democracy assistance didn't come into play. They were a little bit behind us on most things on the democracy front. For example, there were several members of the EU parliament that were intrigued with how the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) worked. I met with them on my way back from Eastern Europe once and shared background on both the NED and on our democracy portfolio. Shortly afterwards they passed a law creating a European version of the NED.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were both very important on both the economic side and on rebuilding, but I wasn't involved in that.

I do remember a meeting at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to discuss elections assistance. There were a few donors, such as the German Stiftungs which are political party foundations that provide assistance to political parties similar to NDI and IRI. There wasn't a big interest in party assistance from all the people at the meeting – most were interested in learning about how planning was going for implementing the elections. Rather than take everyone's time to discuss political party assistance we decided to organize a separate meeting which I volunteered to host. The EU representative at the meeting objected and said it should not be organized by a bilateral donor even though there were no multilateral donors providing party assistance. That was an eye opener for me. So, I let the EU organize it, but it was just a weird kind of dynamic there.

I'm happy to say I've had much better experiences both in Kosovo and Serbia with my

EU counterparts. We were able to collaborate in pretty important ways, particularly in Kosovo. My proudest achievement, probably of my entire career, involved collaborating with the EU in Kosovo which we can talk about later. I'm glad that early experience didn't foretell the future. So, no, other donors were not heavily involved in the sector at that time.

Q: Good. I'm going to sort of jump ahead only because I want to ask, since you spent these early, very intense years in Bosnia, how you managed when you later went to work in Serbia. Were there any difficulties for you in doing that? I'm just curious whether your early days in Bosnia affected your thinking at all?

FRITZ: So it's interesting because I know a lot of Balkan hands would not serve in Serbia if they had served in Bosnia and or Kosovo. I felt that to truly understand how the war happened, I'd have to serve in Serbia and to get a more informed perspective. It was something that I really wanted to do. And in a twist of fate, Mike Harvey who was serving as Mission Director in Belgrade, decided to leave early so the position opened up just when I was finishing up in Kosovo. So I bid on it and I got it. It was one of those things that I thought was meant to be and helped me to really have a better perspective. I can't say it wasn't hard in some ways, but you get perspective and you understand where people are coming from. And it helped that the people that USAID hired to staff the Mission in Belgrade are all people who want democracy, who are tolerant of other ethnicities, and weren't the ones who started the war.

Q: So, you can see a positive side of Serbia as well even though you saw a lot of the negatives early on?

FRITZ: So yeah, absolutely, absolutely. It helped me to complete the picture. And I've met so many wonderful Serbs that on an individual level, it makes it easy.

Q: Okay. But it probably also gave you renewed respect for the history of Tito.

FRITZ: Absolutely. There are a lot of Yugoslavs who'd say that they missed Tito. I can understand why. I mean, he was a dictator, but he was a benevolent dictator. My deputy in Bosnia used to say that they had it good—they got to travel, they got to buy Italian shoes, and socially owned enterprises were much different than the more extreme form of a controlled economy that you saw in the Soviet Union. It was a nicer kind of dictatorship.

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USAID/Kosovo, Deputy Mission Director, 2007 - 2010

Q: You were in both places. Wow. But you had been doing a lot of TDY work over the years in Kosovo, so you knew it well. Can you tell us what was the state of affairs in Kosovo at that point? This was now 2007.

FRITZ: Right. It was late 2007. United Nations Special Envoy for Kosovo Marti Ahtisaari from Finland had created a peace plan for resolving the Kosovo-Serbia situation. The UN had been running Kosovo since the end of the conflict and the Kosovars were getting tired of that. They were getting restless and wanted to run their own country. Ahtisaari devised a peace plan, but politically it was not getting approved by the UN so everything was at a standstill.

It was a good plan. The basic idea was to carve out Serb-majority municipalities from Albanian-majority municipalities to give more local control for the Serbian minority in Kosovo. There were three Serb-majority municipalities that existed already in the north, just south of Serbia. They are probably 99, if not a hundred percent ethnic Serb. Ahtisaari created I think five new municipalities that were carved out of enclaves of Serbs in central Kosovo. I arrived in Kosovo in December 2007. On February 17, 2008, President's Day weekend, Kosovo declared independence. The United States blessed it as long as Kosovo followed the Ahtisaari peace plan. And so Kosovo did and they created these new municipalities. This is where my local government assistance and background, I think helped. I chaired an embassy working group on establishing the new municipalities. It was supposed to be co-chaired with the DCM, but the then-DCM didn't want to do it. So I ended up running this inter-agency working group on these new municipalities and, similar to what happened in Bosnia, they had to have elections but to first create the municipalities. They needed to create the organizational infrastructure because these are new municipalities being formed and they needed help with that. We had a local government project that helped stand up these new municipalities. But as you can imagine, the State Department and the embassy were very interested because it was very political. We also had Public Affairs, the Political Section, and our DG folks as part of this working group. We eventually got a new DCM that was more interested and took an active role in co-chairing the working group. We helped stand up the new municipalities and then helped support municipal elections including in the new ones. The whole effort definitely involved the interagency at the working level, but also at the mission and embassy management levels as well. I think we were as successful as we could have been. I wouldn't say it was a rousing success, but it was good what we were able to accomplish. There was greater Serb turnout for the elections than there ever had been since Kosovo's independence. It was extremely low, but improved.

Q: And one of the challenges was trying to protect the rights of the Serbian population that remained in Kosovo ? Their minority rights?

FRITZ: Right, correct. it was to give them a voice that would have been lost if those municipalities remained majority Albanian. That was the thinking behind the Ahtisaari peace

plan. We were just helping to implement that peace plan to give the Serb minority not only a voice in, but control over their own decision-making and resources.

Q: And I assume, although we won't talk about it now, that some of this generated important lessons that were useful when you eventually were in Ukraine?

FRITZ: It's a little bit different, but I guess you could pull some lessons learned from there. It was kind of a different situation, a much smaller country, much more political, much more transparent, and front and center in terms of importance to the Kosovars, to the Serbs, to the Americans, to the Europeans. So everybody was involved or interested.

Q: In general, can you say a little bit more about what the program was doing besides the support for that?

FRITZ: Sure. A big part of what we were doing was helping to reestablish the judicial system. The UN was running everything after the conflict in Kosovo. And before the UN came to run things, the Serbs were in charge. When Milosević came into power at one point when he made his inflammatory speech in Kosovo Polje, saying, that we (the Serbs) will never be taken advantage of again, basically empowering the Serbs to kick out all of the Albanians, the professionals, from the education system, from the government, from the health system. The Albanians ended up running a parallel system with their own underground schools. They were doing everything outside of the government system. And so when the UN started to pull back and the Kosovar Albanians started to take over there needed to be a lot of capacity building. That was a large part of what we were doing, a lot of capacity building, whether it was economic development or anything in the DG sector and local governance or anything really.

On the judicial front, there was a process for vetting all of the judges for a whole new judicial system. There was an application and vetting process that was taking place that mainly the UN was running, but it was running slowly so we jumped in and supported that effort as well. That was big. We were physically equipping court systems, refurbishing courtrooms, installing recording equipment so you could tape court proceedings.

We had a big education program, but not what you would think. It wasn't the soft side of basic education that USAID normally supports. It was infrastructure. Kosovar schools were running two and three sessions a day because there were not enough schools and classrooms. That meant some kids were going to school at night because that was the only time a day that was available. Our program either added classrooms onto existing schools or refurbished classrooms that weren't in shape to be able to be used. By the time I left, we were in the process of planning to build a brand-new school in Pristina. That was something that was hugely impactful. It brought down the number of class sessions from three to two a day or one in most places. I think by the

time we finished that project, there were no more triple sessions in any school in the country. So that was, I think, a pretty important effort

We did a lot on economic development. Kosovar Albanians are pretty entrepreneurial and I think in the situation that they were in, they had to be in order to survive. It was very refreshing to see – I did not observe that in other Balkan countries like Serbia or Bosnia. There were a lot of ways in which we could support small businesses to market their goods or repackage their goods, find new markets. We did a lot on the agriculture side to identify new products that could be grown. I remember kiwis being one where there's a huge market and good climate, soil, everything that would make that a good crop for them. So we did a lot on that side.

And then because the Kosovar Albanians had to work outside the formal system for so many years, there were lots of issues with following rules or having rules, permitting and following permits. A lot of buildings were built without permits. We were trying to help establish a rules-based governance system.

We provided a lot of support to civil society and media as well. My all-time favorite project, the one I'm proudest of, was in Kosovo. In terms of impact, it wasn't broad, but for those we did help, it was enormous. And the challenges we had to overcome were also enormous. It was the most rewarding thing that I've ever been involved in.

During the conflict, the Roma were seen as siding with the Serbs. They felt in danger being around the Albanians so they fled to the north of the country where the ethnic Serbs were. Unfortunately, they had fled to a UN Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp that was situated on a site where a mine had been so they were living on top of lead tailings which was sickening people, especially the kids. Another donor, I forget who it was -- maybe the Norwegians or the Dutch -- had built housing for the Roma in an environmentally clean and safe area also in the north, but the Roma didn't move there. And when anybody did leave this contaminated camp, other Roma would move in. So you had this challenge of first, this is an area of the country that the Kosovar Albanians didn't control because it was in the north. Second, you had a failed donor attempt to resolve the problem. Third, you had sick kids with lead coming out of their teeth and you can imagine how this was impacting the development of their brains.

Q: Why wouldn't they move to where the other housing had been built? It wasn't in a secure area or?

FRITZ: The new housing wasn't located near where they worked. It was in a more remote place than they were used to. The houses they built didn’t have land to grow family gardens which is something they did to supplement their food. I know, it sounds crazy that you wouldn't move to get your kids to a safer place, but they didn't. And you had this empty housing just sitting there.

Peter Duffy, our program officer, was the one who led the effort. He really wanted to tackle this. When I came to Kosovo as deputy mission director he brought it to my attention. We made a pitch to Ambassador Tina Kaidanow who was skeptical because she thought it would be a waste of money. Mostly due to Peter's persuasive abilities, she finally agreed that we could put $2 million towards the effort with conditions – we'd need to get the UN to secure the IDP camp so that as families moved out to new housing, new people did not move in. This also would require that the departing family's dwelling would be destroyed upon their departure. Second, we'd need buy-in of the community so that they would move into whatever housing that would be built. I don't remember how and why we ended up with Mercy Corps, but we did. I think they were already active in Kosovo so this was something that fit in their wheelhouse. But the problem was it was going to cost more than the $2 million that we had to do everything. I was responsible for donor coordination for our mission. I reached out to the head of assistance for the European Union who was keen to partner with us. And together we figured it out.

He was able to allocate five million euros. And, overcoming the EU's very strict procurement rules, he was able to basically sole source it to Mercy Corps' European sister organization. Between the two organizations, which were all Mercy Corps, they pulled it off. They found new land that the Roma would move to, that was safe. We were able to involve the UN police so the housing that existed in the camp was destroyed after each family moved and the camp was eventually closed down. The Kosovo government had blood chelation equipment that a donor had provided that they didn't know how to use. We brought in expertise so that they could start treating everybody but mostly the kids who had lead in their blood. We consulted with the community leaders to design housing in a style and place that they would move to. So it succeeded against all odds. It was a shame that those people ever ended up on contaminated land but we were able to do right by them and make it happen. And so like I said, I'm the proudest of that. It was mainly Peter's doing, he really pushed and he convinced Ambassador Kaidanow and she blessed it and we were able to pull it off. My small piece was helping the Europeans to get their money to the table and that was because I had a good partner who was willing to go the extra mile to make it happen on his end. He didn't break any rules, but bent them to make something good happen.

Q: Yeah, that's a wonderful story that bureaucracy can come to the end and do the right thing sometimes.

FRITZ: Yep, yep, absolutely.

Q: That's wonderful and a meaningful contribution. Did you mention that one of your responsibilities was on donor coordination? Just how did the director-deputy relationship work?

FRITZ: So when I first got there, the mission director was Mike Farbman for the first six months. And Mike was an economic growth guy. He assigned me the DG side of the house. I

asked him if he would allow me to just use that time to learn from him. I told him that I was happy to be responsible for DG, but I needed to learn about economic growth as well as how a mission runs, the offices that I didn't engage with, the executive office (EXO) and others. He was great. He said, "Come to any meeting you want. I'm happy to explain anything to you. My door's open. Join any meeting that's on my calendar." And so I did. I also took that time in the first six months to go to each of the support offices and interview each person on the staff to find out what they did, how they did it, what the office did. That included EXO, financial management (FM), every office. And so that gave me a good grounding to have the broader perspective that helped me hit the ground running as a deputy. Patricia Rader came in after that and she wanted to do things differently. She wanted to be the outside person and have me be the inside person so that's how we divided things. Except I did get to go out and do donor coordination. That was my day out for the week. And it was great! I think that's what I'm best at—internal management. It wasn't such a steep learning curve. I'm an extreme introvert, so it played to my strengths. However, when I became a mission director, I had to be out front a lot more and I wasn't used to it. I hadn't had that experience. I think I did two public events in the two and a half years I was in Kosovo. So that was something that was hard for me, very hard.

Q: Interesting. I know for introverts, it takes a lot of practice. That I know.

FRITZ: Yep, absolutely.

Q: Right. Well, that really sounds like a fascinating time to have been in Kosovo. I mean, you were there during one of the most meaningful times. I remember reading Craig Buck's oral history and he spoke about how pro-American the population was in the early days after the war. Was that still the case when you were there?

FRITZ: Absolutely. Craig left Bosnia when we were there to go to Kosovo, because that's when the Kosovo conflict had just ended. The Kosovar Albanians are very pro-American.
They have a Bill Clinton street. I think they might even have a George Bush street. President Biden came as well while I was there. His son, Beau served in Kosovo so he came out when he was vice president. He knows the Balkans really, really well. And that was a great visit. We renamed the USAID parking lot the Joe Biden Pavilion because that's where we did the all hands meet and greet with the embassy staff. And yeah, they love Americans. If they could be a U.S. state, they would definitely become one.

We had enormous influence. There was a joke actually going around when I was there. Our ambassador at the time, Tina Kaidanow, was the head of the U.S. office that became an embassy once the country declared independence. Tina was a force to be reckoned with. She was perfect for the first ambassador in Kosovo and to help birth that country, to guide them through independence. The joke was that the President, Hashim Thaci, was coming through customs and they asked him, do you have anything to declare? And he says, "Hold on, give me my phone."

And he calls Tina and asks, “Tina, do I have anything to declare?” Everybody knew she was running an awful lot, advising the Kosovars through their independence. And so that was a special time to be there.

I would say it's very different now. The country has really come into its own. But those early days, it was really birthing a new nation. One thing we did, and this was before I became the deputy, but when I was supporting the mission, we brought together judicial experts from the Kosovo and legal experts from the United States. We brought them out to Macedonia and helped them draft a new constitution to get them ready for a new country. And it was all very quiet. We didn't do the drafting. But we supported them drafting a new constitution for their country. We knew it was heading in that direction. And so yeah, that was an important piece of work. And it was two mission staff working very closely with them. One of them is now on the Supreme Court of Kosovo.

Q: One of the USAID staff. Okay, I was going to ask you then about the FSN staff and it sounds like you had a quite extraordinary group.

FRITZ: Yep. Great, great group. Gresa Caka is the FSN who helped on the constitution and she is amazingly talented. She was going to law school at the time. She was working with John Allelo, who was a PSC at the time and has since joined the foreign service. While he was a PSC, John and Gresa were the ones who brought in the U.S. experts and helped manage this process and provided input as well.

Q: Well, it's a real success story.

FRITZ: I think so. We'll see. It remains to be seen. Going back to when we were helping to establish the Serb majority municipalities, our local staff were all ethnic Albanians. And I felt that we needed to have some ethnic Serbs on the staff. The only ethnic Serb was one of the cleaning ladies. And I had such a hard time working with the embassy human resources people to designate a position to be for a specific ethnicity. They said we couldn’t do that. So we included requirements like you have to speak Serbian. A lot of ethnic Albanians, particularly younger ones didn't speak Serbian, older ones, yes. But we ended up hiring an ethnic Bosniak, which was good just to have a diversity of views. And she was excellent. She managed that portfolio working in those new ethnic Serb-majority municipalities. So anyway, that was a challenge. I was talking to somebody recently that was trying to hire an ethnic minority and I think it's a little bit easier today. But back then you couldn't just say we want to hire an ethnic Serb.

Q: What about your implementing partners? Was that a challenge for them as well? Did you have any provisions asking them to seek as much diversity as possible? Or did you just leave it to their judgment if it was needed or not needed?

FRITZ: We left it to their judgment. I would say that, you know, a lot of them brought in more expats because that was easier in a way. I think it was easier having expats, especially from the region. As I mentioned previously, the woman who was the mayor of Zlatograd in Bulgaria became the chief of party of the local governance project in Kosovo. I think that that was almost easier than trying to hire an ethnic Serb because there aren't that many in Kosovo and few, if any, with the requisite skills, and Serbs from Serbia aren't going to come to Kosovo because they've heard it's really dangerous for Serbs. So expats were definitely a better approach to staffing projects.

Q: Given the amount of time you spent in the Balkans, you really have some unique capabilities and understanding the region.

FRITZ: I love the Balkans. I mean, it is my passion. There are others in the agency, and I've actually tapped into that expertise. Some of the folks I worked with from OTI, Michael Stievater, Jason Aplon, Ray Jennings, these are people I worked with in Bosnia, one of the first OTI programs. When we were trying to figure out what to do to prepare for our work in these ethnic Serb municipalities being created in Kosovo, I called on them. Again, I had only ethnic Albanian staff. I couldn't send them to those places.

I reached out to Michael Stievater, called him to pick his brain. I think he was in Indonesia at the time. I told him, "This is what I want to do. We don't have people in these regions. We don't know what's doable, what's not. And we need somebody to help us figure out what we can do in the north." Initially it was the north. Then we did a second assessment that included the new municipalities in the south. So we quietly hired these former OTI people, I think on a purchase order with a deliverable of a report to tell us what's doable, what's not, what are these areas like, what's the appetite for assistance, what's the openness for assistance in these areas. I would say people like Michael, Ray, and Jason are equally or even more expert on the Balkans than me. So there are people in the agency or who are somehow related to the agency. Michael now works in Ukraine for a USAID contractor. And Jason is working for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva. Ray does a lot of work for OTI still. So there are other Balkans experts in USAID.

Q: Right, so a lot of that was embodied within the OTI structure?

FRITZ: Well, this wasn't part of OTI. This was outside of OTI. These just happened to be OTI contacts.

Q: Yes, right, but OTI helped to create the capability?

FRITZ: Right, yes, absolutely, absolutely, yeah.

Q: Okay, other thoughts on Kosovo. Again, it sounds like there were a lot of successes and in an environment in which there was strong collaboration with the locals. Since USAID is emphasizing localization so much now, were you working directly with any local organizations, or were you working through U.S. implementers?

FRITZ: At that point, it was through U.S. implementers. There was a lot of corruption in Kosovo. With independence came a lot of money. There was a huge concern about ensuring that our funds were managed well and not siphoned off. There was an interesting case of reverse localization. I don't know if we ended up doing this, but as I had mentioned the schools project, as we were building classrooms and schools through our implementing partner, the Kosovo government was doing the same, so it was a parallel effort. But when they saw our schools that were cheaper – we spent less money – and much better built, they came to us and asked, "Can we give you money to build schools?" I don't know if that ever happened, but I think because of corruption, money was probably skimmed off the top. Our implementing partner had engineers checking everything every step of the way and our own staff was doing the same. Our process yielded better quality school structures, buildings, and the government recognized that.

I understand the same thing happened with the Kosovo government giving USAID money for the credit guarantee program. So it's not localization, and it's almost a step backwards. On the one hand, it recognizes that USAID can use these funds better. It's not the best situation. You want the government to be able to do this but in the short term it is a way of getting assistance out there in a way that avoids corruption.

Q: And the country itself recognized this.

FRITZ: Yeah.

Q: Given their recognition of the problem, were you able to do any kind of anti-corruption programming? Or does that kind of programming have any results anyway?

FRITZ: Well, no, I definitely think those kinds of programs have results. We saw really great results in Ukraine, which also has huge corruption. I think it's harder in a country that small, where everybody knows everybody else. And you have a history of people working outside the formal system, because they were forced to. It's really hard to establish formal systems where people follow the rule of law and rules and regulations after that. So in a place like that, it's hard. I just think the institutions were young, people, the experience was undeveloped just because they worked outside the system and you didn't have people who had been long in the government, managing ministries and things like that. These are all new people. These make it even harder to stamp out corruption.

Q: Okay. Anything else on Kosovo? Because it's a surprising next assignment, not the logical follow on from Kosovo.

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USAID/Ukraine and Belarus, Mission Director, 2016 - 2020

Q: You've spoken about certain elements of the program, especially in trying to work in the east and build a development program out of what had been done earlier by OTI and through humanitarian mechanisms. But you were doing other, more normal work, in Ukraine. Can you talk about some of those major parts of the program? I know that there's a long history of doing work in health. I know there's a long history of working in the financial sector. And I suspect that you were also doing some important DG and anti-corruption work as well. So, any of those things that you'd like to talk about that you all were doing?

FRITZ: Sure, let me take a step back. We did a new strategy when I was there very early on and it was unique because we had the traditional objectives, a democracy one and an economic one. But then we created an anti-corruption objective and a countering Russian aggression objective, which are very unusual for USAID missions. But as we thought through why we were there, why are we working in the energy sector so much, for example? It wasn't the economics of it, that's not what drove us to work in the energy sector. It was to counter Russian aggression – they were weaponizing the energy sector – that was the reason energy became so important, why we worked in the sector, why we put so much money into it and why we did what we did in the sector. We helped to stabilize the grid so that they could disconnect from Russia and connect to the European Union. So it was kind of unusual that way.

Our work in the east was mostly countering Russian aggression, but it also included the work on energy. The anti-corruption objective was interesting. It wasn't part of the DG portfolio, where I think most anti-corruption work would normally reside. It was almost part and parcel of everything we did. Our health portfolio was part of the anti-corruption objective. We worked in Ukraine in the health sector for a long time, but as USAID health sector funding always is, it was very disease-specific. We had HIV-AIDS money and TB money, both of which were important but the overall sector was hugely corrupt. We had a fortunate opportunity with the appointment of a Ukrainian-American doctor as minister of health and she was a real go-getter. She wanted to clean up the sector and we saw a real opportunity to go in and help her do that. We obligated anti-corruption money into a health sector reform project that was implemented by Deloitte. We helped tackle some issues, but we didn't finish because COVID happened, but we got pretty far along in terms of helping to reform the pharmaceutical sector, which was a huge source of corruption. We helped to set up a new pharmaceutical agency that had new systems for purchasing drugs and that hired non-corrupt people and so forth. We helped them to save a lot of money and reduce corruption through that effort. We were in the process of helping the ministry to right size health sector institutions, hospitals and the like, to save money and set up a new

national health insurance system for Ukraine. Budget allocations had been based on the number of beds rather than the services provided. The system was bloated with too many hospitals. That only got so far along before the Minister left and COVID happened. We had been advising them to reduce the number of hospitals, but actually with COVID, you needed more hospital beds. So I think with COVID things changed in the world a lot. I don't know what happened after that, but at least the early work that we did was pretty impactful in terms of reducing corruption.

And then we had the more traditional programs in DG and EG. In economic growth we had a lot in the agriculture sector because Ukraine has a huge agriculture sector and a lot of opportunities there. On the democracy and governance side, we had a lot of traditional programming in civil society, judicial reform, a big decentralization program that was under the radar and I think had some pretty good successes and in a pretty challenging environment. We did media work as well and some work with parliament, which we did for way too long. I just felt like after 25 years, how much more can you work with the parliament? But the evaluation we had commissioned told us that everybody who we worked with loved it. So therefore, I guess we just continue doing it. Yeah, well, that happens sometimes.

Q: I assume your new strategy went into Washington. Was there immediate consensus on the more nontraditional objectives of countering Russian aggressive aggression and anti-corruption? Or was there a debate about that in Washington?

FRITZ: Well, you know, it was interesting because the agency set up a new strategy process and we were one of the first missions to go through it. We were actually partway through it when they set up that process. My replacement as senior DAA, Margot Ellis, and Lisa Magno, head of the E&E program office as well as others, had been helping us with the strategy. So it wasn't like we sent it in and, oh, what's this? We coalesced around these ideas and decided that they seem to be the right development objectives or strategic objectives for us. They were part of that discussion so it wasn't news to them. And ultimately, the bureau adopted the countering Russian aggression strategic objective for the E&E regional strategy. I think it just makes sense in this environment. I don't think there was a lot of pushback and they definitely were part of the process so it was easier.

Q: Okay, that's actually an important lesson. If you're going to be doing something that sounds a little non-traditional, it's best to involve people early on. So, there was an election in Ukraine during this period, correct?

FRITZ: Yes, that was interesting.

Q: And that would have been in 2017 or 2018, I can't remember, when Zelenskyy was elected. And was USAID providing support on that election?

FRITZ: We were definitely part of that. The previous president, Poroshenko, was the consensus candidate coming out of the Maidan, but he was an oligarch. In the beginning, he was on board with the Maidan revolution and the reforms that civil society pushed for during that revolution. When I first got to Ukraine, it was really interesting. Civil society was sitting side by side within ministries helping to advance a new law to reform X, Y, or Z. That was very common. You had a coalition of NGOs called the Reanimation Package of Reforms, kind of an unusual name, but they were side by side with ministry staff. Then at some point, Poroshenko decided that these civil society actors were actually looking to get into power. He came at the international community, criticizing us for supporting civil society, saying "You're just supporting those who are going to run for office in these next elections." There were some within civil society that decided to run. We couldn't control that. But going back to the relationship, it soured between Poroshenko and his administration and civil society somewhere, I would say, towards maybe within a year, year and a half of his time as president. So our ability – and the ability of civil society – to work on some of these reforms became more and more difficult.

Yes, we did work on the elections. We worked with political parties through NDI and IRI. We helped on election administration through the IFES. I talked earlier about ENEMO, a regional body of election monitoring organizations around Eastern Europe. I believe we funded ENEMO to monitor elections. So yes, we were heavily involved in supporting the process.

I think a lot of people were surprised when Zelenskyy came into office. It was a bit challenging because he was not supported in Kyiv. He was a populist, popularly elected populist president. Most of the USAID staff are intellectuals living in Kyiv – they were not happy. Not only were they not happy, but also they thought USAID should not be working with the new president. I heard murmurings of this and ended up setting up informal discussions once every couple of weeks for anybody who wanted to talk about the election and the results. They asked questions like, "Why are we working with him?" And I said, "He's saying all the right things. He's the democratically elected president.
And until he says or does anti-democratic things, we're going to be working with him. It's U.S. government policy and if you cannot abide by that, I suggest you go work somewhere else because right now, that's our policy and we will be working with him, with his team, with his staff." And we did. By the third meeting people were very, very upset. It was the last meeting we had about it, but it was the hardest. People were crying and saying that they had fought on the Maidan to speak their own language, to not be beholden to Russia. They really thought because Zelenskyy was a Russian speaker, because he had ties to an oligarch through his TV show, that he would be pro-Russian. People were seriously worried, enough to cry about this. Looking back now, it's surprising that that even happened, given where we are today in Ukraine, but it did. And it was a difficult turning point in the mission, from Poroshenko to Zelenskyy. And most surprising to me because as I mentioned earlier, Poroshenko by that time was not a reformer.

Zelenskyy brought in a lot of good people, a lot of young IT people. We've had a lot of success, or USAID has had a lot of success in bringing government to the people through IT applications, like government services. Dia is “government in a smartphone.” It’s an app that everybody can use to get government services. We helped with that through the Eurasia Foundation. We had really good people to work with that he brought into his administration.

Q: It's really interesting that the local staff had such strong views. Is that something that you discussed with the ambassador and with the embassy? It sounds like you handled it really well.

FRITZ: I don't know about that. I'm sure I mentioned it to the DCM because I had weekly one on one meetings, usually with the DCM. The ambassador would join when she had time, but she was really busy. It was mostly with the DCM.

Q: Okay, that's really fascinating how you handled them. That's not the kind of thing anybody gives you training on when the staff reacts that way. Did any of the FSN staff leave?

FRITZ: No.

Q: Did they see early on that he was doing some of the right stuff?

FRITZ: It took some time. Quite honestly, I think the war changed their mind on Zelenskyy. I think it took that long.

Q: Okay. So you were there during one of the more chaotic periods in U.S. foreign policy. I don't know if we want to talk about this today or whether we want to do it at a fresh session.

FRITZ: Well, we're getting to two hours. So maybe a fresh session might be better.

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Q: Okay, today is June 17, 2024. And this is interview number four with Susan Fritz. Susan, last time we'd begun to talk about your time in Ukraine and had a very interesting discussion. You had mentioned you went through a revision to the strategy and you mentioned a bit working with the Poroshenko government early on. That strategy had included a lot of reform elements. And then there was an election in Ukraine in which Zelenskyy came in and you mentioned the concerns that your own Ukrainian staff had about his election. Was it easy to go forward with this strategy with a new host country government? Or did you have to make adjustments?

FRITZ: Let me take a step back before my time, before I arrived in Ukraine. At the time of the Maidan, the mission had just started a new strategy but everything changed with the Maidan. Previously we couldn't work with the government so our strategy was more of a civil society

kind of strategy, working at the grassroots because those were the people we could work with. And the mission had a lot less money. The mission had put that strategy aside but we hadn't really devised a new strategy and we had not gotten additional funding yet. But we sort of had a plan that we were working against and that's what I came into when I arrived. And then as you know, we developed a new strategy in about 2019, when Poroshenko was still in power and we were transitioning then to the new government shortly thereafter.

What happens in Ukraine and a lot of countries in the region when you have a new president or prime minister is that in addition to the top political echelon, a lot of the civil servants leave as well. It's a wholesale change in government so that could be a bit of a challenge. Towards the end of the Poroshenko administration we started running into roadblocks, particularly on anti-corruption reform. As I mentioned earlier, civil society was seen as a political opposition. So we were already running into some issues by the end of Poroshenko. With the Zelenskyy administration, we saw new opportunities, at least some of us saw new opportunities to engage. I would say one of the main areas that he brought in good people was on the IT side. He brought in some young tech-savvy IT experts who really wanted to advance citizen access to government through IT platforms. And they developed what they call government in a smartphone, the Dia app. And so we were able to, through our implementing partner, do a lot to advance a greater appreciation for responsiveness by the government. We helped to bring citizens and government together through this Dia platform by providing services more easily, making them more accessible and doing it in a way that reduced opportunities for corruption. So there were some opportunities too. It was challenging, but there were opportunities.

Q: But as I recall you saying that part of the new strategy was to counter Russian aggression. Hadn't Zelenskyy, as a Russian speaker, campaigned that he would be best positioned to mend fences with Russia? Did that raise questions about your strategic focus on stopping Russian aggression? Or, were our efforts so subtle that it would not have been noticed?

FRITZ: Well, as I talked about earlier, some of it was just putting many more resources into upgrading the grid, getting it prepared for detaching from the Russian grid and attaching it to the European grid. Some of the work in the east that OTI was doing and some of the early development work that we were doing in the east, that needed to be done no matter what. I would say that there was a bit of a challenge because of the change in Ukrainian government representatives in the east. It was new people, new priorities, and that was much more at the granular level because we were out there working in each of the government-controlled areas of those oblasts. And then new governors in the surrounding oblasts like Mykolaiv and elsewhere wanted our assistance as well. So that part of the transition was a little more difficult, I would say, but not impossible. It's just that you have to get to know new partners and new administrations and everything kind of comes to a standstill and all that, which I'm sure you've experienced as well.

Q: Okay, because we tend to think about political transitions only in terms of U.S. ones; we sometimes forget that there are ones in the countries where we work as well. I know that another part of the strategic approach was to build a portfolio that could be adapted as changes occurred in the country. How did you approach this, both strategically and operationally?

FRITZ: Yeah, so it was both. I would say when I first got to Ukraine, as I think I mentioned earlier, the mission was on sort of a downward path budget-wise. There were some that were thinking that it would close. What I found when I came out were very small – I would even call them boutique – projects, a million dollars here and a million dollars there. And they were very narrowly defined activities. To go from about twenty-five of those activities with maybe a total budget of I think $20 or $30 million to $180 million dollars a year was going to be difficult. And we weren't going to be able to do it by doing more of these boutique activities which also don't pivot easily. So if an opportunity came up in another area, we just couldn't do it because we couldn't get ourselves together to get our contracts in place and the like.

I'll give you a good example. One of the legacies of that approach was a contract we had with Deloitte to do customs reform. We thought customs reform was going to go somewhere because the former president of Georgia, Misha Saakashvili, had been appointed governor of Odesa Oblast. He chose customs as an area that he was going to reform and he brought in a very young dynamic reformer to work with him on that. We were still trying to get that contract in place when I arrived. When we finally signed the contract, Saakashvili had been removed as was his customs reformer. Poroshenko's guy in Kyiv running customs was very corrupt so there wasn't anything we could do with him. So I went to the ambassador and said, "This is a waste of money. We're not going to get anywhere. The reformers are gone and this guy who's heading up customs is a sleazebag." But she knew USAID pretty well and she was reluctant to let us cancel the contract because she knew how long it took to get it in place. Her thinking was that maybe today there's not a reformer, but maybe in a month or two there might be, or maybe a year from now. And how long is it going to take USAID to get an assistance vehicle in place? Eventually I convinced her that this was not a good use of our money. And so that was, again, a very narrowly defined boutique program.

Looking at some of the activities that we designed going forward, like the work that we designed out in the east, multi-dimensional economic development activities, multi-dimensional democracy governance activities, each with one contract, but multi-dimensional. And we said, "Okay, right now we're going to focus on these five oblasts in the east," but within the contracts, we said, "if opportunities come up elsewhere, we can move." Well, we barely got the contracts in place and there was a big opening in Mykolaiv. It was a little bit of a problem with the bandwidth of the contractors, within their own teams, but we shifted and said, "Okay, let's get OTI in initially, get them moving and then we can mobilize those contracts to come down and do some work in Mykolaiv in the south." We also made them multi-dimensional in terms of the kinds of things they could do. We made them flexible in terms of where they could work. And we had just

great contracting officers who worked with us in the designs to figure out how we can make them as flexible as possible. The other thing I would say is we made these as big as we could thinking that if the funds didn't come through, we could more easily modify and reduce, but it's easier to do that, then to then add another component and another $10 million.

We did that early on in designing the energy activity. We started out with a small energy efficiency activity – maybe a couple of million dollars – and ended up with a new $65 million contract for a much broader energy security project that could pivot and meet the needs in the energy sector as they came up. The original design was much smaller, but I insisted that we add another $20-30 million to it. Everybody on the energy team was nervous going that big but I knew money was coming and the sector was extremely important developmentally and politically. We knew there was a lot of support on the Hill, and on both sides of the aisle. So we knew that the money would come at least for several years. And if we did some smart programs that had results that there would likely be more coming. So that was our approach. It seemed to work at least while I was there. It gave us a lot of flexibility. And I think Jim Hope would say that when he came in after me, that the mission was set up with some more flexible instruments that could pivot pretty easily.

Q: And that probably should always be done in these transitional situations, right?

FRITZ: Yeah, I think so. It should have been done earlier in Ukraine, but when I came out as acting AA on a couple of trips, I found an overwhelmed staff, overworked, really very, people were tired and they had just been through the Maidan and they knew people fighting out in the east – friends' kids or their sons and their daughters. I said, "We need more staff. We need to hire more local staff. We need more foreign service officers. We need the people to be able to manage these programs and we can't do one-off activities, a million dollars here, a million dollars there." We ended up staffing up, but the initial reaction I got from the mission was, well, no, we were downsizing so we can't start hiring staff. I said, "That was then, this is now. We're not downsizing anymore and won't be for the foreseeable future. So, if we don't want to work our staff to death, we've got to come up with more people and a smarter way of managing our programs."

Q: That's good. I think we sometimes forget that there have been successes on the policy reform front in Ukraine given all of the change and turmoil. I believe that may have included pension reform. Was that under the Poroshenko regime?

FRITZ: That was early on. And we did it jointly with the IMF and the World Bank. They provided the impetus because there was a lot of interest in shoring up the pension system. Ukraine was $17 billion in the hole when Yanukovych fled. Our reform didn't totally fix the problem but it did close loopholes and reduce the percentage of GDP necessary to pay out pensions. On the pension system reform itself, the work was very collaborative. We had the

technical assistance that could help the government implement some of the reforms that both the World Bank and IMF were calling for and supporting with their financing. A second component was envisioned that would establish the possibility of private pensions like our TSP or 401ks but it was too hard politically to go into that second component. And you have to remember there was a banking crisis before that in which a lot of people lost their money so the citizen demand for it wasn't quite there. So we only did the first pillar.

Q: Okay. I believe Eurasia Foundation worked alongside USAID in Ukraine. Was it a significant program at that point in Ukraine? In Russia, Eurasia localized the foundation and spun it off. Did they do the same in Ukraine? Can you talk a little bit about how Eurasia Foundation was operating?

FRITZ: Sure. Before I got there, the mission had done a procurement for an e-governance program. It included e-procurement, e-governance, and open data. Eurasia Foundation won the cooperative agreement. Years earlier, Eurasia Foundation did spin off a local organization called the East Europe Foundation in Ukraine, and they also were implementing programs with USAID funding, including our parliamentary assistance program. And then they had some small pieces of other activities from time to time.

Q: So they were both operating then?

FRITZ: Yeah. They try not to compete for the same things. And let me take a step back. I am on the board of Eurasia Foundation, so I should be very transparent about that. The local spin-off, the East Europe Foundation, was implementing the Parliamentary Assistance Program. Eurasia Foundation, the U.S.-based organization, won the cooperative agreement to do the e-governance program. That program grew, especially when Zelenskyy came in, but even before Zelenskyy, we were making some headway on a lot of aspects of e-governance. It really advanced two and threefold, maybe even more than that, when Zelenskyy came in and brought in these young tech savvy IT people and they set up the Ministry for Digital Transformation, a ministry that's specifically devoted to advancing IT solutions to government issues. Eurasia Foundation implemented that program throughout the time I was there. It is finally wrapping up this year. Eurasia Foundation received a follow-on program to do similar work, but at a much greater scale, a lot more money.

Q: Well, that was fortuitous that you had that program started when Zelenskyy came in.

FRITZ: Yeah, yeah. I wish I could take credit, but I can't. My predecessors were really smart about that and we hired a really good FSN to manage that program. So yeah, that worked really well and fortuitous that we had a great partner. And while we didn't have a champion in Poroshenko, he did have a great tech-savvy, smart guy working for him that we could and did work with. We made some progress, particularly on open data. We also shored up the storage of

the e-procurement platform called ProZorro, which we also supported the expansion of. That was a huge anti-corruption tool because it put all public procurements on this transparent platform. USAID put additional funding aside to enable the Ukrainian government with Eurasia Foundation to do similar programming in other countries around the world to help them put government in a smartphone. So the things we could do under Poroshenko, we did. And then we had more opportunities even after him. So yeah, it was good.

Q: Oh, that's good. Okay, we'll maybe move on to the elephant in the room, which is the degree to which Ukraine became a political issue in the U.S. during the period you were there. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about how that affected you all. And that would have been happening throughout 2019. Is that correct?

FRITZ: Right, it was spring 2019, it started to unfold. Let me talk about that part. And then there's an earlier part of the history with USAID. It was devastating to observe. I was not front and center. I didn't testify, but several of my colleagues did. All of us observed the very disturbing and upsetting way the ambassador was removed. Any president has the ability to remove an ambassador for any reason, so it wasn't that, but it was the lies around it, the made-up stories in the Hill newspaper. I remember somebody forwarded me an article from that newspaper and it was false. It was talking about what Ambassador Yovanovitch had or had not done. She was accused of bad-mouthing Trump, which she never did. She was accused of all kinds of things. And so you had the Hill newspaper, then you had the so-called reporters on Fox News repeating what was in the Hill newspaper, which wasn't true. And then you had Donald Jr. tweeting about our ambassador saying some pretty awful things. And for somebody like Masha Yovanovitch, one of the top-notch diplomats in the foreign service, someone with such integrity. She was very, very careful dealing with a difficult situation where you had the U.S. ambassador in Europe, the U.S. ambassador in Germany, you had Kurt Volker, you had the White House, you had people from all those groups trying to intervene related to U.S. policy in Ukraine and run our relationship with the Ukrainian government. That's the job of the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. So she was trying to navigate that. It was horrible, but also fascinating to see how that just unraveled from a false story to being repeated and repeated and then all of a sudden it becomes true—watching lies become disinformation in real time. She had come back to the United States to accept an award, I think from the National Defense University. That's when she was told, "Wait. Do not go back to post. Cool your jets and wait for further direction." And finally, when she was given further direction, it was to go pack out and come back to the United States. We were all horrified to watch this happen to her. She did not come into the office that week. She packed up her things. She came to give a farewell speech to the embassy community. I'm getting choked up thinking about it now. I cried. I cried for her. I cried for our country. Just to see somebody like that whose name was dragged through the mud so viciously.

Most of my colleagues got called up to the Hill. Bill Taylor came in behind her as Chargé. I told Ambassador Taylor that the (only) silver lining of Masha's removal was that I got an opportunity

to work with him. I had never worked with him before. I wish there were other circumstances under which that would have happened. But yeah, so they all went up and testified and yeah, so that was that. And it was gut wrenching, the whole thing. It was so upsetting.

Q: Did it affect your ability to work with the Ukrainians?

FRITZ: Less so for the USAID mission, just because we were working more technically. But certainly U.S. policy towards Ukraine. I think it was challenging for my embassy colleagues more so, but I wasn't in the middle of that. But the United States lost a lot of credibility, and that part of it did affect us.

Q: I was just curious how much confidence they would have in dealing with individuals on controversial issues given all that was happening. To what extent did this affect what USAID was doing?

FRITZ: So it did, but way earlier and here's how. The day I arrived in Ukraine to take up my position as the mission director, the DCM had reached out and said, "Hey, you know, there's an article in one of the local papers. It's written by a parliamentarian who oftentimes accuses us of things that aren't true. Can you just follow up on this? There's a story about USAID and she's talking about USAID and Burisma being close." Burisma is the oligarch-owned company that Hunter Biden was on the board of. So you know how it is, checking in, getting access to your computer, you're just getting oriented at post. I was meeting all the heads of the different sections and so forth. So I asked John Pennell, my deputy, to look into it. He wasn't aware of anything and talked to our energy folks in the economic growth office. After he followed up, he said, "No, nothing now. Apparently, we had a relationship last year but that has ended." So this was late July, early August in 2016 that this was playing out. Every year our energy program would have an awards program for, I think it was journalists that covered renewable energy issues and maybe local governments that did any kind of renewable energy projects in their cities. We had an agreement with Burisma that they would provide the awards such as TVs or something like that, nice prizes for this event. When John had checked with the economic growth folks they said that we were no longer doing it. But a couple of weeks later, John says, "Never guess what I've just found out. Apparently, we are still working with Burisma. And we're planning on doing this again in September." I said, "No, we're not. We're not doing this. Let's talk to the implementing partner and let them know we're not doing this. No way we can work with Burisma. This cannot be associated with USAID in any way, shape or form." So we did cut the relationship or our partner cut the relationship.

Unfortunately, Burisma had some pretty high-powered lobbyists who showed up in Kiev and did a full court press on me and on the DCM saying that Zlochevsky, the oligarch who owned Burisma, has never been convicted in court of any corruption so there's no reason for USAID to pull out of this relationship and blah, blah, blah. We stuck to our guns. I got a lot of support from

the DCM. I talked to him about it before we pulled the plug and we agreed that it was the right thing to do. There was a lot of nasty blowback. They were okay to me, but the DCM took a big hit from these lobbyists. So that was our relationship with Burisma. The DCM mentioned it in his testimony and he said the story's out there already but nobody really followed up on it. It had nothing to do with Hunter Biden—our implementing partner established the relationship on their own. It never came to the surface or anything after that, but we did have that early on relationship.

Q: Okay, but you never got any pressure from Washington to do anything?

FRITZ: We let our Washington folks know in the Bureau. We kept them apprised of things in case they blew up. Fortunately, it didn't come back to bite us. It came back to bite others, but not us.

Q: Just another aspect of the politics of USAID, whenever it works in a high priority country. Did you have a lot of Congressional delegations (codels) that came to Ukraine? If so, could you talk a little bit about how you manage those codels. Were they bipartisan, or did they come separately?

FRITZ: So no, they usually came together. They were usually managed by the political section and then if there was a USAID dimension to it, we'd have a control officer for that meeting or that event. Usually they were interested in the military relationship, the intelligence relationship, and what was going on in the east so very rarely did we get pulled in. The most memorable codel was when Senators Amy Klobuchar, John McCain, and Lindsey Graham came out over the winter holidays – it was really cold. I think maybe they came over New Years. This was when Poroshenko was still in power. When they met with him, he invited them to go out with him to the front lines, but they had not brought that kind of gear. The control officer was running around getting boots and socks and all kinds of stuff. The ambassador accompanied the three senators to the east. We were left with the staff who didn't get to go on that trip and so we briefed and went out to dinner with them. We had regular briefings of a lot of high-level military from the United States. There was always a country team to brief them or State Department or the NSC. When Zelenskyy was inaugurated Senator Ron Johnson from Wisconsin, Kurt Volker (who was U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations) and I think the U.S. ambassador to the EU, Gordon Sondland, came out to represent the United States.

Q: Did Vice-President Pence go? Maybe not.

FRITZ: No, he did not. And so we briefed the three I mentioned when they first came out. It was a small group, like three, three or four of us who briefed them. So we did a lot of briefings, but not a lot of show and tell of USAID projects. I was most impressed with General Mattis when he came to Kyiv. He requested to be briefed by the broader country team, so it was a room full of

people. He listened intently to each briefer, and asked each person if they spoke one of the local languages as well as other questions about their background. He is extremely smart, personable, and exuded leadership. Briefing him was a highlight of my time in Ukraine.

And then I did a lot of briefings when I came back to DC from time to time. There was a lot of interest on the Hill. I did a lot of staff briefings, which I grew to have a real appreciation for how smart a lot of those staffers are and how up to date they are on what's going on. They knew just as much as I did. And I was on the ground getting my hands dirty (literally with our agriculture work) overseeing all of our projects. They were very well-versed in what was going on in Ukraine and had a good understanding of the lay of the land.

Q: When you did have to do briefings and consultations on the Hill, was the focus often on what you were doing on the anti-corruption front? Was that absolutely a priority?

FRITZ: Yeah, that was absolutely. That was the biggest priority. Some interest in what we're doing in the east as well, but the anti-corruption part was front and center.

Q: Can you say a bit more about what we were doing on that front? And were there any elements you saw to be more effective than others?

FRITZ: Yeah, so I haven't talked about them as anti-corruption programs, but the big Eurasia Foundation TAPAS program -- the e-governance, e-procurement, and open data program that I described earlier – were all part of the anti-corruption work we were supporting. The e-procurement platform, Prozorro, closed opportunities for corruption in procurement, for skimming off the top. The Ministry of Economy estimates that to-date over $70 million have been saved since the establishment of Prozorro. Also, previously I spoke about our health reform program. Those were the two centerpieces of our anti-corruption work and I believe the ones that had the most impact. We had another project, Support to Anti-Corruption Champion Institutions (SACCI) that worked with the National Agency of Corruption Prevention (NACP) and with various government institutions to help them establish anti-corruption action plans. We also did a lot on judicial reform. I would say judicial reform and independence are more long-term prospects. There's a lot of old guard which is really hard to weed out as you're trying to reform a judiciary, but we were working in that space as well.

Q: Right, that's important. Were you doing any work with an anti-corruption commission or anything along that front?

FRITZ: We were. So there were four pieces to the new anti-corruption architecture established after the revolution: the Anti-Corruption Court, the NACP, the Special Anti-corruption Prosecutor (SAPO), and the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) which was an FBI-like

investigative body. INL was helping NABU and SAPO and we both helped stand up the Anti-corruption Court. We had different pieces of it, so we coordinated.

The NACP, which USAID was taking the lead on, was another interesting case. This was towards the end of the Poroshenko administration. SACCI was one of the projects that was slow in the procurement process. By the time that contract was just about set, we were getting ready to roll out the program with the NACP. I had gone to meet with the head of the NACP who was a Poroshenko appointee. At that point we weren't helping them at all. They were rumored to be politically targeting who they were investigating. Also, one of the conditions for one of the sovereign loan guarantees that we had provided to Ukraine was related to establishing an e-declaration system whereby public servants had to declare their assets. This would enable civil society and media to track whether a civil servant was getting wealthier than their salary would suggest. That system was supposed to be run by this anti-corruption agency, but the system had been dismantled. It had been created by the United Nations, I believe, and then dismantled by this anti-corruption agency led by a Poroshenko appointee.

We were sitting on a bunch of computers that were sitting in boxes in Odesa Oblast, where Saakashvili had been trying to reform the customs service. Before they were even able to get everything set up, Saakashvili and his advisor were sacked. So we collected those computers that OTI was providing them. Before our SACCI contract with lots of resources rolled out, we thought, “Why don't we offer them to NACP and see what they do with them?” Ostensibly that was the purpose of my meeting with the head of the NACP. I had asked her, “How do you select people to investigate?” She said, “We act on accusations.” I said, “You don't have a risk-based system whereby you look at the most probable or fishy cases? She was very open about going after their political rivals and I was horrified. I said, “Well, thank you. This meeting has been very helpful. I'm sorry we can't provide assistance to you at this moment. This is not an agency that we want to work with, the way you're working, the way you're working both your declaration system and then how you identify who you're going to investigate or audit.”

There were several commissioners that ran this agency. There were some good people on that commission and they were quite frustrated that she was the head of it. They also were in that meeting. This was not something that I was going to go public with, but rather, we planned to quietly step away from this agency. I walked out of the meeting and was ambushed by media. I played it safe, saying we had a nice meeting, we just had discussion about what the agency's doing and just left it at that. By the time I got back to the office, one of the other commissioners had put on Facebook, “USAID cuts all assistance to the anti-corruption agency” and it became like this big hullabaloo. But we didn't change our decision not to provide assistance. Again, it goes back to what you were asking about earlier about these instruments that just couldn't pivot. We ended up doing some other anti-corruption activities, but it was really working at the margins. We couldn't work with our main partner. We simply couldn't work with them. They were not reformists.

Q: Right; that's an important thing to document. But I think picking some areas such as e-governance and procurement where you can have meaningful impact and it's not dependent on this political system is probably a valuable lesson. I suspect it is often easy to fritter away resources on politically ineffective central agencies.

FRITZ: Yes.

Q: What a fascinating story.

FRITZ: Yeah, it was an exciting time to be there. We did some really good work. We had impact. That's really richly rewarding when you can see the impact of the work and the funding that you put out. Not everything was a huge success, but we had enough of them that really inspired us to do more. So it was a great time to be there.

Q: I didn't ask when we were talking about the politically difficult period, if you were getting the support you needed from USAID Washington. Did they understand the stress that this was putting on the field?

FRITZ: Yeah. I mean, how could they support us? It wasn't really much. We just kind of circled the wagons, had the resident legal officer and our energy guys sit down and document the facts so that if any questions came up, we were prepared. The bureau front office was aware but there wasn't really much they could do, unfortunately.

Q: Anything else on Ukraine that you would like to mention?

FRITZ: Not really. I did want to mention that I left during COVID, and that was a terrible way to end a career as I left in March.

Q: Right when COVID started then. Did you have to go through working virtually? Or did that begin later?

FRITZ: No. So what happened was the embassy was very nervous and by this time Bill Taylor had left we had a Chargé who was new to the region, was new to Ukraine, and it was a very hard position to put anybody in. She was doing the best she could. But then the crisis hit with COVID. The CDC representative at post told country team that it was likely at least one of us would die from COVID so they were kind of in panic mode which was not helpful.

The embassy health unit and I believe the CDC people went through our health records. My son, Cody, has type 1 diabetes, and my husband was at that time in his early seventies. So the health unit told me that my son and husband had to go on the next plane because they were high risk. At

this point, there were no planes out of Kyiv. So we thought, “Okay, well my tour's up in July so I'll stay here with Kai (my daughter). And Mike will go home with Cody, and we'll follow in July.” I was quarantining, working from home because both Mike and I had just come back from Germany on work trips. My kids were both seniors in high school.

On a Monday morning at about 11 o'clock, we got a call telling us that there was going to be a plane taking off at about three o'clock. I couldn't talk my husband into it. He was not ready to go psychologically. My daughter talked him into taking my son. And so they packed up and left. About two weeks later, we had another call from the health unit saying anybody with asthma had to go. My daughter and I both have asthma so we packed our bags and left.

We were fortunate to have a place to land. We have a beach house in New Jersey that was unoccupied since it was in the off-season, so that’s where we went. I handed over my duties immediately to my deputy, Susan Kutor. She said, “You can't run a mission from New Jersey. And she was right. Although as painful as it was, I handed the reins to her. The kids did school virtually and I worked virtually from there. We got up at two in the morning every day until they graduated and I finished my tour. Basically I worked with the foreign service officers on their annual evaluation forms (AEFs). I backed up Susan where I could. I also organized virtual happy hours and tried to boost morale with things like that. And then I ended my foreign service career virtually at the end of July. The mission had a nice virtual send off. It was a hard way for my kids to finish high school, graduating virtually.

Q: I hadn't realized that the embassies were proactively asking people to leave.

FRITZ: Our CDC guy at post was extremely worried and I think communicated that to the Chargé. I think that just got people so overly cautious. The Ukrainian health system is not great either. There was concern that if anybody had a non-COVID illness or my son, God forbid, had some issue related to his diabetes, that there would be no place for him to go. You do what you have to do and you think you need to do for your family, so that's what we did.

Q: So, but that was managed post by post? It wasn't a worldwide policy to be directing people out.

FRITZ: Yeah.

Q: So did you then retire?

FRITZ: Yes, I did. I retired.

MARK SILVERMAN
Deputy and Acting Mission Director
Nicaragua

(1992-1997)

Mr. Silverman was born in Boston, Massachusetts and moved to Los Angeles in his childhood. After graduating high school, he enlisted in the California Air National Guard in 1965. He was educated at San Fernando State College and Ohio University. He volunteered for the Peace Corps in Afghanistan before entering the U.S. Foreign Service in 1976. He worked in various positions for USAID in Afghanistan, Egypt, Peru, Washington D.C., Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Mr. Silverman was interviewed by Marcia Bernbaum in 2023.

Topical Focus – 1990s Democracy Reform after the Sandinista Revolution

SILVERMAN: In early 1990, Nicaragua had its election which resulted in consequential changes to the political situation there. The Nicaraguan election outcome was a surprise to many. Dona Violetta de Chamorro ran against Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega and won. The second surprise was that the Sandinistas agreed to a peaceful transfer of power. Janet Ballantyne was named the new USAID Director, and she quickly traveled to Managua to put together a short-term strategy for USAID assistance to Nicaragua. The economy was in great danger; in 1990 the inflation rate exceeded 7,000 percent, consumer goods were in short supply, petroleum availability was limited, productive capacity was falling, and consumers were hurting.

I believe the last USAID mission closed its doors in 1980-81. As there had been no USAID presence in Nicaragua for almost ten years there was a need to immediately find some temporary office space and the embassy provided an office for USAID to use. LAC sent me to Managua on the first of several priority visits to lend a hand and support Janet's efforts to launch the short-term strategy, help start designing critical program components and support actions to establish the USAID presence. USAID sent out a world-wide cable requesting volunteers for Nicaragua and there was a terrific response. With staff arriving in Managua on short term visits, the embassy office space became inadequate for the growing mission. Nevertheless, a series of program and project proposals were rapidly developed and submitted to Washington for review and approval. On another visit I helped draft a second balance of payments/cash transfer program document and upon returning to Washington the LAC Bureau accelerated the review and approval of the program and a major disbursement was made four days after approval. This required close coordination with the office of management and budget and the treasury department. The National Security Council [NSC] staff demanded a daily report on what USAID was doing to help Nicaragua which required drafting summaries of actions on all initiatives ranging from developing new primary education textbooks to promoting democratic initiatives. They also wanted to know what USAID was doing to help reactivate the Nicaraguan economy which was in freefall. Fortunately, Jim Michel was the interlocutor with the NSC, and I only had to produce the briefing materials. Washington approved an initial total of $300 million for the Nicaragua program and the task was to help ensure that projects and programs reflected Administration priorities and demonstrated that USAID could respond quickly to foreign policy priorities. Coordination of Washington based work with State, the NSC and with USAID senior leaders on a daily basis was, to say the least, stressful.

An example of one initiative that USAID carried out early on was developing new primary school curriculum by designing new textbooks with nonpolitical content. If you have ever seen

the primary school textbooks that the Cubans helped Nicaragua develop in the 1980's you would see some interesting political educational concepts.

Q: As it turns out I was USAID education officer when they were developing that curriculum in 1980 when we went in. It was a fascinating experience watching them do it. So yeah, that is interesting.

SILVERMAN: One example of politics at the elementary level was in the Cuban math textbooks. To promote addition the book asked questions and developed drawings along these lines: "If you found one grenade underneath the table and three grenades in the backyard, how many grenades would you have?" They would do these examples for utilizing rifles or shooting "gringos" as its revolutionary approach to learning. Basic math was more than math; it represented a political indoctrination mechanism.

…

SILVERMAN: Unfortunately, the fascination wore thin with all the political problems that we encountered; political problems created by the Nicaraguans themselves and micromanaged by part of the U.S. congress. You must consider that with the Sandinista revolution came a ground swell of departures. In some cases, people were afraid they would be arrested and who knows what would happen to them. In other cases, they didn't want to be a part of the revolution and others left in the middle of the night without notice. Earlier I spoke about the Pinata and the expropriation process. A number of those property owners who left the country under duress eventually became American citizens; many lived in the Miami area. The reason this was important was because the stolen property got distributed to both Sandinista organizations and to their leaders. The Nicaraguans who had become U.S. citizens tried to sue the government or at the very least convince the conservatives in the U.S. congress to hold up assistance to Nicaragua. The Sandinistas issued decrees and turned those assets over to members of the leadership and the leadership then transferred ownership to many others.

The Sandinistas also stripped ministry buildings of basic equipment and furnishings, leaving the new government with empty buildings for their staffs. I remember USAID provided approximately $5 million to the new government to help get the ministries functioning, including provision of vehicles for senior leaders. To ensure that vehicles were only used for official purposes we set up a monitoring system to track their use and when we found them being used for personal reasons, we formally notified the Minister of the Presidency and required evidence that the GON had addressed the issue effectively. This was a headache to administer but it sent a clear message to the GON.

Conservative congressional leaders, such as Jesse Helms of North Carolina, not only were interested in incorporating USAID into the State Department but were unhappy about providing any assistance to Nicaragua while the property of American citizens was in the hands of Sandinistas without compensation. This political issue translated into a very complex work environment, not only for USAID but for the entire U.S. mission. The embassy actually had a full-time economic officer work on property issues and the Ambassador spent considerable time trying to address this complicated problem. Senator Helms and staff constantly placed holds on various parts of the program making it difficult to carry out our approved strategy and

creating stress for all the staff.

Therefore, even though we had approved operational year budgets, with approved investment plans, we were constrained from being able to provide funding for our programs in a timely manner because of intense congressional oversight. The USAID Managua front office worked closely with our legislative staff in Washington, LAC bureau management and congressional staff to understand why it was in our foreign policy interest to carry out programs needed to help stabilize the Nicaraguan economy, reduce runaway inflation and work with poor communities in need of support. The social and physical infrastructure of the country was distressed and was falling apart and required investment. Finally, to help strengthen this fledgling democracy, assistance to develop democratic institutions was, in our view, essential.

Senator Helms' staffers made numerous trips to Nicaragua and often would grill us on the various investments we were proposing to make. To their credit they listened carefully to our briefings and asked tough questions. They seemed willing to support parts of the program and convinced the senator to lift some of the holds but only after significant delays which negatively affected program implementation. The property issue did not go away as the U.S. citizens now living in Florida demanded that their properties be returned to them, or full compensation provided and they were often opposed to helping Nicaragua at all.

The Catch 22 nature of this problem should be evident. For the government to better address issues they first needed to staff and furnish government ministries with basic equipment, launch programs to address the deteriorating economy, design and implement needed health, education and agricultural related activities, and work on strengthening weak democratic institutions. However, they were caught in a political squeeze as they were not the cause of the property problem but since the largest bilateral donor had domestic political challenges associated with implementing assistance efforts in Nicaragua the GON had to do something to demonstrate progress on the big political issue. Since it was impossible to return properties that were taken a decade before and the Nicaraguan treasury was almost broke, USAID worked with the Central Bank and Finance Ministry to develop a program for the issuance of Nicaraguan government bonds to partially compensate those citizens whose properties were stolen. This was the reality of U.S. relations with Nicaragua between 1992 and 1997.

I worked with Janet during my first two years in Managua and essentially served as her alter ego. Nicaragua was a high-profile mission with twenty-six USDH staff and over 100 FSN positions. From zero in 1990, the overall portfolio was expected to reach $500-600 million by the end of 1994. As you may gather from our discussion the program faced high levels of operational uncertainty due to congressional and executive concerns over the slow pace of Nicaragua's movement to democracy and the thousands of unresolved American citizen property cases. Despite these continuing challenges Janet and I ensured that USAID's program had a strategic direction with balanced policy based conditionality along with a focus on strengthening the contributions of nongovernmental organizations and broadening the benefits of USAID assistance. We successfully concluded negotiations and obtained approval of a multi-year Title III food assistance agreement that was key to generating the local currency resources needed to target programs focusing on food security and agricultural reactivation in

the poorest areas of the country. We also mobilized additional development resources for the conflictive zones in the north of Nicaragua which had not fully disarmed following years of civil strife. This was an important USAID policy objective that I pursued with the GON and helped get their agreement to pay increased attention to these areas.

We tried to help increase investment in the agricultural sector through local nongovernmental organizations such as the Union of Non-traditional Agricultural Producers [UPANIC] by providing technical assistance to small farmers through improved agricultural practices and by helping them associate with larger producers who had the capacity and experience with export markets. We also helped the private agricultural export association find new markets for the small producers. Melons and sweet onions were two sub sectors where due to our program there was an expansion of exports for smaller producers.

After the 1992 election Mark Schneider was appointed the new AA/LAC. Mark was once a Peace Corps volunteer in El Salvador, and he wanted it to be understood that there was a new administration and that he had views about assistance strategy in Central America that weren't necessarily the views shared by career staff. I would just say that our work styles didn't mix well but he was the boss. I have never been known to meekly follow instructions without being able to have a dialogue. Mark may not have understood that career officers worked for every duly elected administration. The fact that the director was appointed by USAID under George Herbert Walker Bush's administration didn't mean that the director was political, but the AA decided that a change in mission leadership was needed, and he had the authority to do that. He wanted to replace the USAID front office, but he didn't appreciate that the state department, represented by Ambassador Maisto, wouldn't agree to such an action. The Ambassador acknowledged that the AA had the authority to replace the USAID director, but Maisto was not going to agree to replace both USAID leaders and made it clear that only one officer could depart post. If the AA decided to remove both officers, the Ambassador stated that he would not approve a replacement for the director. You can imagine that my relationship with the AA didn't improve after that conversation.

Janet Ballantyne graciously departed post, and I remained, as acting director, for approximately six months, until George Carner, who was director in Madagascar, arrived in Managua. I didn't appreciate Mr. Schneider's micromanagement of the Nicaragua program, including rewriting congressional notifications and pushing a more politicized agenda. He probably would have been happier not having me in Managua yet he was in charge of the LAC and I supported him as best as I could as acting director including contributing to a successful Consultative Group meeting in Paris with the Nicaraguans, the World Bank and other donors as well as supporting his efforts when testifying on Capitol Hill. Fortunately for me, I had an excellent working relationship with our country team and with the Government of Nicaragua.

…

George arrived in Managua in late 1994 and I had been Acting Director for around six months. By that time, we had a yearly budget of approximately $55 million. Shortly after George arrived at post, he and I teamed up to address the challenge of reorganizing the mission for greater effectiveness and efficiency, given changing program needs and scarce resources. We spent a great deal of time consulting staff and working with Washington offices. The reorganization

plan better reflected program priorities as it combined program and project functions into one office, established an office of Democratic Initiatives, and restructured the agriculture office. Washington then tasked the mission with developing a new strategy and through a highly participative process we formulated a revised strategy that reflected agency priorities and resource availabilities and had full ownership by the staff. More attention was placed on directing resources to the poor and to democracy and human rights challenges. This included significant investment in strengthening the process associated with elections.

In late 1996, Arnoldo Aleman, who was the mayor of Managua, was elected President of Nicaragua. We weren't sure what to expect until early in 1997, as we monitored the GON's approaches to management, it appeared that the GON demonstrated a lack of transparency in its actions. I sensed that transparency would be a continuing challenge. For example, we had a multi-year Title III Food for Peace Agreement that generated substantial amounts of local currency; USAID put into place a vetted local currency secretariat responsible for managing the many activities the government would carry out in support of the agreement. The secretariat was well managed and internal controls were effective with procedures agreed to by both the GON and USAID. The director of the local currency secretariat was well trained and doing an excellent job. Any changes to the leadership of the unit required joint agreement by USAID and the GON.

In early 1997 the Aleman administration unilaterally bypassed the agreed upon rules and regulations that were established for the secretariat and President Aleman appointed a new director, a close ally, who appeared to lack the management experience to handle this important position. This unilateral decision by the Aleman administration, implemented through an executive decree by President Aleman, was given to me as a fait accompli by the Minister of Finance. This action created a serious challenge to USAID and the U.S. mission. We all wanted to have a good working relationship with the new administration, but we also had to ensure that the Title III program was being implemented correctly and with transparency. As the USG's representative on the Title III Executive committee (along with the Deputy Minister of Finance and Minister of Finance), I had to handle the unwelcomed replacement of the Executive Director. After consultations with Ambassador Maisto, I firmly communicated our displeasure with the action, advised on correct hiring procedures that must be followed and insisted on a probationary period for the political appointee. These decisions were accepted by the Nicaraguans. As it turned out I departed post several months later and the new executive director was relieved of his duties.

The five years in Nicaragua were fascinating. We found iguanas in our backyard and somehow in our master bathroom; the roof of our house leaked and we had to put down cans to catch water after heavy rains; the municipal water supply would often shut down and we had to draw water from a big tank and the electricity would go out regularly, forcing us to turn on a generator in the front of the house that sounded like a railroad engine. As the economy grew and western amenities became available, Managua became much more interesting to live in.

Nevertheless, someone once told me the problem with Nicaragua was not Nicaragua but the Nicaraguans themselves. The property issue was complex and required an enormous amount of work to find some kind of reasonable solution. As mentioned earlier USAID

hired a specialist from the University of Wisconsin who designed a government bond program with the aim of providing some value on the secondary market in support of compensating the prior property owners. The government lacked the resources needed to fully compensate the long list of original owners. The U.S. citizens who wanted the value of their properties (generally defined by them without proof) provided to them were not happy with this approach but there wasn't any other viable solution. I believe the GON issued these bonds, but I don't recall the actual discounted value of the units. Senator Helms was not happy about this effort as he believed the GON could have issued a decree announcing that the homes and other properties taken by the Sandinistas in 1979 were no longer theirs and that they should immediately be returned to the prior owners. This wasn't a realistic option in a Nicaragua that still had a large Sandinista following, including in the military and police.

During my five years in Nicaragua, USAID carried out several valuable programs. During the 1980s the Sandinistas burned down a lot of the productive areas where rice was grown on the Atlantic coast. In 1990, USAID hired Bob Gersony, a conflict and humanitarian specialist, who spent several months going up and down the rivers on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua trying to understand what kinds of interventions would be needed to reactivate agricultural production there. He met with farmers and local officials and learned a great deal about their challenges. Bob learned that farmers needed several basic inputs such as rice seed, machetes and basic implements to be productive, but they lacked the resources to finance these items. Therefore, rather than developing some large, complicated set of programs, USAID responded with a targeted package of assistance to the farmers on the coast with the above inputs which led to thousands of tons of new rice production with new marketing channels. It was a promising new chapter for the Atlantic Coast producers.

Now one of the biggest problems getting to the Atlantic Coast, as I am sure you remember, is that there was no easy way to get there. There were no roads and bridges that would take you all the way through and bad weather would make it difficult to complete the trip. USAID used local currencies generated under the program to finance a major new project that built wooden bridges using local labor and local materials. No imports were required; we used the materials available on the coast and the road network was broadened and strengthened with the use of local labor as well. We encouraged increased attention to maintenance of the roads, and I believe we provided some budget assistance. Once the bridges and roadwork were completed the program reduced the time needed to travel from Managua to Bluefields from twenty-four to almost five hours in total. Unfortunately, despite the focus of promoting an improved transportation network to the coast, local governments didn't budget adequately for maintenance and during the rainy season parts of the roads washed away. In my more than thirty years working for USAID I found lack of maintenance to be a common problem in all the countries where I worked. The Atlantic Coast infrastructure project was a success however given the lack of maintenance funding available I imagine that with today's political and economic situation things may not be much different than when we started the program.

I would also like to mention another key fact. While the conservatives in Congress were beating up USAID by holding up program implementation, the mission was working to ensure election integrity and promote the vote for all Nicaraguans. We traveled around the country, including to the conflictive zones, to ensure that voter registration programs were being carried

out effectively and people from all political persuasions would have access to the vote. Ex-combatants, for the first time, were an important part of this process and the Helms staff acknowledged that USAID's work on elections represented an important step forward in Nicaragua's democratization process. One of the most uplifting things we viewed in the countryside was to speak with people who walked **twenty hours** to get to a voter registration place. There was a significant desire to participate and none of this would have happened without the leadership of USAID and the Organization of American States team who promoted democracy and human rights and facilitated the participation of many ex-combatants in the democratic process.

In the 1996 presidential election, the Sandinistas didn't challenge the results of the election where the conservative Arnoldo Aleman was declared the winner. But as I will talk a little bit later in my final Washington assignment, I led the USAID observation team in the 2006 Nicaraguan election; Daniel Ortega won that election and through non-democratic means (including the arrests of opposition candidates and illegal actions by the National Assembly) he continues to be President of Nicaragua today, eighteen years later. What a tragedy for the Nicaraguan people.

Q: What did the donor community look like when you arrived there.? I can imagine within the donor community there were probably differences in perspective. Some ardently support the Sandinistas with other points of view How did that pan out with relations with other donors?

SILVERMAN: Well, I think the Europeans were much more likely to be pro-Sandinista and they paid less attention to the idea of civilian control of the military or the police. Remember that Humberto Ortega, Daniel's brother, was the head of the Nicaraguan army. It was impossible for Dona Violetta's government to replace him. So, the Europeans were more willing to work directly with the Sandinistas and less concerned with the confiscation of property issues, they tended to see this as only an American issue. With a new administration in Washington and a new AA/LAC, there was a change in our policy, and we started to move toward working with some of the Sandinista organizations in agriculture and education. We had a difficult balancing act to work through; an administration more open to work across the political spectrum but an important conservative congressional constituency with access to our budget that had influence over assistance flows.

USAID has a responsibility to the U.S. taxpayer who finances foreign assistance, and it must manage resources in accordance with U.S. government rules and regulations. But let's return to Nicaragua. There was a lot of work between the Europeans and Sandinista groups. We had many visits from left wing groups across the United States who would come to Nicaragua and donate their time to work in the fields and with poor communities and they would often complain about our policy direction and the need to work more at the base level. So, we were stuck with a construct that required us to work with organizations that could be certified as capable of managing money and were not politicized. I think the Europeans didn't like it, and the left of center American volunteer groups also were unhappy but at the time USAID believed that the private sector was the engine for development. So, I think we had a balance; the Europeans would work with institutions that we couldn't work with. But we

talked about it a lot.

…

SILVERMAN: I imagine that the Sandinista leadership was building their assets in the companies they had run, and this was part of the complication. It wasn't the military industrial complex; it was the political industrial complex. The leadership had their fingers in lots of different financial pies and illegally owned real estate (both homes and productive enterprises) while much of the country was poor. There was a large informal sector, and I don't recall people in the streets demanding change. The private agricultural sector was led by right of center producers and they were leaders in the export sector. They wanted to work with the new private banking systems (including establishment and strengthening of the Superintendent of Banking) that we helped Nicaragua establish. The left-wing Sandinista led agricultural groups were focused more on domestic production and followed state led agricultural models utilizing state owned banks which weren't profitable and were a drain on the government's budget. Banking decisions by the state-owned agricultural bank were rarely sound and easily influenced by politicians.

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Gerald Hyman
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(1990-2007)

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Gerlad Hyman studied at the University of Chicago where he earned both his undergraduate and doctoral degrees. He then began working as a professor at Smith College in 1970 for 12 years, until he pursued a Doctor of Law degree at the University of Virginia. He entered USAID in 1990 and became director of its office of Democracy and Governance in 2002. He served in Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Romania, Morocco, Nigeria, Sudan, and South Sudan. He was interviewed by Ann Van Dusen in November 2016.

Topical Focus - Beginning of the Europe DRG Program

HYMAN: And so, how I got to AID. I took an Indonesian language class at Yale before I went to Malaysia, and I continued to connect with a couple that was in that class afterwards. He went to Berkeley and I went to teach at Smith. Then he came back here on an IPA (Inter-Agency Personnel Agreement) to DOD (U.S. Department of Defense). This was in Bush 39.

Q: Oh, the late '80s.

HYMAN: Or maybe it was under Reagan. Anyway, he was having lunch with Carol Adelman. He had been in Indonesia so he was an Asia guy in a part of DOD that was a sort of policy shop, thinking about larger than just military.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: And Carol Adelman was at that time head of AID's Asia/Near East Bureau. And so she was thinking about developing a democracy element, a governance element in ANE (Bureau of 'Asia and the Near East...

Q: Open Markets, Open Society.

HYMAN: Exactly. You may be one of the three people that remembers that other than Carol and me.

Q: Okay.

HYMAN: Exactly. And it was called the Democratic Pluralism Initiative, which is what she titled it. But she didn't know what this was going to be about. She had no idea. She just knew, or thought, maybe we should look at this.

So, she was having lunch with this language colleague of mine, at the White House I guess it was, or wherever he was and he said she was looking for someone to start this program. And there were no democracy programs in those days except if you want to talk about Greece, ancient Greece.

Q: Well there was some funding for IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems) that went way, way back.

HYMAN: There was some money funded for IFES and LAC had an administration of justice program but it was limited to courts and limited to justice. So, that was it. But it wasn't a systematic democracy and governance program. Jim Michael was instrumental.

Q: On the Latin America side?

HYMAN: On the Latin America- well there was only Latin America as far as I know and it was a result of the nuns who, you know, Kissinger came back, yadda, yadda, got to do something about the courts, etcetera. But it wasn't even beyond that as far as I know. So, this was in the early part of 1989 and my friend said well I have this friend who's an anthropologist, worked in Asia, also a lawyer, maybe he'd be a good person to start this kind of program. Because, again, nobody had any idea what this was going to be about. So, she looked at my resume, I guess, and thought well maybe so. So, I had an interview with her -- totally unsubstantive as I recall -- and she hired me. Now she did that as an AD so, there was no tenure involved in that.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: And so then, 1989 was sort of a hallmark year for Europe. Well, AID had three regional bureaus, Africa, Latin America, and ANE. Well, they knew Europe wasn't in Latin America.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: They also knew it wasn't in Sub Saharan Africa.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: So, they put it in ANE partly because ANE had a couple of little programs, one was in Ireland for example, the Tip O'Neill fund.

Q: And they had one in Italy.

HYMAN: Exactly. So, they had these snippets of programs that nobody paid much attention to because they were earmarks and they didn't do any work in the former Soviet Union and they also didn't do any work in Western Europe. There was no need in Western Europe and they weren't going to do it in Warsaw Pact countries. So, all of a sudden bam, this thing blows up. So, I walk in the door in ANE and there was a "taskforce" on Europe. They said well you're on the taskforce and I said I have never been to Europe. I'd been to London once on my way back from Malaysia to go to the library. That's it. So, they say that's good enough for us; you're on the taskforce. And it was headed by Dick Brown and Marge Bonner, who had been relieved of their duties on the Egypt desk to do this Europe thing, about which they also knew nothing. Don Presley was the economics person.

Q: Right, okay.

HYMAN: Paul _____ was sort of one of the program kind of people. Oh, we had, I guess we must have had a unit where these guys would look over your scopes of work and stuff like that. Ron Redman was one of them. They don't even have those now. I think Brian did away with that.

Anyway, so there's one of those (program office) and so on. And a contracts officer was assigned to it. So, that was the taskforce. And so we wound up responsible for devising programs in

Central Europe, initially only Poland, Hungary and what was then Czechoslovakia. That was under the so-called SEED Act, Support for Eastern Europe and Democracy.

Q: Yes, I remember the SEED Act.

HYMAN: So, the word "D" (democracy) appeared in the act. And not only that but unlike other parts of the world these people actually wanted to have not only a market economy, they also wanted democracy, they wanted to be a part of Europe. And so they were open to assistance in this area. It's not like you had to cram it down their throat. And so our first task was to do Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. And very shortly thereafter the dominos fell in the rest of Central Europe so very shortly after that was Romania and Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

So, there was a PMI, do you remember PMI?

Q: Yes.

HYMAN: PMF now, who was looking for a rotation. She was in FM, that was her hone base, and she was looking for a rotation. And I don't know if she wandered by or if she, I forget how it was but she stopped in and said can you use me. So, it was just me and Tom Nicastro. That was the democracy office but he had other things; he covered education and all kinds of other things. So, I was a junior DG person reporting to Tom who reported to Dick Blue who reported to Barbara Turner. That was the pecking order.

Richard, he's no longer Dick. Okay, in those days he was Dick.

So, she came in and I didn't think much about her, I was thinking what's she going to do. She's going to be there a couple months. But Tom was more of an empire builder than I was, and he said sure, come on in and why don't we take you as your LPMI. That was Susan Kosinski, now Fritz. And so she changed her home base to what then became a division in the technical assistance part of ANE and she stayed with it forever, until she went to management.

And then Catherine Stratos joined us. She's in economic growth now. Anyway, long story short or not so short. So anyway, so ANE then got carved up because Carol and Roskins were in, to use the technical term for this, pissing matches with each other.

Q: Right, yes.

HYMAN: And so Roskins said well, I may not be able to get rid of you but I can cut your empire down. ANE started in Manilla and went all the way to Morocco. And then included Europe. And he said well I'll fix that. So, he took Near East away, and then it was Asia and Europe and then finally Europe split off also. So, when we first started this we were kind of a large global world and my attention never was back on Asia again.

Q: Right. So, you stayed with Europe and Carol Adelman?

HYMAN: Yes, so I stayed with her because she is the one who brought me on and of course you stay with the woman who brought you. So I did. And I went with Europe because that's where she went.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: And also that's where the need was greatest because Asia, I think, was much more quiet.

Q: I forgot that Carol spent time on the Europe program before she left

HYMAN: Oh yes. It was, yes, definitely. She was the lead for the Europe program until the end of the Bush Administration.

Q: Okay. And then Tom Dine came in.

HYMAN: Tom Dine came in. And more importantly Barbara Turner.

Q: Right. But Barbara didn't go to the Europe program until later, no?

HYMAN: She stayed with Carol for a while and then I can't remember where she went but then she came back with Tom Dine after Carol was already gone.

Q: Okay.

HYMAN: So, I've known Barbara for umpteen, umpteen years.

Q: Yes.

HYMAN: And Tom, who I'm still in touch with.

So, Carol brought me in and as a result of that she often called me to the front office to talk about things that I shouldn't have been involved with. They were not part of my job. But we got to be close and we still see each other from time to time.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: And so, I wouldn't say I was like a DAA (Deputy Assistant Administrator) but I was often in the room with her and David Merrill and I shouldn't have been there. If anyone, Barbara should have been there. I should not have been there. So, we had Barbara and Dick Blue and Tom Nicastro and me, and I'm reporting to all these people.

Q: So, they probably resented you.

HYMAN: Exactly. So, I felt very uncomfortable doing this. I mean it wasn't a way to make friends and influence people.

Q: And you were an AD that whole time?

HYMAN: I was an AD and I wasn't even a division chief because it wasn't even a division.

Q: Right, right. But it probably tells you how isolated someone like Carol felt at the top where everything was so pre-chewed and digested but you can't ask the questions.

HYMAN: I guess so. She must have felt that way because again, it's not just democracy that we talked about. We did talk about that but we talked about other things. She called me up there all the time and I would sort of try to sneak up the back staircase.

And okay, so in the early days of the Europe democracy program Europe was the big kahuna. They had more money for this area than everybody else. And also the grantees that were doing any of this work were very small because there wasn't much of a program anywhere.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: Except the NED. You know what the NED (National Endowment for Democracy) is?

Q: Yes, I do. Yes.

HYMAN: So, all of a sudden there was this cache of funding and the need for working in this area. So, our first job was to think through how is this going to be organized. The organization was just Tom and me. So, I sort of came up with this four-part distinction which was elections, which is what we called them, elections and political processes, still called that, still called that; the Rule of Law, and we didn't call it AOJ (Administration of Justice), we called it the rule of law.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: Because it should have been broader than just the courts and the administration of justice. It should have included and did human rights, other kinds of things. How do you organize a society that's truly law-determined and based on a rule of law with integrity? So, it was Rule of Law was the second one. Again, we just didn't choose AOJ.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: The third was civil society.

Q: Yes.

HYMAN: And the fourth was governance. And that is basically still the same four areas, at least at AID.

Q: Now did you and Susan and Tom hash that out over time or did you get to that pretty fast?

HYMAN: Susan was pretty junior and her area was FM. I mean she was at Syracuse, she came from Syracuse. I think it was Syracuse. Or Maxwell. So, she was definitely, absolutely in the conversation. But the distinction is the one I came up with and we talked about it and they said okay. But we didn't have a big bureaucracy. This was just two of us and the third guy was doing other things, education, etcetera. Tom was not fully on this.

And so we organized ourselves that way and we put out grants that way. And the organizations that responded to this were small. So, NDI, which existed as a NED core grantee, IRI which was also a NED core grantee; small, very small. The AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), which was then divided, they had one, this goes back before us, way before us, so they had a Latin America operation, they had an Africa operation, they had an Asian operation and they created a Europe operation. It was many years later that they combined them in to the Solidarity Center. And there were big fights about that.

Q: I'm sure.

HYMAN: Because all these guys had their own turf and they were ancient guys who had built these programs.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: Okay so there was the Solidarity Center and then there was the Chamber of Commerce. These were the four NED grantees. And IFES. Those were the only ones really around that did this kind of stuff in any serious way.

So, NDI, I doubt if they had more than 20 people, maybe 30. It's now like 3,000 or something like that. And Brian Atwood was the president and Ken Wallach was the vice-president. And there were other people there, Tom Melia and so on and so forth but they were just a tiny organization.

Q: Just doing their thing.

HYMAN: Yes. Just scraping by with NED grants mostly and some AID grants but not very much because Latin America didn't have these programs. So, we were big, and this was a big shift for them in those days because it was a big increase in money.

So, I got to know these people reasonably well because there weren't that many of them, including Brian. So, when Brian came in I should have left AID.

Q: I'm sure.

HYMAN: And Brian kept saying I'll see if we can keep you on. Because I had known him, I was responsible for probably by that time 60 percent or more of NDI money. And so he said well I think you should stay. Let's see if we can't keep you on. And so there were many pink slips and finally I stayed on as an AD. Then I think because they wanted the job for a real Democrat he

asked me to convert to the Civil Service. I would never have done that in a Republican administration and certainly not in a Bush Administration because that burrowing in I find repugnant.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: I figured well if the head of the agency and a Democrat is saying he wants me to stay on I don't know if burrowing in is exactly the way to think about this. So why don't I stay on for a while. And I did in the Europe bureau.

Q: As an AD?

HYMAN: As an AD. But then converted to Civil Service later on because then he created the Global Bureau, about which I don't need to tell you. So, he created the Democracy and Governance Center in the Global Bureau. I went to him more than once and I said Brian, I don't know; Europe is still up in the air, do you want me to stay in Europe or do you want me to go to the Global Bureau. What do you want me to do? And he said well I don't care, why don't you decide. And I said well I'm here at your service, I'm an AD so I think you should tell me which of these is more important to you. Anyway, he didn't so finally I was sort of persuaded to go to the DG Center and we created it from scratch, of course. So, it was unlike health and economic growth, where these people all knew each other. But you remember that the technical offices were all in the regional bureaus.

Q: Right

HYMAN: So, Brian's view was well, if you're going to do something in Morocco and they already tried that in Bolivia why don't you learn from each other. Why are we geographically stove piped? Of course, there was huge resistance from the regional bureaus.

Q: Tell me about it.

HYMAN: For turf reasons, right? Yes, so the usual bureaucratic brouhaha. So, he was starting this new Democracy Center and I felt well, I really owe it to him to see if I can contribute to that because he's the guy that's keeping me on, so I did. And I became the sort of head of the strategy part of that new Center. Chuck Costello was the director of the Center and after a while Jennifer Windsor was the Center deputy.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: But you know Jennifer was only able to take that role because she too converted into an AD. She was way too junior. She was a PMI in the Africa Bureau. Well as a GS- 12, you can't move to an assistant deputy division chief if you're going to follow the rules. That's how that job became political and it still is because once it's in the plum book you can't get it out.

Q: Can we go back to when Europe was just setting this program up and for the first time there was money and a lot of it for democracy and governance programs. Did you have to fight within the Europe bureau for your share of the funding for democracy?

HYMAN: Not really.

Q: Because I don't think it was earmarked specifically for democracy programming.

HYMAN: No. But first of all, Carol wanted to do the program. Secondly, there was enough money. So, we had enough money; the problem was to figure out what to do with the money.

Q: Yes, okay. Because after a while I'm sure there must have been some elbows thrown.

HYMAN: Absolutely. But as I said when we first started I'm a bit iconoclastic about this sort of stuff so I just didn't feel it was worth our time to get into a brouhaha about a half a million dollars.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: Our problem, I thought, was how do we do this well. I don't want to spend a lot of time sitting around here arguing with some other office about how much money they're getting and we're getting. We've got enough to do what we need to do; how do we do it?

Q: So, related and I'm really interested in making sure we tell the Washington side of all of these stories. You must have had to go to the Hill to explain or did Carol do all of that?

HYMAN: She did most of it, she did most of it.

Q: So, I'm interested in your interaction with the Hill, dealing with outside interest groups, dealing with the press if you had to. How did that happen?

HYMAN: And dealing with State.

Q: And dealing with State.

HYMAN: So, first of all, the SEED program was only supposed to be three to five years and it was only supposed to be for those three countries. Then all these others came out and so they never changed the title but Bulgaria is not supposed to be part of this.

Q: Right, yes.

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Topical Focus - Global Bureau Democracy Center

Q: Maybe you could talk a little bit about how you even thought about doing democracy and governance programs in the former Soviet Union once it had collapsed.

HYMAN: We, perhaps incorrectly, almost surely incorrectly, essentially took the same structures that we had created, those four areas (elections, rule of law, civil society, governance), and applied them to the former Soviet Union. I never took a trip into the former Soviet Union like I have in the Balkans and continue to in the Balkans. I did, let me think; I went to Moscow I think briefly. I went to Kiev once briefly. But I never did the kind of on the ground reconnaissance that I did in the Balkans. And in the Balkans it was not just in the former Yugoslavia. It was also in Bulgaria and Romania. And as I mentioned to you, I kept going back to those places whereas I didn't go back to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was not in the Carol Adelman sphere. Remember I was mentioning to you there were some disagreements, I would say, between Carol Adelman and Roskins. So Roskins created a different operation for the Soviet Union and that was with Malcolm Butler and Barbara Turner and never the twain should meet after that. So, Barbara was the DAA equivalent or whatever, I've forgotten what the structure was exactly, but the Carol Adelman side never was part of the planning for that. We simply gave over in a quiet way to our colleagues who were part of the NIS it was called there for a while. Remember, they fumbled around about what we're going to call this. First it was the former Soviet states and then it was the new independent states and so on. But since I was with Carol Adelman and she was not in that operation they never asked my opinion about it, except at the lowest levels. So, the people that did the democracy and governance work in the former Soviet Union, were who I had worked with previously, but they were sort of lower level than I was in the Europe bureau. I've forgotten how the structure was in the NIS operation because I wasn't part of it.

Q: Well, they had a notwithstanding authority that allowed them to go out and bring in PSCs and so I think they did that a lot.

HYMAN: Yes. Did they have a separate democracy operation or was it part of a technical assistance?

Q: They did. Well, if you think about your four categories it seems to me it was very heavy on civil society.

HYMAN: Yes.

Q: There was some judicial training but the governance side of it was almost totally lacking. That's my recollection.

HYMAN: Yes. And the elections work? I'm sure that must have gone on. Well anyway, I wasn't intimately involved in it because of bureaucratic divisions.

Q: Okay. Well then, you got involved with the Democracy and Governance Center early on.

HYMAN: Very early, yes.

Q: Do you want to talk a little bit about how that shaped up and your role in shaping it?

HYMAN: Sure. So, as I mentioned to you the last time I was struggling in my own mind and with others about whether I should stay in ENE (EUROPE/NEAR EAST) which was still in its early formative period, or should I go to the Global bureau and finally decided to go to the Global bureau. When I got to the Center, there were only, I'm not sure there were half a dozen people there.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: There was Chuck Costello, Jennifer Windsor, Patrick _____ I think by that point was there. I've forgotten, I think he may have been a PSC even, I don't remember. And maybe one or two others. Oh, the woman who became his wife, Pat Eissmann her name was. And she and Jean North came from PPC or she came from something called the IPC. Trying to remember all these acronyms. It was an inter-studies policy operation. Anyway, they were floating around so they got grabbed into this thing.

Q: Right. And I think the interesting thing, it was very short-staffed because the agency didn't have many programs so there weren't a whole lot of people already in AID that you could steal from the regional bureaus.

HYMAN: Yes. And there was resistance by the regional bureaus to sending anybody over. And Brian's idea was fought and that was to send all of the technical people but one or possibly two who were left, supposed to be left in the regional bureaus to "advise" the AA about these technical areas but the expertise, the bodies and so on were all supposed to come to the Global bureau. In the end most of them initially did and then the regional bureaus built back up again. But the one that resisted was ENE. They now were separate, and for whatever reason, maybe it was because Tom Dine, Brian never pushed that bureau in the way that he pushed the others. So, the Africa bureau, LAC and Asia bureaus, they did most dealings with us initially. But then for various reasons including turf but not just turf – we'll get to that in a minute – so we started. My view was that the first thing we needed to do was get ourselves up and running. I mean we needed to have things that we could offer the field. Okay. So, as far as I know, except for Chuck, I was the only one who had any experience in AID programming, and I had only been there for a couple of years. So, the first year that I was in that operation mostly I did RFPs for vehicles that we could use to make available to the field missions, with our technical engagement in the scopes of work, and they could "buy into" so that they wouldn't have to create their own. And so-

Q: Which was a model that the other Global centers that had more of an established track record, already had..

HYMAN: Yes. Well, we didn't have any. So, my first year, as I recall almost all of it but I'm sure that can't be right, was writing the scopes of work for, I don't know, six, eight, 10 IQCs and then being on the selection panels and also for what was then called leader with associate grants.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: Which acted like IQCs in a lot of ways except they were assistance instruments instead of acquisition instruments. So, we did that too and we put about eight or some odd number of such instruments into place so that we could have something to offer the field because my feeling was you're not going to get anywhere unless you can offer the field something that will be helpful to them.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: You're coming in and saying we're the new Center of blah blah, I mean, that and a dollar will get you a beer somewhere. So, we have to make ourselves useful to the field, which isn't to say we shouldn't have an input but primarily our job was to be useful to the field.

Q: Right. Was another issue in establishing that usefulness that the whole DG area was so new that you didn't have counterparts in missions to work with?

HYMAN: Yes, so let me come to that too. So, yes, that was one thing. So, there weren't that many people in the field that were DG officers and there wasn't a DG backstop. Ultimately, we found Backstop 16 which was the backstop for these program people, the Ron Redman's. Well, they would review the scopes of work for things to make sure that they touched all the bases.

So, we borrowed that backstop. It was only later that the Agency insisted there should be a DACHA backstop and that the DG officers should be in that backstop rather than program. So, we had some backstops but as you point out we didn't really have a lot of technical officers out there. And of course, Chuck knew how to do all of this stuff. He'd been a mission director.

Q: Right.

HYMAN: But he wasn't going to sit around and write scopes of work, so that's what I did most of the first year.

The bigger problem, I think, in my view and this was a difference of opinion between Chuck but more Jennifer and me -- by the way, we're very good friends so this never got personal. It was an ideological difference -- was how to establish democracy in the agency as kind of a core element. They established what personally I think was sort of a juvenile slogan, and I told them that, actually for the office, which was "kick ass."

Q: That's Jennifer.

HYMAN: Yes. Mostly it was Jennifer. I don't think Chuck would have come up with it but he bought into it, which is we're going to go in there and we're going to hammer this thing, etcetera, etcetera. My view was the opposite. And so my view was that either we convinced the agency, the missions, everybody that this was a good thing to do, not only for itself but for the larger development portfolio, or this was going to go the way of the dodo bird once Brian walked out the door. This was going to be like other initiatives that other administrators, including Brian as it turns out, wanted to start. And if you don't institutionalize these initiatives, if you don't convince your colleagues that there's value to them, who's going to champion them once you

leave? Well, that meant compromise. Well, that was a dirty word, I think, for Jennifer and to a lesser extent Chuck. So, I was the head or became the head of a unit called the strategies unit. And the strategies unit was to do a variety of things, some of which was whatever else the others didn't do, including interagency or interbureau. Everyone who was in the center was supposed to have both a sub technical area of one of these four areas, Rule of Law, etcetera, etcetera, but also be part of a center geographic team. Well, mostly they fought the latter. Everyone that came in afterwards they were Rule of Law, that was what they were doing, they were not about- who cared- why did they have to worry about Somalia. And my view, again, differed from Chuck and Jennifer's. I said if you don't backstop these countries, if we don't know what's going on in these places we're not going to be of any use to the mission and we're not going to be of any use to the front office. You've got to know what's going on there, not just Rule of Law, what's going on and not only that but we are supposed to be training democracy officers not just Rule of Law officers. So, when you're the backstop for Somalia you're supposed to know everything about what's going on in Somalia, not just the Rule of Law program. And you better not favor the Rule of Law programs just because you're a Rule of Law person. Well, I never was able to get that done very well.

Q: So, people were more interested in and associated with the particular sub sectoral approach than with a geographic region.

HYMAN: There were a couple of reasons for that, one of which was that the team leader, in those days they were called team leaders -- after it became an office there were division chiefs, now I think they're team leaders again, it went back and forth, including in – with AEFs (personnel evaluations). And yes, the regional coordinators had input, but a lesser input. So, all the regional coordinators were on the strategies team. That was one of their responsibilities. Another responsibility was to be at the table, so to speak, at every review, every mission, country strategy.

Q: Right, CDSS

HYMAN: Exactly. And they had different names as we went through the years. But the five year- as I recall at the time there were only three places in the world that still had five year plans; one was the Soviet Union, the second was India and the third was AID.

So, every mission had a five-year strategy and it came to Washington and it was reviewed. My team was responsible, the strategies team was responsible for going to those reviews and raising questions, or not, about the democracy, potential democracy programs. I'll come back to this in a minute. So, that was the second thing.

The third thing was to try to develop a framework for doing democracy and governance strategies. How do you approach this problem outside of Europe where they all wanted it while in other places in the world they didn't want it? So, how were we going to think about coming up with and advising missions as to what programs would be the most useful in Chad or in Bangladesh which we didn't have to do in Europe because they already wanted these things, less so in the Soviet Union. So, that was a third area.

Then there were interagency meetings and there was inter-bureau where all of that fell to the strategies team.

Q: So, did you have a lot of contact with Justice Department, and with State?

HYMAN: No, not a lot, I would say, but some with State. This was also the time of what I believed at the time and I think has been born out to be the case was a big loss for democracy and governance when the agency consolidated in the new building. Because in the old building we were interspersed on the floors along with everybody else and so you would have informal contacts with your State Department colleagues. You would find out about meetings that weren't necessarily on the speakerphone in the building. You found out also- you had relationships with those folks and you built them and so you knew things, you found out things, you participated in things. Once you moved five blocks away, it was a trip. Previously, it was not a trip to go to a meeting anymore for you than for anybody else in the building going from floor three to floor seven or six or four; everybody had to do that. Well, everybody didn't have to get on a bus and go from 14th Street to 21st. And you say well okay, it's only from 14th Street to 21st Street, how big a deal is that? Well, it's 20 minutes or 30 minutes or whatever it is so every meeting is a half hour on the way and a half hour on the way back. Not only that but you don't even know that they're happening because you don't meet these people in the hallways, you don't see them, you're not part of it. You have to be invited. Well, they're not going to necessarily say oh, don't forget our AID colleagues over there on 14th Street. This is State which has its own ego dimensions to it. When we were in the building these things just happened organically. And so I was involved in all kinds of meetings that later I wasn't involved with because I didn't even know about them. It's not that they would have prevented me; I just didn't even know that they happened. Again, mostly it was on the Europe side because those were my initial contacts but it was for others as well. And so I remember saying look, this is going to kill us. This is going to eviscerate our influence in the most important decisions by not going over there. Okay, well, so, I wasn't the administrator, Brian was. He wanted to do it (the move to RRB), we did it. In my view the cost wasn't I think so much the case for other technical areas because their connection to their State Department colleagues wasn't as close. So, the health people -- you know this better than I do -- didn't seem to have as close ties into the everyday operations of State as the democracy and governance office did.

Q: Right. It's mainly with the desk officers, and IO.

HYMAN: The desks hurt badly and our office, our sector hurt badly. The others were less affected.

Q: Maybe less affected but they were no less oppositional to the move-

HYMAN: Oh, is that right? I did not know that.

Q: And it could be bureaucracies are inherently conservative and don't like change but it was more than that.

HYMAN: But the gains to us of having our consolidated operation a mile away or half a mile away were not as great as the losses. So, for example, the contracts officers moved over from Roslyn to the Ronald Reagan Building. You didn't see your contracts officer all that often. It was not a big deal to go over to Roslyn once in a while, whereas it was a big deal to go to every Kosovo meeting because they happened all the time. Your contracts officer and you met intermittently. And I know this because as I said I was very connected on the contract side because I was putting these IQCs together. So, it's not like I wasn't connected to the contracts people it was just that it wasn't a big deal. It wasn't often. It wasn't often enough to outweigh the cost of proximity to the State Department.

Q: And that's in '97, I think.

HYMAN: Yes, it was much later, I admit that. It was well into Brian's term. And the building had to be built so that took a long time. I remember for example, just to go back to this business about how we related to our colleagues, I went to a session on Morocco. So, I had a team and I said to the team okay, you go to the ones where we really don't think it's a major problem, where you think issues are fairly clear, where we're not engaged. If there's any kind of a problem let me know and I'll go with you. So, one of them was Morocco and I went to the meeting and the mission director, Jim Bedner at the time, said he didn't want any democracy program in Morocco, they were concentrating their program in a certain part of the country and that wasn't an area that there was going to be much into governance work yet, etcetera, etcetera. At the time there was a rule that Brian established that said - look, we only have these things every five years. We're not going to do this every single year. We're going to do this every five years. And in the intervening period between strategy one and strategy two you don't get to challenge the strategy. You've already approved the strategy. So, you can go and look at implementation but you don't get to look at the strategy. So, I said gee Jim, I don't know. It looks to me like there's potentially some problems in Morocco on the political side that are going to affect the country and affect your program. Are you absolutely sure you don't want to at least look at the possibility? No, we think we know what we're doing and we've got a program and that's just a low priority, we don't have enough money and we're not interested. We don't have people and this and that. So, I said look, let's make a deal. Why don't we forgo the DG potential objective -- this was strategic objectives, by the way -- but let me come back to you two years from now or three years from now and let me at least raise the question again during your review. Not to redo the whole strategy but just to reconsider whether you still think this is right. And if you do, fine, let's just go forward without a democracy objective.

I got back to the office and you would have thought I was Benedict Arnold. String the sucker up from the lightbulbs. What do you mean? Don't you understand what kick ass means? Okay. One year later Jim Bedner came back and said I think we need some work done in this area. I think we could have alienated him by taking this to Brian. First of all, you couldn't take everything to Brian. And secondly, I think we would have alienated him, not just for that but for every other mission he was going to be in. Why not create a colleagueship and say well okay.

So, I went out to Morocco at his request to do this democracy strategy for him in his mission in Morocco. Now, in my view that was a better way to ensure that your colleagues looked at the program with non-turf eyes and looked at it a little bit more openly and said well, do we have a

political problem as well as an economic and health and education problem here. Is that to some extent what's standing in the way of some of these other things? So, my view was to integrate democracy in the mission programs and to show how can it work not only for its own self but for the benefit of health and education and economic growth in particular. Those two (democracy and economic growth) I thought went together and of course those were the non-discretionary accounts. So, both of them were sitting there vulnerable to all kinds of things because they weren't earmarked.

Q: So, as you think about the way you engaged with missions, are there particular programs that you think having the DG component really made a difference? Any that stand out?

HYMAN: I don't know. I think it would be worth going back and looking and when I became director of the office I asked us to do that and we did do a project but it was not well done in my view. I was disappointed in the result and I had championed it as the strategy team leader and then as the director. First, you'd have to ask where was any assistance successful at all. And then you'd have to ask to what extent did political factors play a role and then third, to what extent did the democracy program help on that side. So, you'd have at least a three-level kind of discussion and I was never able to get support for that kind of look.

There were certainly places where I think it became a central or more central part of the portfolio than people thought it would. Nigeria would have been an example of that. Kenya, Uganda. Now, were we successful in Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda? Not very I would say probably. I think I'd have a hard time and this was something that democracy and governance people certainly don't want to address let alone admit to because the implication is well, if this isn't doing any good why are we doing it whereas I was very willing to look at it square in the face, you know: is this doing any good, are we getting anywhere with this, are we getting anywhere on its own terms and are we getting anywhere insofar as it helps the larger portfolios.

I guess Nigeria might have been a good case. I never worked in Latin America because I didn't have Spanish and although of course as an officer director by the time I became one in the Global bureau I could have just gone down to any of these places. What would they have done; they wouldn't throw me out. I just felt it was an imposition because these missions worked in Spanish. I mean internally they worked in Spanish. And all their counterparts assumed they spoke Spanish. So, it wasn't like going to Chad where people didn't necessarily expect that everybody who showed up spoke French let alone any of the Chadian languages. In the other parts of the world there was a little bit more give and take about language but not in Latin America, I felt, and so I never worked in Latin America because I didn't want to burden my colleagues. So, I had people who spoke Spanish that were working with me and so I said well why don't you do this. The Latin America team leader was a Spanish speaking person. So, that person did Latin America. And there may have been some good cases like that. There were certainly some attempts in Central America but if you look at Central America now I think you'd have a hard time saying that any of what we did there has worked very well. Certainly, not the Rule of Law. I mean AOJ, as I mentioned last time, was the corner of the LAC proto democracy program. And INL was not that active in this area and if it was it had a more constrained mandate in its own mind than it does now. Now it gets involved in all kinds of Rule of Law stuff.

I don't think I could say that we were very successful in Central America and I don't know enough about Chile, Peru and-

Q: Colombia?

HYMAN: And Colombia. Certainly, Plan Colombia made a difference as far as I can understand. I know AID was very important in those countries and can we take some credit for the success of Chile and Peru. Latin America is an exception; Venezuela has maybe done pretty well, Ecuador I guess. Obviously big problems in Brazil and Argentina now but it seems to me they're going to get over that and so it's not like Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa or parts of the Middle East. Southeast Asia has done extremely well. How much of that- Malaysia, which I know well, didn't have an AID program of any size. Singapore never did. Indonesia did. Maybe we can take some credit for the transition, helping the transition after Suharto in Indonesia. Thailand, where we had a big program-

Q: A long time ago.

HYMAN: Yes, exactly, a long time ago, was now a big problem, right? Vietnam didn't have a program in those days yet and when it did it, did not want a democracy program so it only had an economic growth program and may still only have an economic growth program. It might have had a health and education program.

Q: It does, HIV.

HYMAN: I mean of these two sister areas, in my mind sister areas of economic growth and democracy. I say sister because the problems are similar. People don't object to a health program. Even dictators don't object to a health program. But when you get to economic growth and free markets and democracy and competition that's what they don't want. They don't want competitive things; they want to run the place.

Q: Control, yes.

HYMAN: Yes. Health, education, fine. Everybody should have health and education. But the politic economy of the country gets sticky because there are entrenched interests that don't want these kinds of reforms whereas an education reform normally doesn't rise to the level of- except within the education bureaucracy, I'm sure, but at the national level the president doesn't get all-

Q: Hot and bothered?

HYMAN: engaged with how many K through 12 teachers there are going to be or where they are and so on. So, the two, in my mind always the two sisters should have been more cooperative areas: economic growth and democracy.

Q: But you were competing for very limited funds.

HYMAN: We were competing for money but more importantly I think the economists still remained pretty skeptical of the democracy area and my democracy colleagues never wanted to learn enough economics to be able to talk to their colleagues. So, never got to where it should have, I think.

Q: So, earlier you were talking about institutionalizing a program and no doubt the vehicles that you put in place not only helped the field but helped channel the way they thought about democracy and governance. One test of institutionalization, when Brian left (and he was the patron saint of democracy), was- was there retribution? Was there recidivism of any sort?

HYMAN: No, I don't think so. So, I think in that respect my approach won out. I think it would have been worse if we had been in a kick butt mode all the time but since I was the one who went to these meetings I've got to say that I reported absolutely every conversation that I had where I compromised something.

Q: Right. And you tried to be collegial-

HYMAN: Yes.

Q: -and it paid off.

HYMAN: I think so. I think there were democracy officers that became mission directors. Not a small number. So, they rose through the ranks of the missions. That's one. Another is that I don't think there are very many missions that say we don't want to have this program because we can't afford it but it's not become an ideological thing, why do we have to have this whereas it was initially. There were a lot of people, a lot of people in the agency who thought and had a good reason to think that this was intervening in areas that we should not be engaged in. We the U.S. Government, we the U.S. people; these were internal political problems number one and number two it is going to poison every other part of their program.

Q: All four areas or particularly the administration of justice programs?

HYMAN: Actually less the administration of justice program. The elections and the civil society, media and programs like that. I haven't heard anyone say that there is resistance now. Part of that is socialization; a lot of the mission directors grew up with this so they just assume that's part of programming. But that wasn't the way it was originally. And I think it would have been a mistake to have brushed aside their objection. They had a good argument. It wasn't one that I thought would carry the day or at least not carry the day everywhere but I did think it was not something you should just crush. And so it has become institutionalized much more.

There was one other area that I personally engaged in even when I was the director of the office and that was recruitment. HR (human resources).

Q: Right.

HYMAN: So, I personally, both as the director and before that as the strategy team leader, went to the annual assignment meetings; who was going to go where, who was going to get what positions, what was going to happen. I thought, first of all, if you don't take care of your colleagues and know what's going on and so on you're letting them down so you're not representing them very well but more importantly where do you want the best officers and how do you want this thing to work so that mission directors felt they had a team player. And vice versa, there was room for career growth for your democracy officers. So, I went every year to the panels.

Q: Did you have to force your way in?

HYMAN: No, they were pretty good about it. By the time I'd become an office director there weren't many office directors that went to that meeting but I did.

Q: And at that point you knew all of the democracy officers.

HYMAN: Sure, because they'd all been recruited. And the other area of recruitment that I went to personally was the PMF jungle. I don't know if this still happens but we had a very, a very systematic way of doing that. Everybody who came to our table saying I want to be a DG officers, everybody who came got a 15-minute interview. After that they got a half hour or a 45 minute or maybe even one hour interview, the best of them, and the ones who got through that were called back or could do it wherever they were and we did a case study. And they had to write up a case study and a panel of people from the office would interview them about why they chose this and that and the next. Now, this was for one PMF.

Q: Right. But did you always get one PMF?

HYMAN: Yes. We didn't always get the one we most wanted because State or CIA or DOD or whoever else was at that thing too, not just AID. So, there were people who preferred to go to State and so on. But we certainly did a prioritization as rigorous as we could within the framework of the two days and then after that. And that took a long time, took a lot of energy to have all these people who were doing all these many, many assessment exams. But we didn't have that many PFMs and so I felt well, you'd better get the best ones. And so that was on the PFM side.

And then on the assignment process, when people moved I felt we should be active at the table representing what we thought was the best decision for the individuals but also for the agency. So, in all of those cases you would be engaged with people that were not your democracy and governance colleagues. HR wasn't, you know, that wasn't their job.

Q: Or the program people.

HYMAN: Program people, etcetera, etcetera go to the table on these annual reviews. And again, I was an office director, not initially but later on. So, office directors for Economic Growth, Health and Education certainly weren't there in the assignment discussions.

Q: They may have cooked it behind the scenes beforehand.

HYMAN: They may well have but they weren't there. And so when a director of an office is there…

Q: Shows up and you're sort of the senior guy.

HYMAN: Yes. And you convey some respect to your bureau and the front office of the bureau as well as to the mission director especially if you're not a jerk, which I tried not to be. I can't say I always succeeded. So, all of these were, I thought, ways in which we could institutionalize our area.

Q: Did you have budget battles too or did someone else fight those?

HYMAN: We did have some budget battles but I don't remember that that was the major problem. It didn't take a lot of money to do the democracy governance work. You are providing materials for the most part, etcetera, so the budget was secondary I would say. I can't say there weren't ever any. I don't remember all of the meetings but I don't recall that budget was the major issue.

Q: So, thinking back on that period where you're putting together a whole menu of services, which were the key contractors or grantees in your mind, the ones that really grew and performed global services?

HYMAN: Yes. The most vocal on the grant side were the democracy grantees, particularly NDI and IRI but also labor. A little less of the chamber of commerce group, which is called CIPE, the Center for International Private Enterprise, because they had roots and connections into the EG people as well so DG was not their only source of funding. So, those certainly, those three were major players.

Since I worked on this framework I mentioned to you about how you conduct a strategy assessment, that was done with a team of people who were recruited through a contract, an IQC, and MSI was a major one. And Lynn Carter- you know her?

Q: Not well.

HYMAN: She's at MSI and she was a very important colleague. And then she brought in a couple of people into a group. I won't go into the details of how we came up with this framework but -- unless you want to -- and she brought in a couple of people that turned out to be important, people that we could get as consultants on different- short-term consultants. So, this was MSI. There were lots of others there, national state courts and so on and so forth but they tended to be fairly narrowly focused and so I think they didn't play as great a role maybe. You know, you couldn't run the program without dealing with NDI and IRI all the time because of their connections to the Hill.

So, I had lunch yesterday with Ken Wallach for the I don't know how many years we've been doing that. We did it more often when I was in AID than we do now. It was often a three-hour lunch, it wasn't yesterday but that's because it began with an hour and a half of railing against contractors.

Q: Right. I do remember Ken's arguing that USAID did not adequately credit the role of volunteer labor.

HYMAN: And not only that but giving too much money to the contractors who were only in it for profit and so on and so forth.

Q: And MSI's probably what he had mind.

HYMAN: Oh yes, he had MSI for sure in mind. I mean, it wasn't the only one but it was one of them. Some of those firms don't exist anymore or were bought out or whatever. MSI is now part of a big California company called Tetra Tech.

Q: Oh gosh, yes.

HYMAN: Which bought ARD which originally was called Associates in Rural Development and none of these NGOs (non-governmental organizations) any longer use their original names because why should they only be doing rural development; they should be doing everything which they do so they're not ARD and I think there may be four people who remember that it was Associates in Rural Development. MSI had a pretty innocuous name. Then there was DAI, which still exists. There was DI, which went under and now there's a DI but it's a different one. Anyway, so some of these things don't exist anymore but I would say that for me at least NDI, and MSI on the contract side, were probably the most useful and collegial acquisition colleagues. Who else?

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

WILLIAM HAMMINK
USAID
(1981-2017)

William Hammink studied at the University of Minnesota for both his undergraduate and masters' degrees before entering USAID as an International Development Intern in 1981. He served in many different positions in several countries, including Swaziland, Senegal, Madagascar, the West Bank and Gaza, Ethiopia, Sudan, and India. He was interviewed by John Pielemeier in February 2018.

Topical Focus - USAID DRG Program Development

AFR/PD Setting up Democracy and Governance (DG) programs (1990-1991)

HAMMINK: Anyway, we stayed in Senegal for four years. And then, because our kids were around five to seven at the time, we thought it's important for them to live in the States for a while, and to go to school in the States. I applied for jobs in Washington, and I was assigned to the Africa Bureau Office of Project Development, or "PD" at the time. And I was the Assistant—I think, what's it called now— The Assistant Division—or Deputy Division Chief in the Central and Coastal West Africa division of PD.

And at the time, Carol Peasley was the Office Director. So, I had the wonderful opportunity to work with Carol then. But there were big changes going on in Africa at the time, and elections were happening in many countries, some more free and fair than others. At the time, in USAID and in the State Department there was a lot of interest in how America and the U.S. government could support not only elections, but broadly good governance, democratic governance, political process reform, independent media, judiciary, and the like.

And so, I was asked by the AA (Assistant Administrator) to work with a team to put together a new division in the Office of Sustainable Development on elections and governance. So, with several other people, we established the first Africa bureau democracy and governance division. It was the first USAID group to focus on support for democracy and better governance in Africa, with a small budget.

Q: What year was that?

HAMMINK: That was in 1991. And not surprisingly, there was a large amount of pushback. Most people in the Africa Bureau, both in Washington and in the field, thought that USAID shouldn't touch anything political. We do development. We do economic development. You know, economic and social development. But we worked on making the case that economic and social development depends on good governance and citizen voice and choice. We brought in well-known academics. We developed white papers and policy papers on why the political economy is so important. And the importance of the elections, and why we need to support that. We put together some Africa-wide programs with the likes of NDI (National Democratic Institute), IRI (International Republican Institute), and IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems) that missions could buy into.

So, that was an exciting period, because I led the division and was responsible for starting brand new programs in this area. I was working with some terrific folks such as Jennifer Windsor and Anne Williams. We made some mistakes in the early days. We once had a meeting with several State Department Africa Bureau colleagues. We discussed what needed to be done and how we could work together. You know, I look back now, and realize that we should have been more

open to working collaboratively and even jointly on programs. Mistakenly, we just said, "Oh, we can do this. We're not going to give you any of our money." And I think, looking back, we should have said, "Hey, how can we work together to achieve common objectives here?" Luckily, that came later.

We established the importance of these DG programs (democracy and governance programming) from an academic point of view and we also showed the conceptual linkages to the rest of our development programs including the need to support elections. Everybody understood that elections do not a democracy make. So, we tried to make the case that USAID also needed to get involved, where we had a chance to make a difference, in all areas of democratic governance, including financial accountability, independence of the judiciary and media, and a strong advocacy civil society representing the interests of citizens and not just those NGOs doing social programs.

This type of DG work for USAID was around in Latin America before that. But I think in Africa, it wasn't until the 1990s that development people started to see the need for USAID to support civil society that advocated for citizens' rights and improved transparency. Those who are there trying to hold governments accountable for what they promise.

As I mentioned, that was an exciting time but also a lot of work. And then after about a year in Washington—or a year and a half—George Carner, with whom I had worked in Senegal where he was Deputy Mission Director, was at the time the Mission Director in Madagascar. And he—I was kind of ready to get back overseas—

Q: Pretty quickly!

HAMMINK: —as was my wife. So, he recruited me to bid to come out and head up a new combined program and project development office that they had set up in Madagascar. My family and I went out to Antananarivo in the summer of 1992.

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USAID/Russia: Director of DG Office (1996-1999)

HAMMINK: Anyway, after Madagascar, I was recruited to bid on a job in USAID Russia, which I was excited about. It was as Director of the Office of Democracy and Governance.

Q: All right!

HAMMINK: This was the first time I was involved in a technical office.

Q: So you were sitting in Madagascar, you were still a Program Officer or Project Design Officer?

HAMMINK: I was both. I was in management too, because I was head of the office. A Program and Project Development Office.

The Russia assignment was another example of trying something new. Of course, I'd worked, as I mentioned, on helping get DG programs going for the Africa Bureau. Thus, I had some technical knowledge that I had picked up and learned from that period. But it was a lot of learning when I got to Russia, because at the time, Russia had one of the largest DG programs in the world. It was about $30 million a year.

Q: Now what year would that have been?

HAMMINK: My family and I moved to Moscow in 1996 and stayed for three years until 1999. Again, fascinating period of history. Truly, history in the making with the end of the cold war and the opening of what was a very closed society.

Q: How long had USAID been in Russia?

HAMMINK: USAID came back to Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union, I believe in 1991 or 1992. And in the early '90s, we had a billion-dollar assistance program. Some were loan guarantees. But USAID had also set up very large enterprise funds. USAID also had the regular development programs related to health, private sector development and support for democracy and governance. Our relationship at the time was such that the U.S. Government even set up a Peace Corps program.

Yeah, there was a close partnership for several years. And then Peace Corps backed out. As you know, USAID got kicked out in mid-2000s.

But when I was there—or when I got there anyway—there were excellent relations between Russian organizations and USAID. The people of Russia were interested in learning from America and developing good partnerships. And the government was also open. This was when (former Russian President Boris Nikolayevich) Yeltsin was President (of the Russian Federation).

Then later—I think it was 1998—when the U.S. bombed Yugoslavia, that changed a lot in terms of Russian official and non-official views of the American presence in Russia. You know, once

the bombing in former Yugoslavia started, then even driving around became tricky and a few times people would throw sticks at our car.

Q: Really?

HAMMINK: Yes.

But it was fascinating to see the Soviet-style approach to everything. Like, even selling groceries morphed into a more Western approach with cash registers and the like. And you know, even service in restaurants moved to one of serving the clients instead of the feeling that the clients are lucky to even be there.

But it was also fascinating because Moscow is a major European city with incredible history and culture. And if you walked around almost any corner in Moscow, you'd see a beautiful 200-year-old church or building or park, something that is both beautiful and has a long history.

Q: Were you given some Russian training?

HAMMINK: Yes, I was given Russian language training, because very few people spoke English and the script is Cyrillic of course.

Q: How many months did you have?

HAMMINK: You know, we didn't even get a month of language training. My language training was very basic but was better than nothing. When we arrived in Moscow, the mission set aside half a day, every day, over a month period for me to study Russian.

That just didn't work very well. I could not speak or understand very well, but I could get around and read the signs. And so, my Russian was very basic.

But we had some exciting and successful USAID democracy and governance programs. We supported world renowned human rights NGOs, like the Sakharov Center. I met Sakharov's widow (Yelena Georgievna Bonner), who was there. An incredible woman, brave.

Q: Explain that a little more. What was the Sakharov Center?

HAMMINK: The Sakharov Center was a non-profit organization based in Moscow supporting human rights, human rights activism, outreach and legal protections. It was named after Andrei Sakharov, one of the most famous human rights activists under the Soviet Union. USAID provided a lot of support for an independent judiciary, including training judges. We provided a

lot of support for civil society in different parts of the country, along with small grants. We provided a lot of support for independent media through a U.S. group called Internews that did a great job.

We provided a lot of support for parliamentary and presidential elections during my time in Russia. In fact, I arrived there in— I think it was summer of 1996 -- just a week before the first Russian federation presidential election when Boris Yeltsin was elected as Russian president for the first time.

And so, the USAID DG program was broad and multi-faceted. By the time I left in 1999—this is an interesting story—thanks to the Russian people themselves, there were an estimated 50,000 community and civil society organizations across the Russian Federation, whereas in 1990 there were none. There were over 120 different independent media organizations—print and broadcasting. There was a movement toward jury trials, toward the independence of the judiciary.

And probably within a decade or so after President Putin took over, they were all gone, I'm told. So, you know, all of the democratic gains and democratic institutions were rolled back.

Q: When you were building that program, you were working with people in the government or only people outside?

HAMMINK: Both. For example, people in the judiciary were very interested to learn more about how the U.S. judiciary carried out its role as an independent third branch of government. They thought it through and they decided how they wanted to use what they learned within the Russian context.

The university-to-university linkages, which we also supported, as well as scholarships, was run out of my office. There was huge interest in institutional linkages and individual scholarships to study in the U.S. Because the Soviet Union had been such a closed society for so many decades, Russian citizens from across the country, even rural farmers under our farmer to farmer program, wanted to learn about the U.S. This was especially true on the academic side, through university to university linkages, and as I mentioned for the Russian judiciary broadly speaking as well. We were excited by the fact that we could support Russian and American organizations and institutions of all kinds to build relationships and share knowledge.

That was exciting and again part of history in the making.

Q: Did you find opposition as well that was directed—before they started beating their sticks on your car? I mean, in terms of the programs themselves?

HAMMINK: We had good support from almost all levels of the government, the nongovernmental and the private sectors during my first few years in Russia. The last year or 18 months we saw increased scrutiny from the tax police and others, especially related to the Russian advocacy NGOs that we supported. I suspect that the financial crisis in 1998 also made people a bit more skeptical about the U.S. and the west in general. Also, in some places like in Siberia and in the far east, Russian organizations were not used to working with USAID and some of our accounting rules were hard to follow.

Q: So you had a lot of exchanges as well?

HAMMINK: Yes, a lot of exchanges: business to business, university to university, institutions and the like. I even accompanied a Russian Supreme Court Justice on a visit to the U.S. Supreme Court here in Washington, including a visit to the office of one of the U.S. Supreme Court justices. The Supreme Court justice's offices are quite impressive. But the discussions were even more impressive at the time.

Q: Tell us a little more about who you worked with in the mission there.

HAMMINK: Sure. The Mission Director at the time was Janet Ballantyne. And of course, Janet is very well known in USAID and, sadly, she passed away recently after an incredible career in helping people around the world. It was a real privilege to work with Janet for three years.

The Deputy (Mission Director) was Roger Simmons at first and then Mark Ward. I enjoyed working with them as well. We also had a great senior staff of other office directors, like Gene George. You know, a lot of these folks later went on to become Mission Directors. And Steve Giddings, whom I know from the USAID Alumni Association.

We had a great team and a very supportive ambassador, Ambassador Tom Pickering, one of the most experienced ambassadors in the world at the time. I remember that once I accompanied the head of one of our political party support organizations to a meeting with Ambassador Pickering. And with no notes whatsoever, he spoke for an hour about the political situation. He was incredibly articulate and thoughtful, the most impressive I've ever heard in anybody or any ambassador. Ambassador Pickering was very impressive. That was helpful to see, wow, we had some great diplomats there.

Q: Did you travel around the whole region?

HAMMINK: I did. I didn't travel as much as others, but I got out to Siberia a few times and went up north. And I went out to St. Petersburg a couple of times. We were also allowed, at the time, to travel personally. So, my family and I would often travel to St. Petersburg on the overnight train. It was wonderful. We stayed with Russian families while we were there.

Q: How did you do that?

HAMMINK: Well, this was before the Internet, of course, and Airbnb (Airbnb, Inc.). We found out about Russian families who would rent out a spare room just through word-of-mouth from people in the embassy and implementing partners and NGOs. Also, just around Moscow there's so much to see. We would often drive to Suzdal, a city with fabulous old orthodox churches that were hundreds of years old. I don't know if you've ever been there.

So unfortunately, some years later the Russian government kicked out USAID.

Q: You were there when they—

HAMMINK: No, other USAID colleagues had to face that situation.

Q: But when you left, there was no hint that that was coming?

HAMMINK: Not at the time, but soon thereafter. Soon thereafter, after I left and Putin was elected president, the Russian government pressured and closed independent media outlets and were hassling Russian civil society partners. And there was some discussion on the U.S. side, "Why are we spending all this money for development in Russia? They can take care of themselves."

So then, the Mission Director at the time had to say, OK, where did it make sense to focus. I believe USAID then focused on development areas such as HIV/AIDS, where the U.S. has something to share and the need was clear in Russia. USAID was looking for areas of mutual interest.

But in 1999, I was assigned as the Deputy Mission Director in West Bank-Gaza. So, my family and I moved to Tel Aviv from Moscow, and—

Q: Let me ask you one more question before we leave Russia. I'm sorry.

Q: The political-economic reform program, the Jeffrey Sachs privatization program the U.S. government and, I think, USAID pushed quite strongly. How was that fairing when you were there? How did people see the privatization program—the attempt to privatize Russian state assets and companies.

HAMMINK: At the time, my colleagues and my counterparts in Russian NGOs who were watchdog NGOs and/or human rights organizations were very concerned, because it seemed like that whole approach was "giving away the store" to a few people who are now—many of them

are oligarchs. It was felt that the process was not transparent and it wasn't democratic. It wasn't equitable.

You know, I still remember when I was there, the Russian government basically decided to privatize the housing stock in Moscow. Maybe other cities too; I'm not sure. And it happened overnight. They basically gave title to the apartments to those who were living in them. And overnight almost, there was a real estate market established, and real estate agencies started selling properties back and forth.

They were starting from where the government owned everything, and they wanted to move quickly. So, some of the lack of transparency was inevitable. Some of it was not. At least with our Russian democracy-governance counterparts, they were very concerned.

And I was there, of course, when this whole issue came up with HIID, which was Harvard (University Center for) Institute for International Development that Jeff Sachs ran. And some people went to jail, I believe, and had to pay significant fines. So (sighing) there was that going on. But you know, I haven't read a lot of the history books about that period. And I think it'd be interesting if I did read what people thought about these privatization schemes and the society opening.

It was a challenging period, that's for sure. But also, an exciting period.

Q: Although you were able to travel around, did you get to the point where you were followed, or that your phones were tapped? Did that sort of thing happen?

HAMMINK: Ha, that's a great question! Just after we arrived, we were in an apartment in an area called Stary Arbat. And then we moved to, after that, another place further out of town. But within a month after we arrived, our phone would ring at 2 a.m., and I'd go answer it, and they would hang up. You would see signs that people were in our apartment, like the chairs had these covers, and you could see they were turned around. And nobody had been in the apartment. So, they left signs, and they also made it known they were listening on the phone. Because sometimes, when we were talking on the phone, you could hear somebody else would be talking. (chuckles)

And so everyone knew that they were listening and watching. But my approach was that there was nothing I was trying to hide. Nothing in my work was any secret, including everything we did on the DG side. We wanted to be totally open. You know, our FSNs too, we didn't know where they came from. But it all worked out. You just had to not take that too seriously.

Q: And the bigger programs were the National Republican Institute? And the National Democratic Institute?

HAMMINK: Yeah, there was support for the independent media. There was support for civil society. Support for independent judiciary from several organizations. And then I mentioned, the support for the electoral process and the political process—political party support. That was open to everybody, including the Communist Party, because we had to be fair and open and provide that kind of training for everybody.

Q: And who were USAID's partners in this?

HAMMINK: NDI, IRI, IFES on that side. Internews, I mentioned, on the support for media side. The civil society side, I remember Save the Children and other U.S. NGOs.
Major human rights organizations. I don't remember the names now. There was a group called IREX that managed all our operational or institutional partnership program. International Research and Exchanges - IREX. We had some major partners, most of whom are still around, of course. But not in Russia.

Q: Right, not in Russia. Did you ever meet Yeltsin or Putin?

HAMMINK: No, not at my level.

Q: So after how many years did you say, three and a half?

HAMMINK: Three years. We were three years in Moscow and it went by fast.

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<u>USAID/Sudan, Mission Director (2009-2011)</u>

HAMMINK: Yep. At about the time when the new administration came in, this was about December-January, 2008-9, the Mission Director in Sudan had decided he wanted to leave. So, I told Jim Kunder that I was very interested to get back overseas and to take up that challenge.

It was in the middle of what they call the Comprehensive Peace Agreement period, that had been signed in 2005 for five years.

Q: This is John Pielemeier on March the 7th, 2018. We're going to continue the second part of our interview with Bill Hammink. And we are moving towards Bill's next assignment. He had been working on issues related to Food for Peace and the start of the food security program for USAID. And Bill, why don't you tell us about your next steps?

HAMMINK: Sure. Good afternoon. I think it was about May or June of 2008, while I was in the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade, as you said, mainly working on food security, the Africa Bureau asked if I could join a high-level team to go out to Khartoum to basically carry out an assessment of the health of the mission.

If you remember, on New Year's Eve of 2007, one of our USAID American employees along with a Sudanese driver were murdered, killed by terrorists. And that was extremely difficult on the mission.

So, I joined this high-level team that went out to Khartoum to talk to the staff, to talk to the team, to come up with recommendations on how to help that mission get through that trauma. A lot of people had curtailed and all of those who stayed were grieving, understandably. And of course, with the security uncertain and incredible workload continuing, there was little time for grieving. It was just after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between Sudan and the SPLA (South Sudan People's Liberation Army) in southern Sudan. So, there was a lot of work for the mission at the time.

The senior-level team visited both Khartoum and Juba and the visit lasted a few weeks.

Q: Who was on your team?

HAMMINK: I'm trying to remember.

Q: Were you the team leader?

HAMMINK: No, I was not. A senior person from the Africa Bureau as well as the USAID front office were on the team.

Anyway, it was clear that the Mission Director at the time was wanting to move on the next year, in 2009. And sooner rather than later. And so, basically when we got back to Washington by the fall of that year, I was ready to go back overseas again. There was of course an election in November of 2008. And (former U.S. President) Barack Obama was elected.

So, that fall, I talked to the Administrator and Acting Deputy Administrator, Jim Kunder, and threw in my hat for the Sudan Mission Director job. It's interesting. In the meeting with Jim Kunder, I did say that I thought it would be easier for the Agency to find a new SDAA for EGAT than to find an experienced former Mission Director with food aid and regional experience who wants to go to Sudan.

Sorry, I forgot to mention, by December, the political Assistant Administrator of EGAT had moved on. So, at that point in December, I was Acting AA for EGAT. And I could've stayed in

that job, but I was also very interested to go overseas again and make a difference in the challenges in Sudan with the peace agreement, after the election, *et cetera*.

Q: Would you be going to Khartoum or to Juba?

HAMMINK: At the time Sudan was still one country, and the Mission Director job was for all of Sudan and covered the entire country, meaning both Khartoum and Juba. But I was assigned to Khartoum which was still the capital of the country. Anyway, I left EGAT in February of 2009, and I got to Khartoum a few weeks later. As I mentioned, it was still one country, although what they called one country-two systems. There was a separate government in the south called GOSS or Government of South Sudan based in Juba, even though it was one country. Under the CPA, GOSS basically could set up as a regional government with its own security forces, but could not have any separate foreign policy or monetary policy or anything of their own, which was still under the purview of the government of Sudan based in Khartoum.

So, it was tricky and difficult. But the idea was then, half way through the fifth year of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, there would be a referendum that the south and the southerners would vote on whether they wanted to stay as one country within all of Sudan or whether they wanted the south to pull out and become its own country.

And so, I'll get to that part, which I think everybody knows what happened on that.

I got to Khartoum late February of 2009. One country. So, we had officially one mission, but really, it was two missions, because we had a team in Khartoum assigned to Khartoum, and we had a team in Juba assigned to Juba, each with their own budget and authorities as well as sanctions to maneuver around. And they rarely mixed, because going back and forth was sometimes tricky and risky.

I was based in Khartoum, but literally, I spent half of my time in Juba, because I was still responsible for a very large development program there and a large staff. It was a different appropriation, a different budget, different rules applied in the south and in the north. So, it was very much like running two missions, but it was still officially one mission.

Anyway, just before I arrived in Khartoum—while I was on my way in fact—the Government of Sudan expelled 13 NGOs—13 international NGOs and all their expatriate staff, as well as three or four larger Sudanese NGOs, out of Darfur. With one fell swoop, just before I arrived, the government of Sudan had abolished about 60 percent of the emergency assistance capacity in Darfur. So, I faced an immediate emergency the moment I landed in Khartoum.

We were the largest donor by far, providing food aid and other assistance for Darfur. It took a lot of effort and a lot of time to work through this new emergency. And the presidential envoy at the

time, who was a former general, Scott Gration, flew out to Khartoum and started negotiations with the Sudanese government to get the INGOs back into Darfur. If I remember right, three or four of those 13 were U.S. NGOs. And so, we were negotiating to allow them to go back, one way or another. With the U.N., other donors and the INGOs and Sudanese NGOs still allowed to work in Darfur, the immediate issue was to fill the immediate gaps so that life-saving humanitarian assistance could continue. The international community and Sudanese humanitarian NGO community came together and many organizations and people picked up the work where the expelled NGOs had been working. Because of the immediate response, people's lives were not in danger and emergency assistance continued, while we supported the negotiations with the President's special envoy, General Gration.

Q: How much assistance was cut off? All of what we were providing to Darfur?

HAMMINK: We didn't cut any assistance. What was cut off was the—those NGOs that had teams in the field to distribute and manage that assistance. So, when they had to leave, we had to hustle to find other people to take their place. So, it was not so much the assistance from us. It was the implementing partners on the ground who were kicked out—

Q: Right. Were you able to find others?

HAMMINK: It took a while. It took a while in the negotiations to allow some of the American NGOs back. But for example, SAVE-U.S. (Social Awareness & Voluntary Education) could only work under the flag of, if I remember, SAVE-Sweden or SAVENorway. And so, it was very tricky. But in the meantime, we were able to continue the vital kind of life-saving humanitarian foreign assistance.

I spent half my time, as I mentioned, in Juba, and half my time in Khartoum. I would take and fly on this local airline that the British and the other Europeans would not allow their teams to fly on. They were, like, 50-year-old planes, you know, 727s and 737s and the like. And it was always crowded. There were very few expats. I'd be taking those flights crammed on an old plane at least once a week.

Q: Who were the pilots?

HAMMINK: They were mainly from Eastern Europe and speaking, of course, Russian. And I was of course a little nervous, because planes have fallen out of the sky before in Sudan. But luckily while I was there, there wasn't a plane crash.

I had a Deputy Mission Director based in Khartoum that ran the day-to-day work in the north and a Deputy Mission Director based in Juba that managed operations in the south.

Q: Who were those people?

HAMMINK: In Khartoum, it was Brooke Isham who was the Deputy Mission Director. She was fantastic. After Sudan, I met Brooke again when she was the Deputy Mission Director in Afghanistan. Now she's the USAID Mission Director in Iraq.

Q: Really?

HAMMINK: Yes. And it was tough for her, because she was there that night of the assassination. And she was "Acting" mission director. So, that was a very difficult time for her, but she helped me a lot to understand the seriousness and severity of the security measures that then were put in place and how important it was for us to follow them.

In Juba, the Deputy Mission Director was a guy named Peter Malnak, who you may know. After Juba, he became the Mission Director in Rwanda and then Nepal. So, he is a senior guy in the agency, and did a fantastic job in Juba. Both were terrific, because of course, I was in the other place half the time. And they ran things while I was not there.

But in Juba, we were working with the Government of South Sudan that was totally nascent. You can imagine in South Sudan a situation where you've had decades of civil war, extreme animosity, tribal groups against each other, a very, very high illiteracy rate.

You had a large percentage of the population that had left the country as refugees and were now coming back with this peace agreement in place. And those who had stayed were unhappy with those coming back. Most of the returning refugees had some schooling in the refugee camps. Those who had stayed were basically mainly illiterate and resented these South Sudanese who were coming back and most of them getting jobs and the like. So—

Q: Coming back from overseas?

HAMMINK: Correct. Well, at least from neighboring countries where you had the refugee camps, like Kenya. I'm sure you've heard of the Lost Boys of South Sudan, many of whom came here to the U.S. Some of them returned to South Sudan as well, which is great. Very moving stories of course.

But it was a difficult time. You had a totally nascent government. Before you had zero infrastructure, because the North had not spent much money at all on sewer systems, water systems, and roads. You know, in South Sudan, an area the size of France, there was not one tarmac road outside of the capital, Juba.

You were starting from scratch on almost everything, including the Government of South Sudan that would continue as the government of a new country—depending on the referendum, if the people of southern Sudan voted to continue as part of Sudan, the South would still have some autonomy, and you would still have a separate government in South Sudan. So, we were establishing for the first-time institutions to carry out key functions of government.

And a lot of these government institutions had no procedures, no process, no buildings. Nothing. So, everything was starting from scratch. And I remember we funded a group to come in and do a study on very basic key functions of government. It was a seminal study on what are those key and basic functions of government. Thinking, OK, this is a brand new government. What are those areas that a brand-new government in a new country would have to carry out, at a minimum? And then we focused on those key basic functions in our support to a dozen or so ministries.

Q: An incredible time!

HAMMINK: Yes. So, the CPA was signed in 2006. Sudan, including in the north and the south, had national elections in summer 2010. USAID had a large program of support for this election, which was necessary for the north to agree to support an independence referendum in the south. And then in January of 2011, the referendum for independence was scheduled. And we helped pull it off to have the referendum where people from South Sudan got to vote whether the south should stay with Sudan or become independent. This was an historical vote and historical moment, the outcome after decades of civil war and five years of a peace agreement. Even those South Sudanese who lived in Khartoum were allowed and encouraged to vote in the referendum. Many had fled to Khartoum during the civil war.

Q: Do you remember what the question was, how it was posed?

HAMMINK: Sure, it was something like, Do you want to secede? And “yes” or “no”. Because there were so many southern Sudanese who were totally illiterate, they had a symbol of, I think, an open hand and a closed hand. Something like that. I still have the ballot at home.

And so, USAID was very much part of the support for pulling off a referendum that was on time and that was deemed to be fair by international observers.

Q: What had USAID done to do that?

HAMMINK: Well, we brought in partners: NDI, IRI, IFES. I spent a lot of time in coordinating with the government authority set up to run the referendum, the other donors, our implementing partners and USG leaders. It was complicated, because under the CPA, there was an electoral body that was chaired by a northerner. And the deputy chair was a southerner. And members

were a mix. And then, they had to agree on the process and players and they had to agree on the "rules of the game." It took a lot of upfront time, bringing in electoral experts, referendum experts who had worked on these types of activities before.

I still remember that we were behind the curve, and we were in Juba on a porch of the U.S. Consul General on the compound there. And the Presidential Special Envoy, General Gration, was very unhappy and very upset that things were going so slow. And if you look at the timeline of the number of days to do everything that needed to be done, such as to print the ballots and get them out, we were falling behind. And he was threatening to basically take USAID out of it, because he didn't think we were doing a good job. And the Deputy Mission Director at the time, whose name is Susan Fine— Maybe you know Susan?

Q: Yes.

HAMMINK: She's now the head of PPL (USAID Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning). She and I had a four-hour meeting with General Gration. The Chargé d'Affaires at the time, who was a former ambassador, didn't say a word. He was basically letting us figure it out. And we walked through everything. We drilled down on all the issues. We kept our calm. We kept our cool.

And that was a useful kind of example of how important it is for leaders in USAID to, one, keep your calm and keep your cool. Use facts. Speak as much as possible based on evidence. And then, drill down and pull issues apart and agree on the main sub-issues that you could then agree on the specific steps to move things forward. So, after four hours, using this approach, we could calm down the Special Envoy and agree on next steps to move the process forward. It was a very, very tough meeting.

And then, General Gration and I went to Khartoum and we met with the head of the electoral and referendum commission. We knew exactly what we wanted to see. We wrote some letters with clear descriptions of needed actions from the electoral commission. And within a few days, we got where we needed to be. So, it was kind of a call to action.

Q: Was he under presidential pressure to maybe cut AID off at that point, or was that just his own—

HAMMINK: It was his own assessment to cut USAID out of the process. And yes, he was under a lot of pressure from the White House, where there were many people who strongly wanted this thing to succeed, including the National Security Advisor, Susan Rice. And so, I totally understand. I mean, we were all under a lot of pressure in fact, because things could've gone off the rails very easily with all that history, political issues, and security was still an issue.

So anyway, the referendum took place. And the vote was 90-plus percent to secede. And then Independence Day was scheduled. It was in the CPA that if the vote for independence was positive, then Independence Day would take place before the end of the five years of the CPA, which was July of 2011. From one day to the next there would be a new country; the youngest country in the world. So, we used those six months to work through bureaucracy back here in Washington to basically set up a new USAID Mission for South Sudan. The State Department set up a new (U.S.) embassy for South Sudan the moment the country became independent. And for us in USAID to set up, we'd need a USAID mission too, a totally separate mission from the one in Khartoum.

So, that's what we did. We got everything laid out. We even had a new Mission Director approved by the SMG panel and named. So, I was fortunate enough to stay as the last Mission Director for the entire country—

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: —and was replaced by two mission directors, one for Sudan and one for South Sudan. And the guy who was chosen to—of course, it was a competitive process -to be the first Mission Director for South Sudan was a guy named Kevin Mullally. He was serving as mission director in Senegal at the time.

We put all that in place. I was there on Independence Day, which I think was around—if I remember right—July 10 or so. And the next day, I flew back to Khartoum. I packed out, and I was out of the country by the 15th.

Q: Did you have your hat in the ring for one of those positions?

HAMMINK: No. I had been there two and a half years, and it's normally a one-year tour, because this is a very hardship post. So, I was exhausted and ready to move on.

Q: My goodness. I'm sure you went out very pleased with what you had led your missions to do.

HAMMINK: Absolutely. I had a great team. Of course, Susan Fine is great. And the Deputy in Khartoum at the time for the last year and a half of my time there was a guy named Doug Arbuckle, who then went on to be Mission Director in Malawi. And now he's back here in Washington.

So, I had a great team in both places, and they understood. We designed a new strategy for the south, thinking that whether the south became independent or not, it would need education, health, agriculture, an economy and jobs, infrastructure and a government with clear rules of the

game, especially accountability and transparency. We also developed a separate new transition strategy for the north of Sudan.

So, my first year in Sudan was to do everything to make the two USAID teams—one in Khartoum and one in Juba—feel like one mission. And because people couldn't go back and forth very easily, we had our mission retreats in Addis (Ababa) or in Nairobi, because these were places people could fly to from both Khartoum and Juba. And especially for our FSNs, because it was hard for them to go to the other capital.

And then, my last year there I was preparing for two separate missions, with all the planning, staffing and approvals that entails.

Q: One more question.

HAMMINK: Yes.

Q: Just in terms of distances, what was the distance between Juba and Khartoum?

HAMMINK: It was a two-hour flight. So, that would be maybe 800 to 1,000 miles.

Q: But no way it could be driven?

HAMMINK: You could drive it, but it would take a week. There were no roads. Well, there were no decent roads once you got to the border of what became South Sudan.

Q: Oh, really?

HAMMINK: Yes. So, while I was there, and this had started well before I arrived, we were very close to finishing up a road funded by USAID from Juba down to the Ugandan border to a town called Nimule. And that was the first tarmac road in all South Sudan outside of Juba. You know, I heard recently, it's doing well.

But I can tell you, looking over the last few years, what's happened in South Sudan, it just totally breaks my heart. With all the good will and all the hard work and the excitement at independence. There were a million people at that Independence Day. It was so exciting. That the government there, including the President—who's still the president, Salva Kiir (Mayardit) -- had so much good will from his people and from the international community, and could have moved things forward. And because of a huge lack of leadership, both him and the Vice President Riek Machar, who came from different tribal groups, never did get along, never provided the kind of leadership that any country needs, much less a brand-new country.

And so, it's just heartbreaking. I sat with other people who were also engaged in South Sudan and in senior positions back before 2011 in USAID and in the State Department and talked about what we could have done differently. And you know, my opinion on that, like others I talked to, was that we should have been tougher on accounting for funds and putting in place stricter systems to account for the oil money coming into southern leaders' bank accounts. But many people told me there was little we could have done differently. That it's just poor leadership, that they weren't ready to become a country. Maybe the UN should have maintained protectorate status.

Q: Protectorate?

HAMMINK: Protectorate, exactly. Sovereignty for a while. It's hard to tell. I mean, you know, hindsight is always like that.

At the time, it was very exciting to be there for the Independence Day and for seeing this new country launch.

Q: Meanwhile, Darfur was still around.

HAMMINK: Right.

Q: What was going on during your stay there with Darfur? Was there any progress in dealing with those issues?

HAMMINK: Yes, that's a great question. A lot of my time and effort in Sudan was also spent on supporting the Darfur Peace Process and trying to move some of our assistance, where it was possible, away from just solely humanitarian assistance that could support development-type objectives and helping to build some local capacity. We wanted to help the millions of IDPs move into situations where they could be part of communities.

Q: IDPs are?

HAMMINK: Internally Displaced People. And the difference between an IDP and a refugee: IDPs are displaced people who stay within their country, whereas refugees are displaced people who flee to another country. And they're known as refugees.

In Darfur, as you know, all the IDPs had been displaced because of fighting and because of civil war. It was just tragic to see.

We were trying to work through the IDP issues with the lead taken by the UN. General Gration was also involved on the political side and I was involved on the development side in terms of

what we could do to support that process. They were talking about building new communities: you know, schools and clinics and other infrastructure, for the IDPs to return to. You know, I think it was understood that those IDPs in IDP camps in Darfur could not all go back to where they came from, because some of their villages had been burned, of course, in the civil war. And much of the land they had fled from had subsequently been settled by others.

Q: So the land was gone.

HAMMINK: The land was gone. So, they needed to figure out new ways for resettlement. It was very complicated.

There are certain international norms and rules regarding returning the IDPs that had to be followed. You could not force IDPs to move against their will. You had to make sure that they had the means to live, including jobs, social services and the like. The Sudanese government claimed that IDPs did not want to move out of camps because they were getting so many benefits from the international community as IDPs, a huge disincentive to move. I went to several conferences on the peace process: for example, one in Bahrain and one in Cairo. I was the USAID rep (representative) at those. There was some forward movement but not enough.

As you know, even now, here we are in 2018, there are still very large IDP camps in Darfur. What's happening and has happened in other places in the world where you had large IDP or refugee camps, like the Palestinians who lived around Amman or other cities in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, those refugee camps have basically become part of the city that they started next to. And so, they're no longer viewed as a refugee camp anymore. Although people who lived there had certain special privileges.

In any case, that was around Darfur. That's what was happening.

In the northern part of the country, at USAID we also supported a peace process in an area that's called The Three Areas, which are three provinces in Sudan just north of
South Sudan where a lot of the fighting in the civil war also took place. But in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, it was agreed that these three regions would be part of the North. They would not be part of the South, even though a good percentage of their populations were tribal groups that were from the South.
And the agreement was that people in those three provinces would be able to go through a process of broad discussions—community-level discussion. And then they would be able to decide whether they wanted to liaise with the North or with the South. So, we helped with that whole process as well.

Q: How is that presently?

HAMMINK: That, I don't know what's going on, unfortunately, because of the politics and fighting also broke out again in those areas. It was very hard for us to get into those areas even six, seven years ago to support peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Q: Were you dealing at all with the President of Sudan personally?

HAMMINK: The President of Sudan was of course indicted by The Hague (International Criminal Court)—he was an international war criminal.

Q: Was that while you were there, or was that later?

HAMMINK: It was just before we arrived. So, there was a prohibition against U.S. diplomats meeting with him. We weren't allowed to talk to him. We didn't have an ambassador to Sudan because of the sanctions against Sudan. There were layers of sanctions but most came from Sudan's support at one point in the 90s for Osama bin Laden and global terrorism. There were some serious sanctions from the '90s that were still in place. The issues around president Bashir came from his role in the atrocities carried out in Darfur. We were not allowed to talk to him. And we were very careful, whenever we had media follow us with the Senior Presidential Advisor, we were always looking around.

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: And it happened once to a visiting (U.S.) congressman. He was in a meeting there, and Bashir—President Bashir—kind of joined him as he was walking to his car. President Bashir had his photographers with him. So, it was an unfortunate setup.

But I was very fortunate, because I had an excellent counterpart, I remember, at the Ministry of International Cooperation, who had studied in the U.S. He still understood the importance of a good relationship and the role of development.

You know what? The Sudanese understandably were working with the donors to try to move beyond mainly humanitarian assistance. Some 95 percent of all the assistance, especially from the U.S., was humanitarian assistance. And they wanted to move that to recovery and rehabilitation type of assistance. I totally understood. We worked with (the U.S.) Congress and tried to figure out where and how we could do that.

Q: Were they getting assistance from Chinese and other donors?
HAMMINK: They were not getting typical assistance like we understand it. We tried to meet with the Chinese, but they would not meet with us from the development side. They didn't consider themselves donors.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: They had huge investments in the oil industry in the North and parts of the South as well. So, it complicated the whole dynamic. Besides decades of civil war, there was oil and money from oil. And so, it all had to be negotiated, because most of the oil— 60 or 70 percent—was found in the South. Whereas, it had to go through a pipeline that went up through the North up to Port Sudan.

Q: That was the only way out?

HAMMINK: At that time, it was the only way out.

Q: And now, is there—

HAMMINK: I think it's still the only way out, although the South has been trying to get money to build a pipeline through Kenya so that they wouldn't be dependent on the North. I think that those plans have now been on hold for the last three years because of the fighting in the south.

Q: One more question. I'm not sure if this is during your time, but there are a few stories about large land holdings being sold off to private entities to increase exports from Sudan for foreign exchange. And the question is what was happening to small holders during this process, was that happening during your period?

HAMMINK: It happened a bit while I was in Ethiopia, interestingly. In Sudan, yes there was a lot of talk of that. Sudan had a huge irrigation system not far from Khartoum. I think it was one of the largest irrigation systems in the world. It was all irrigated from the Nile River. And I remember there were discussions and deals about parts of that area that were being given to foreigners to come in and grow commodities for export. But you're right, this was also just after the big food security scare, and the Sudanese were worried that some of the Gulf States would come into these big areas, grow grain, and ship it back to the Gulf, and then the Sudanese wouldn't benefit. Those were concerns as well.

An interesting story: USAID provided support to a conservation group because there was a conservation park in the south that worked with communities. But USAID funded an assessment of the state of the animals and found a huge number—over a million — I think there were wildebeest and other animals found in that area. And I remember flying in there on their little plane, and we could see this huge runway and these large buildings surrounded by manicured land. And so, we asked around, "What is that?" And it was some Gulf State that had paid a lot of money to the Government of South Sudan and set this up for hunting forays.
They'd come in there for hunting when we were working with the government on conservation. And so, there was a discussion at the political level but little changed because of the money. So,

even in South Sudan, some of that happened. I don't know what the state of this game park is today.

Q: Which conservation group was it? Do you remember?

HAMMINK: I think it was— I can't remember exactly.

Q: Anyway, yeah. It sounds like a lot of— I can see the hunting. Some of the Southern African countries have the same issues. They do allow the hunting in South Africa and Botswana, but it's controlled and limited.

HAMMINK: That's right, yeah. We were trying to work with local counterparts and carry out development programs in the south, despite serious security issues and a totally inexperienced government.

But again, when I got there, we were providing well over a billion dollars in assistance, between the North and the South. It's another billion-plus assistance program that I managed.

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USAID/Afghanistan Mission Director (2013-2015)

HAMMINK: I was recruited in 2012 and I moved to Kabul in 2013. I left India in May, and I got to Kabul around July. I had to do all the security training. You know, you must do a lot of training before going out to Afghanistan. And I mean, everybody, whether you're Mission Director or whether you're a secretary, you had to do the same kind of training, which is good.

I got to Kabul in July, and at the time, in 2013, we had a $1.8 billion budget for that year.

Q: Oh, my goodness.

HAMMINK: The next year, it went down. But we had around a $5 billion pipeline. We had hundreds of activities. We had over 400 USAID direct hire officers, both FSOs (Foreign Service Officers) and FSLs (Foreign Service Limited appointees), all over the country. I was told that our staff was in some 80 different places—I mean, bases. So, USAID staff lived in places called FOBs—foreign operating bases or PRTs—provincial reconstruction teams or then there were the regional bases such as in Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharif. A senior civilian representative from State and a senior development representative usually from USAID were in each PRT and regional base. So, we had hundreds of staff, and only about half of them were in Kabul.

USAID was in this temporary building that had been put together in 2004 to last a few years, and we were still there in 2013. There were sandbags on the windows. They were whole shipping containers just thrown together.

We had a huge staff, huge budget, lots of oversight, very political programs and lots of interest.

Q: "Huge" meaning the biggest in the world for AID?

HAMMINK: Yes, it was at the time and think still is the largest mission in terms of money, perhaps also in terms of staff. Nothing compared to Afghanistan since Vietnam.

Q: Right.

HAMMINK: I had three deputies—Deputy Mission Directors -- and a dozen-plus Office Directors. There were some positions that I inherited when I arrived that I never had in my three previous Mission Director jobs. For example, I had a Chief of Staff who was a full Colonel seconded from the military—a full Colonel. And I had a Senior Advisor.
Anyway, I had many people in the USAID front office, but they were all needed because there was so much going on at the time.

In 2013, I think our biggest challenge had to do with the pull-out plans of the military. By that time, the military was already significantly drawing down troops and assets after the major surge approved several years earlier by President Obama. I think it had got up to about 120,000 troops. And they had to bring it down to some 10,000 troops before 2015, I believe.

There was a huge number of troops leaving. They were closing bases right and left. They were closing PRTs, all of them were closed by 2015. So, you know, you had this huge surge in '09 and '10, and then just as fast, you had a de-surge, both on the military side and on the civilian side.

So, USAID had surged up to over 400 American USAID employees, as I said, maybe 450, depending on what you counted. And by the time I left two plus years later in September 2015, we were down to 100. We had gone from 400-plus down to 100 U.S. direct hires. And, as I mentioned, USAID staff had been in some 70-80 bases around the country. As the military pulled out, the civilians also pulled out, because we couldn't obviously have anybody out there if there were no military assets to protect them or take them around.

When I got to Kabul, I had three-star and two-star flag officers offering to take us around, because we could use military assets and the U.S. military supported our development mission. After my first year there, because the military was in full scale-down mode, they basically told me, "We just don't have the assets to bring you guys around anymore" So, it was very difficult to

go visit projects and to get out to see things and meet with Afghans outside of Kabul, whether it was to talk to them or whether it was to see roads or schools or clinics, and the like.

So, those were some of the challenges. Because our staff members were declining, we had to do more and more remote and multi-sourced monitoring. By early 2015, we were not only down to, as I said, around 100 U.S. direct hire staff, but they were all in Kabul.

We were forced to pull back our staff, including FSN staff, even out of Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat. And so, we put in place a very robust, multi-tiered monitoring system, where we tried to get monitoring information daily from different sources. And then we would triangulate the information so that we were comfortable with the data in terms of how our programs were doing, both on the implementation side and in terms of achieving results that we were tracking. And it's still the situation today that in 2018, all our staff is in Kabul. But they put in place a robust, multi-tiered monitoring system that is continually revised and improved.

Q: And how? Describe that multi-tiered process.

HAMMINK: Sure. So, the tiers— I mean it's changed a little bit. They continued to improve it since I left. But when I was there through September 2015, for example, tier one was where we could get out, mainly in Kabul, and see things ourselves, or around bases where we could get out, where there were still bases. We could fly in, go visit a few places and then fly back to Kabul. So, that was the U.S. government tier. Also, we used some of the pictures that different planes were taking of schools and other infrastructure where we could get that information.

Tier two was where our partners—all our partners through contracts, grants, cooperative agreements had a monitoring and evaluation system that had to be part of the contract. So, we would get information back from them as well in terms of trainings that took place, in terms of visits by their own extension people or in terms of how clinics are doing, for example the number of visits by mothers. Just a whole broad range of different data points.

But we didn't just want to go with that, because we didn't know if we could trust it, because we didn't have any actual USAID employee eyes on all those activities or results like we do in other countries. So, the third tier, for example, was basically trying to get information from the (Afghan) government. Some provinces were better than others in terms of what was happening, what they reported on, and the quality of the reporting.

We'd heard through IDLG— That's the independent organization of the government that was responsible for local governments. We would get the reporting back from that. We also received reporting from the UN and other donors as well. And often, we would get back information on programs that we funded.

The fourth tier was where we reached out to the beneficiaries themselves. And one of the offices came up with a novel idea. Because you had good Internet connections, at least in the towns, the smartphones could basically real-time take pictures of trainings as they were going on, like seminars. And folks in our DG office in Kabul would be watching that to verify, just listening to the conversation and taking notes. That was one example. But also, we did surveys. We did calls to different beneficiaries whom we knew. We would call up local officials that we knew to say, "Did this take place? What do you think? What happened?" So, those were all additional data points.

And then fifth was probably the most expensive but also extremely important. That was independent monitors, where we would hire a firm to send out their own trained monitors to our project sites, whether it was a construction site or training or clinics or anything else. This type of monitoring wasn't formal evaluations. It was monitoring USAIDfunded activities and monitoring sites. We used GPS (Global Positioning System) pictures and other latest technologies to ensure they visited those places that they claimed to have visited. And then for each site visited, they had to write a report with date stamped pictures.

So then, our project officers could triangulate these data points, including from implementing partners, independent monitors, and beneficiaries. If it's going on in Kabul, also from our own observation. And so, that's an example of course of the multi-tiered system. We probably knew more of what was going on than we do in other countries, where we might send out a project officer to a town outside the capital once every few months.

Q: Did your program provide program or budget assistance to the Afghans?

HAMMINK: This is in a paper that I wrote when I came back to Washington after my time in Kabul that USIP (United States Institute of Peace) published, so I'd be glad to share it with you.

Q: Yeah.

HAMMINK: But to answer your question, I think it was 2010, at a conference—a political conference on Afghanistan, the U.S. government at the time—and this was supported by President Obama—basically made a commitment to provide 50 percent of our entire development budget for what they call "on budget" programs. President (former President of Afghanistan Hamid) Karzai asked all donors if they could move towards 50 percent on budget.

And for the Government of Afghanistan, "on budget" meant either what we call in USAID government-to-government programs or multi-donor trust funds that also used government systems. There were two multi-donor trust funds that had been set up. One called the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, or ARTF, that was managed by the World Bank.

Another multi-donor trust fund was just for infrastructure, and it's managed by ADB (Asian Development Bank).

Q: The Asian Development Bank.

HAMMINK: Correct: the Asian Development Bank. And USAID, since 2004 or so, provided funds to the ARTF. And the government considered that on budget, because the World Bank then used those trust fund funds to support programs that went through government systems.

It was extremely difficult to consider moving to 50 percent on budget with the government that still had very nascent systems. Again, like South Sudan, much of the government was nil, non-existent before the U.S. came back in 2001. And so, it was starting from scratch with a lot of these government institutions, procedures, and staff, and the like. The government systems weren't even close to international standards, especially related to accountability and audit.

And so, our government-to-government programs were very tightly managed. We basically provided funds directly to their treasury if government ministries carried out a certain number of steps towards agreed-upon development objectives. They weren't so much policy steps as they were program implementation steps. We had agreed-upon milestones, like for example, purchasing textbooks through the Ministry of Education. We had benchmarks. And when they met those, we could pay them. So, we could either pay against milestones or benchmarks or we could pay in terms of reimbursement of expenses that the government pays up front for agreed-upon development activities.

The on-budget was tracked closely, and it was very staff-intensive, as you can imagine. Best donor practices in countries includes as much as possible to go through government systems with the idea then it would lead to quicker self-reliance. For us, it made it much harder in USAID at the time. But we did it, because it was a U.S. government political commitment, if you will.

I think now, there may be fewer government-to-government programs, but there are other programs. When I was there, we launched what was called at the time the New Development Partnership, which was a new approach, basically where, because President Ghanī (Mohammad Ashraf Ghanī Ahmadzai) had been elected in 2014 along with Dr. Abdullah Abdullah as the CEO, chief executive officer (Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan)—like vice president. But they were true reformers. They supported major reforms. And so, they laid out a reform program, and it was a reform program that the U.S. government could very much get behind. Almost all the government's reforms represented the right actions to take to move the economy, social indicators, justice indicators, democracy, gender.

The Afghan government presented these reforms in big donor conferences in London, first, and then Brussels. And so, the U.S. said, "Wait a second. We think these are the right reforms. We want to help you. We want to incentivize those reforms and help you get these through," whether they're (the Afghan) Parliament or their own bureaucracy.

So, we sat down with them and came up with 40 of those types of reforms and changes. And we basically said, "We'll give you $20 million for each of these you carry out." And some of them were tough. I mean, some of them involved new taxes or new systems to, for example, have customs taxes paid through banks instead of cash. These were important changes but not easy, because there were going to be losers in many of these kinds of changes.

We called this the New Development Partnership. It was basically up to an $800 million incentive program. And if they didn't carry out these reforms and changes, they didn't get the money. And they lost out of a lot of money, but they also gained a lot of money. And they used it as leverage with their Parliament and others to try and make sure these reforms were put in place.

I believe the mission is now negotiating—and the embassy of course, with the Ambassador— with the (Afghan) government on a new reform program. The New Development Partnership was viewed as a successful approach and the EU (European Union) basically negotiated its own similar program as did other donors. The ARTF had its own reform program. The IMF had its own reform program. So, we made sure that they were coordinated, so that the government didn't have to pursue dozens of different reform programs. But they were all linked to the government's own reform program and agenda.

You and I have been working in development for a long time. In the '90s, we saw structural adjustment whereby the World Bank or USAID would come up with a long list of policy changes that we wanted to see, and we'd give them money if they carried out all of the long list of policy reforms. These were dictated from our end. These were from our experts. The difference here is that the reforms we were putting $20 million in for each one, these were their reforms. The (Afghan) government wanted these. So, it wasn't us telling them what to do. It was us saying, "We agree with these. We're going to incentivize. And these are so important that we'll give you $20 million for each one you actually carry out."

Q: Interesting. You mentioned earlier you weren't able to travel very much at all.

HAMMINK: Well, interestingly, as I mentioned, I arrived in Kabul in July of 2013. And at the time the U.S. military was in the throes of a major drawdown, in men and materials and bases. But also, the country was undergoing major transition, at the time, moving towards 2014. 2014 was a threshold year in the sense of major security reforms, security changes, whereby the U.S. military and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) were saying to the Afghan security

forces, “You’re now responsible. We’re only here to train and assist the mission. You have to do the fighting.” So, that was a major shift.

The other transition was political. There were new presidential elections in 2014 under the (Afghan) constitution, the President could only stay two terms. President Karzai had already been there two terms, so it was a brand-new game. There were many presidential candidates.

So, political transition, security transition, and then economic transition with the billions of dollars that NATO and others spent, especially in these PRTs. Our funding went from $1.8 billion when I got there— I think that was the 2012 appropriation. It went to $850 million the next year. And then it’s been steady around that. So, significant changes to the economy too with all the troops leaving and all the money that had been spent in rural areas with PRTs leaving.

Those three major transitions required planning and analysis to figure out how the development community could best support Afghanistan through those transitions. The donors and the government were looking at this in terms of a whole decade of transformation, from 2015 to 2025.

Q: Is that their term or our term?

HAMMINK: I don’t know. I suspect it’s ours. It sounds a bit like ours. But the World Bank had carried out a significant amount of analytical work on different scenarios— economic growth and the like—from 2014 depending on what happens.

Also, we did good work on the impact of the drawdown and these changes I mentioned on the economy. Frankly, what we saw in ’14 and ’15 is that I believe the World Bank completely underestimated the impact, and it was much harsher than we all thought it would be, especially on the rural poor and overall GDP (gross domestic product).

Q: You also, as I recall, had auditors on your tail all the time, and there was an office in Kabul?

HAMMINK: Yes, in fact oversight: very important and very expensive, not surprisingly, for our multi-billion-dollar programs. There were four audit organizations. You had the State Department auditors. Well, actually five. DOD (U.S. Department of Defense), GAO (U.S. Government Accounting Office) had an office there. USAID auditors and investigators. And then you had a Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction called SIGAR. And SIGAR was very active. They looked at all reconstruction, not only USAID, but would audit what DOD was doing related to reconstruction, as well as State.

At one point, we did an assessment of how much time the USAID team spent just responding to the auditors, especially SIGAR. A significant number of work days from my staff were used in

responding to requests from auditors and responding to audit findings and/or recommendations. Now, that's just how it is, and we did what we needed to do. And a lot of times, that was useful, because it helped us, as it should. I mean, the *raison d'être* of the auditors should be so that we improve our programs and so that we improve the impact of our taxpayer-funded programs and account for every dollar spent. So yes, there was a lot of oversight from auditors.

And then of course, when I got to Kabul, there were five ambassadors. You had the regular ambassador. You had a deputy ambassador. And you had what they called "coordinators" for different types of assistance—the judiciary, other kinds of development. So, there was a lot of oversight from these ambassadors as well from the State Department.

Q: And you reported directly to one of the ambassadors?

HAMMINK: Yes. I would say I was very fortunate, because I worked with terrific ambassadors providing this oversight of USAID. And this is no surprise, because it's all in the record. The guy who was USAID Mission Director before me, Ken Yamashita—

Q: I've interviewed him.

HAMMINK: Yeah, you've interviewed him? Good.

He was Mission Director for two years. The person who had been the assistance coordinator, which is at an ambassador level in the front office, from 2012-2013 was also from USAID—Bambi (Hilda M.) Arellano. In 2013 she was leaving. They asked Ken to take on that job. So, he became the assistance coordinator in the front office—the coordinator for all assistance, including INL (U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs) and USAID, all the various DOJ
(U.S. Department of Justice) groups that were managing some assistance. He coordinated all that. I met with him often, but he did not try to control everything we did. He knew everything we were doing in any case. But he let us run with it. I just made sure he was aware of everything we were doing. Because of the "no surprise rule."

I was very fortunate because, for most of my time there, I also had an outstanding ambassador, whose name was Mike (P. Michael) McKinley. He went on to be ambassador to Brazil. I'm not sure if he's still there, but he was a great guy, and we got along very well, along with the other ambassadors. So, that was helpful.

Q: Is he political (a political appointee) or career (a career diplomat)?

HAMMINK: No, he was career. He was Ambassador in, if I'm correct, Bolivia and

Colombia. And then, he came as Deputy Ambassador to Kabul, and he moved up to be Ambassador. When I got there, the Ambassador was James (B.) Cunningham, who was also very professional. We had a lot of oversight, but we had good relations. As you know, communication is key.

So, I stayed there two years and three months. And five days. No, I'm just kidding.

Q: (laughs)

HAMMINK: So, 27 months.

Q: Which is a long time for that post.

HAMMINK: Yes, which is a long time. Normally, Kabul is a one-year tour. I extended the second, and then stayed a few more months for different reasons. My successor is still there after two-and-a-half years. His name is Herbie (Herbert) Smith.

Q: I think I know him.

HAMMINK: He was USAID Mission Director in Yemen before they closed the mission because of the civil war. A very good guy, excellent.

So anyway, at the time everybody said it's not a good idea to retire out of Afghanistan, mainly because, you know, in Afghanistan, you're working seven days a week, 10 or 12 or more hours a day. Sometimes, you had the seventh day off. The Ambassador was good. He insisted that people not work on Fridays. We had Fridays off, which is the day the (Afghan) government had off. But every other day of the week, we were expected to work. You know, because of the work flow, you worked 12-14-hour days. So, people would say don't retire out of Afghanistan, because it's difficult to go from 120 miles an hour to zero.

And then I talked to folks in Washington and was offered a position as the SDAA in the Africa bureau. To USAID's credit, based on my request, they allowed me to spend a few months at USIP when I came back. I had a month or so of home leave, then I spent—

Q: The decompression period.

HAMMINK: Correct. I spent November and December of 2015 at USIP. And it was a terrific opportunity. It was the first time in my career, which had been boom-boomboom-boom for 35 years non-stop, that I took some time to reflect, to think, to read, and to write. And this is this paper I just mentioned that was just published, because when I retired—

Q: What's the name of the paper?

HAMMINK: It's called "USAID in Afghanistan: Challenges and Success". And it's on the USIP website. https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/12/usaid-afghanistanchallenges-and-successes

Q: Can we link that up to your oral history?

HAMMINK: Yeah, sure. I'll pull the information.

And I was asked by the "Foreign Service Journal" to take that paper -- it's about 10,000 words—and to put it in an article of 2,500 words.

Q: Good, good! So, we can all find it when it's there.

HAMMINK: Hopefully. The article is with the FSJ editorial board now. We'll see what they say.

Q: Well, it probably says what I was going to ask you next: How would you sum up what you learned about USAID in a circumstance like Afghanistan. You were also in Sudan in difficult circumstances. What works best, and what doesn't work well?

HAMMINK: Well, there are many lessons learned. And you'll see in my paper that I have some recommendations. One is, as much as possible, keep to development principles. In Afghanistan, we were pushed as an agency to do things we normally wouldn't do, to go well beyond our comfort zone. I had mentioned that phrase about India. But in Afghanistan, it's even more so, you know, where multi-billion dollar budgets were thrown at us to carry out development and stabilization programs in a war zone. We were told to show development results, as well as to do stabilization with U.S.
troops during some of those years. And to show results in a conflict war zone: very difficult charges, right?

And you know, I gave some examples and analyzed what some of the major challenges were. One was this 50 percent on budget political requirement. The other was the major surge. Another was trying to build the capacity of government employees in the Afghan government, when everything was based on patronage.

Q: Oh.

HAMMINK: Early on, we had no support from the (Afghan) government to find and bring in qualified Afghans for these positions. So then, it went to where it was donors— and USAID was just as guilty as others—that supported Afghan technical advisors through projects—time-bound projects-- to do government line functions so that they got done. This was of course a very

expensive approach. And instead of building the capacity of civil servants we brought in and paid top-dollar to consultants to carry out key government functions. Because the (Afghan) government systems wouldn't allow the hiring of qualified Afghan civil servants.

Q: Did we end up paying them more than they would've been paid in the Afghan government?

HAMMINK: Oh, yes, much more. I mean, it was nuts. This was before I got there, but at one point, because so many billions of dollars were being thrown at Afghanistan, the salaries of some of the top Afghan consultants were $10,000, $15,000 a month.

Q: Oh!

HAMMINK: Yes, that's crazy. Whereas now, the salaries have come down, but still not to a sustainable level. There's a plan—and you'll see it in my paper—to move beyond that. You'll see one of the recommendations is to, as much as possible, stick to good development principles related to due diligence. USAID needs to be allowed to carry out our due diligence and up-front analytical work.

One of the most important recommendations, I think, is, whether you're sitting across from a four-star general or a presidential envoy, USAID needs to be clear about expectations and risks, what we can achieve and what the risks and costs are. This happened to me and happened to other USAID leaders over the years. And it's hard, because people like the person who worked as the (U.S.) Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mr. (Richard C. A.) Holbrooke, had a mind of his own and told USAID what to do without discussion or analyses. So, whether four-star or whether a presidential or special envoy, or an ambassador, be clear about expectations and risks.

There were times when U.S. political or military leaders would tell you what you were expected to do. On stabilization, we had to move quickly to carry out quick response and quick impact types of stabilization programs, and move money from development programs. However, as part of the U.S. government supporting U.S. national security interests, we would normally salute and do our best.

Q: Sure.

HAMMINK: So you know, all those considerations. The other thing in my paper, you'll see is I talk a lot about stabilization. There's been some good analytical work done by different researchers on the impact of the stabilization programs in Afghanistan. Most of the large USAID stabilization programs happened in 2009, '10,'11 during the major military surge. Most of our stabilization programs were under the counter insurgency, or COIN, approach, related to clear, hold and build, and following the troops, which was extremely dangerous. Because with

clear-hold-build: The U.S. military might clear. But they would only hold this if they're there. Then when they left, the bad guys would come back and kill our development workers. That's why we lost a lot of Afghan development workers.

Flexibility is another recommendation. I think that, you know, USAID has its quiver of different approaches, mainly contracts and grants.

Q: Right, right.

HAMMINK: But in places where we work that are conflict zones, typical contracts and grants don't work. And this is why OTI does so well. Because they have an approach that requires flexibility and to be able to move quickly in these kinds of quick-changing situations. Not only on the ground, but in terms of our own security and political objectives, strategic objectives for the U.S. government.

GERALD F. HYMAN
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
Democracy and Governance

Gerald F. Hyman was born in Chicago in 1942. Hyman has a B.A. in philosophy and a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Chicago and a J.D. from the University of Virginia. He is a senior associate with the Office of the President at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), as well as a member of the Advisory Council to the Center for International Media Assistance of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). He conducted democracy and governance assessments for USAID in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Serbia, South Africa, South Sudan, and Ukraine. Gerald F. Hyman was interviewed by Ann Van Dusen on November 16, 2016.

Topical Focus – Establishment of the Democracy and Governance Center in the Global Bureau at USAID

Q: That's Jennifer.

HYMAN: Yes. Mostly it was Jennifer [Windsor]. I don't think Chuck [Costello] would have come up with it but he bought into it, which is we're going to go in there and we're going to hammer this thing, etcetera, etcetera. My view was the opposite. And so my view was that either we convinced the agency, the missions, everybody that this was a good thing to do, not only for itself but for the larger development portfolio, or this was going to go the way of the dodo bird once Brian walked out the door. This was going to be like other initiatives that other administrators, including Brian as it turns out, wanted to start. And if you don't institutionalize

these initiatives, if you don't convince your colleagues that there's value to them, who's going to champion them once you leave? Well, that meant compromise. Well, that was a dirty word, I think, for Jennifer and to a lesser extent Chuck. So, I was the head or became the head of a unit called the strategies unit. And the strategies unit was to do a variety of things, some of which was whatever else the others didn't do, including interagency or interbureau. Everyone who was in the center was supposed to have both a sub technical area of one of these four areas, Rule of Law, etcetera, etcetera, but also be part of a center geographic team. Well, mostly they fought the latter. Everyone that came in afterwards they were Rule of Law, that was what they were doing, they were not about- who cared- why did they have to worry about Somalia. And my view, again, differed from Chuck and Jennifer's. I said if you don't backstop these countries, if we don't know what's going on in these places we're not going to be of any use to the mission and we're not going to be of any use to the front office. You've got to know what's going on there, not just Rule of Law, what's going on and not only that but we are supposed to be training democracy officers not just Rule of Law officers. So, when you're the backstop for Somalia you're supposed to know everything about what's going on in Somalia, not just the Rule of Law program. And you better not favor the Rule of Law programs just because you're a Rule of Law person. Well, I never was able to get that done very well.

Q: So, people were more interested in and associated with the particular sub sectoral approach than with a geographic region.

HYMAN: There were a couple of reasons for that, one of which was that the team leader, in those days they were called team leaders -- after it became an office there were division chiefs, now I think they're team leaders again, it went back and forth, including in – with AEFs (personnel evaluations). And yes, the regional coordinators had input, but a lesser input. So, all the regional coordinators were on the strategies team. That was one of their responsibilities. Another responsibility was to be at the table, so to speak, at every review, every mission, country strategy.

Q: Right, CDSS.

HYMAN: Exactly. And they had different names as we went through the years. But the five year- as I recall at the time there were only three places in the world that still had five year plans; one was the Soviet Union, the second was India and the third was AID. So, every mission had a five-year strategy and it came to Washington and it was reviewed. My team was responsible, the strategies team was responsible for going to those reviews and raising questions, or not, about the democracy, potential democracy programs. I'll come back to this in a minute. So, that was the second thing.

The third thing was to try to develop a framework for doing democracy and governance strategies. How do you approach this problem outside of Europe where they all wanted it while in other places in the world they didn't want it? So, how were we going to think about coming up with and advising missions as to what programs would be the most useful in Chad or in Bangladesh which we didn't have to do in Europe because they already wanted these things, less so in the Soviet Union. So, that was a third area.

Then there were interagency meetings and there was inter-bureau where all of that fell to the strategies team.

Q: So, did you have a lot of contact with the Justice Department, and with the State?

HYMAN: No, not a lot, I would say, but some with State. This was also the time of what I believed at the time and I think has been born out to be the case was a big loss for democracy and governance when the agency consolidated in the new building. Because in the old building we were interspersed on the floors along with everybody else and so you would have informal contacts with your State Department colleagues. You would find out about meetings that weren't necessarily on the speakerphone in the building. You found out also- you had relationships with those folks and you built them and so you knew things, you found out things, you participated in things. Once you moved five blocks away, it was a trip. Previously, it was not a trip to go to a meeting anymore for you than for anybody else in the building going from floor three to floor seven or six or four; everybody had to do that. Well, everybody didn't have to get on a bus and go from 14th Street to 21st. And you say well okay, it's only from 14th Street to 21st Street, how big a deal is that? Well, it's 20 minutes or 30 minutes or whatever it is so every meeting is a half hour on the way and a half hour on the way back. Not only that but you don't even know that they're happening because you don't meet these people in the hallways, you don't see them, you're not part of it. You have to be invited. Well, they're not going to necessarily say oh, don't forget our AID colleagues over there on 14th Street. This is State which has its own ego dimensions to it. When we were in the building these things just happened organically. And so I was involved in all kinds of meetings that later I wasn't involved with because I didn't even know about them. It's not that they would have prevented me; I just didn't even know that they happened. Again, mostly it was on the Europe side because those were my initial contacts but it was for others as well. And so I remember saying look, this is going to kill us. This is going to eviscerate our influence in the most important decisions by not going over there. Okay, well, so, I wasn't the administrator, Brian was. He wanted to do it (the move to RRB), we did it. In my view the cost wasn't I think so much the case for other technical areas because their connection to their State Department colleagues wasn't as close. So, the health people -- 49 you know this better than I do -- didn't seem to have as close ties into the everyday operations of State as the democracy and governance office did.

Q: Right. It's mainly with the desk officers, and IO.

HYMAN: The desks hurt badly and our office, our sector hurt badly. The others were less affected.

Q: Maybe less affected but they were no less oppositional to the move-

HYMAN: Oh, is that right? I did not know that.

Q: And it could be bureaucracies are inherently conservative and don't like change but it was more than that.

HYMAN: But the gains to us of having our consolidated operation a mile away or half a mile away were not as great as the losses. So, for example, the contracts officers moved over from Roslyn to the Ronald Reagan Building. You didn't see your contracts officer all that often. It was not a big deal to go over to Roslyn once in a while, whereas it was a big deal to go to every Kosovo meeting because they happened all the time. Your contracts officer and you met intermittently. And I know this because as I said I was very connected on the contract side because I was putting these IQCs together. So, it's not like I wasn't connected to the contracts people it was just that it wasn't a big deal. It wasn't often. It wasn't often enough to outweigh the cost of proximity to the State Department.

Q: And that's in 1997, I think.

HYMAN: Yes, it was much later, I admit that. It was well into Brian's term. And the building had to be built so that took a long time. I remember for example, just to go back to this business about how we related to our colleagues, I went to a session on Morocco. So, I had a team and I said to the team okay, you go to the ones where we really don't think it's a major problem, where you think issues are fairly clear, where we're not engaged. If there's any kind of a problem let me know and I'll go with you. So, one of them was Morocco and I went to the meeting and the mission director, Jim Bedner at the time, said he didn't want any democracy program in Morocco, they were concentrating their program in a certain part of the country and that wasn't an area that there was going to be much into governance work yet, etcetera, etcetera. At the time there was a rule that Brian established that said - look, we only have these things every five years. We're not going to do this every single year. We're going to do this every five years. And in the intervening period between strategy one and strategy two you don't get to challenge the strategy. You've already approved the strategy. So, you can go and look at implementation but you don't get to look at the strategy. So, I said gee Jim, I don't know. It looks to me like there's potentially some problems in Morocco on the political side that are going to affect the country and affect your program. Are you absolutely sure you don't want to at least look at the

possibility? No, we think we know what we're doing and we've got a program and that's just a low priority, we don't have enough money and we're not interested. We don't have people and this and that. So, I said look, let's make a deal. Why don't we forgo the DG potential objective -- this was strategic objectives, by the way -- but let me come back to you two years from now or three years from now and let me at least raise the question again during your review. Not to redo the whole strategy but just to reconsider whether you still think this is right. And if you do, fine, let's just go forward without a democracy objective.

I got back to the office and you would have thought I was Benedict Arnold. String the sucker up from the lightbulbs. What do you mean? Don't you understand what kick ass means? Okay. One year later Jim Bedner came back and said I think we need some work done in this area. I think we could have alienated him by taking this to Brian. First of all, you couldn't take everything to Brian. And secondly, I think we would have alienated him, not just for that but for every other mission he was going to be in. Why not create a colleagueship and say well okay.

So, I went out to Morocco at his request to do this democracy strategy for him in his mission in Morocco. Now, in my view that was a better way to ensure that your colleagues looked at the program with non-turf eyes and looked at it a little bit more openly and said well, do we have a political problem as well as an economic and health and education problem here. Is that to some extent what's standing in the way of some of these other things? So, my view was to integrate democracy in the mission programs and to show how can it work not only for its own self but for the benefit of health and education and economic growth in particular. Those two (democracy and economic growth) I thought went together and of course those were the non-discretionary accounts. So, both of them were sitting there vulnerable to all kinds of things because they weren't earmarked.

Q: So, as you think about the way you engaged with missions, are there particular programs that you think having the DG component really made a difference? Any that stand out?

HYMAN: I don't know. I think it would be worth going back and looking and when I became director of the office I asked us to do that and we did do a project but it was not well done in my view. I was disappointed in the result and I had championed it as the strategy team leader and then as the director. First, you'd have to ask where was any assistance successful at all. And then you'd have to ask to what extent did political factors play a role and then third, to what extent did the democracy program help on that side. So, you'd have at least a three-level kind of discussion and I was never able to get support for that kind of look.

There were certainly places where I think it became a central or more central part of the portfolio than people thought it would. Nigeria would have been an example of that. Kenya, Uganda. Now, were we successful in Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda? Not very I would say probably. I think

I'd have a hard time and this was something that democracy and governance people certainly don't want to address let alone admit to because the implication is well, if this isn't doing any good why are we doing it whereas I was very willing to look at it square in the face, you know: is this doing any good, are we getting anywhere with this, are we getting anywhere on its own terms and are we getting anywhere insofar as it helps the larger portfolios.

I guess Nigeria might have been a good case. I never worked in Latin America because I didn‟t have Spanish and although of course as an officer director by the time I became one in the Global bureau I could have just gone down to any of these places. What would they have done; they wouldn't throw me out. I just felt it was an imposition because these missions worked in Spanish. I mean internally they worked in Spanish. And all their counterparts assumed they spoke Spanish. So, it wasn't like going to Chad where people didn't necessarily expect that everybody who showed up spoke French let alone any of the Chadian languages. In the other parts of the world there was a little bit more give and take about language but not in Latin America, I felt, and so I never worked in Latin America because I didn't want to burden my colleagues. So, I had people who spoke Spanish that were working with me and so I said well why don't you do this. The Latin America team leader was a Spanish speaking person. So, that person did Latin America. And there may have been some good cases like that. There were certainly some attempts in Central America but if you look at Central America now I think you'd have a hard time saying that any of what we did there has worked very well. Certainly, not the Rule of Law. I mean AOJ, as I mentioned last time, was the corner of the LAC proto democracy program. And INL was not that active in this area and if it was it had a more constrained mandate in its own mind than it does now. Now it gets involved in all kinds of Rule of Law stuff. I don't think I could say that we were very successful in Central America and I don‟t know enough about Chile, Peru and-

Q: Colombia?

HYMAN: And Colombia. Certainly, Plan Colombia made a difference as far as I can understand. I know AID was very important in those countries and can we take some credit for the success of Chile and Peru. Latin America is an exception; Venezuela has maybe done pretty well, Ecuador I guess. Obviously big problems in Brazil and Argentina now but it seems to me they're going to get over that and so it's not like Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa or parts of the Middle East. Southeast Asia has done extremely well. How much of that- Malaysia, which I know well, didn't have an AID program of any size. Singapore never did. Indonesia did. Maybe we can take some credit for the transition, helping the transition after Suharto in Indonesia. Thailand, where we had a big program-

Q: A long time ago.

HYMAN: Yes, exactly, a long time ago, was now a big problem, right? Vietnam didn't have a program in those days yet and when it did it, did not want a democracy program so it only had an economic growth program and may still only have an economic growth program. It might have had a health and education program.

Q: It does, HIV.

HYMAN: I mean of these two sister areas, in my mind sister areas of economic growth and democracy. I say sister because the problems are similar. People don't object to a health program. Even dictators don't object to a health program. But when you get to economic growth and free markets and democracy and competition that's what they don't want. They don't want competitive things; they want to run the place.

Q: Control, yes.

HYMAN: Yes. Health, education, fine. Everybody should have health and education. But the politic economy of the country gets sticky because there are entrenched interests that don't want these kinds of reforms whereas an education reform normally doesn't rise to the level of- except within the education bureaucracy, I'm sure, but at the national level the president doesn't get all-

Q: Hot and bothered?

HYMAN: engaged with how many K through 12 teachers there are going to be or where they are and so on. So, the two, in my mind always the two sisters should have been more cooperative areas: economic growth and democracy.

Q: But you were competing for very limited funds.

HYMAN: We were competing for money but more importantly I think the economists still remained pretty skeptical of the democracy area and my democracy colleagues never wanted to learn enough economics to be able to talk to their colleagues. So, never got to where it should have, I think.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

NORMA PARKER

Topical Focus – Justice and Democracy Development in Latin America

Q: Yes, absolutely. And of course, you're looking at what's happening to our own country. In

1998, I did an in-depth case study of the Peruvian Institute for Education, Human Rights and Peace (IPEDEPH). Rosa Maria Mujica, the Director of IPEDEPH, had been the head of the Coordinadora. This is one good case where I shared worldwide the findings, and the U.S. human rights groups, community education, and others learned tremendously from their experience. Well, great. Do you want to stop here?

PARKER: What time is it?

Q: It's twenty to three. We have time, if you want to continue.

PARKER: I guess I can do a little bit more. We can jump into the experience of heading the Office of Administration of Justice and Democracy Development. After Peru, I was assigned in mid-1987 to this new office in the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau that was little known but becoming respected, called Administration Justice and Democracy Development. It was first headed by Bill Schoux, who tried his best to put it on the map.

Just by fluke, I came on the scene. It was the time when, in Latin America, many of the authoritarian regimes were starting to swing back toward democracy.

During my tenure, we had something like ten elections within a two-year period, all of which we supported through technical assistance in election administration and observation through Capel, a technical organization based in Costa Rica established to assist Latin countries in their election administration. CAPEL was part of the
Inter-American Institute for Human Rights. We also enlisted NGOs, like NDI, National Democratic Institute, and NRI, National Republican Institute, and the OAS for election observation, especially the counting of ballots of these elections. This was when election observation activities began in earnest. In Latin America, it began with the referendum on Pinochet in Chile, who lost and had to stand for election against a strong democratic opponent, Patricio Alwyn. A new and very effective NGO was formed to support the opposition to Pinochet's election. This NGO, Participacion Ciudadana, was led by a wonderful Chilean woman, Monica Jimenez. This was USAID's first experience with election observation and election support of a local organization committed to a democratic transition. Many people in the Bureau, including myself, thought someone would be killed if we openly provided support to this organization because, for the first time in this era, we really were down there in the middle of an election, advising a foreign government on how to carry out a free and fair re-election. The US Ambassador, Harry Barnes, was very supportive of our efforts.

After a great outcome in Chile, the idea of USAID assisting countries with their transition to democracy through holding free and fair elections had begun. In my office, I had a lawyer, but not a USAID lawyer, a State Department lawyer, because USAID would not
provide me with a lawyer. I think they thought it was too high risk. I also had staff like Roma Knee, Marilyn Zach, and Sharon Isralow, who had been working on human rights and democracy issues under the radar for a very long time. And all of a sudden, their day had come, and we got a decent budget for the first time. We were able to assist in the establishment of new NGOs throughout the hemisphere that supported both human rights and election assistance. I remember traveling all over the hemisphere, meeting with these groups and

encouraging them. They actually didn't need too much encouragement, because as I said, the pendulum has started to swing back toward democracy. The opening was there for USAID to step in with its support.

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Q: I did an evaluation of their observation of the 2000 election when Fujimori tried to take over for the third time. It was a fascinating experience. But yeah, so that's interesting for me to see, I think for a reader that you began with a heavy focus on elections in the very beginning, and then began to branch out further over time.

PARKER: Right. Because a lot of the fraud was related to human rights abuses.

Q: Was Tom Geiger with you at that time?

PARKER: I can't remember Tom. I think he came after me.

PARKER: It was not a popular area in the early years, as you know. It took off really when Jim Michael became the Assistant Administrator of LAC. Jim was another great mentor I had while working in this area. The AOJ part, the Administration of Justice, was most interesting. It began in 1983 with the murder of the four nuns in San Salvador and the assassination of Archbishop Romero. The State Department and human rights groups clamored for the perpetrators of those murders to be prosecuted.

It was Michael's idea that they should be prosecuted using their own justice system in El Salvador. We got two congressional earmarks of $3 million and $6 million over two years to assist the Salvadoran Government in its efforts to prosecute the intellectual authors of the murders, as well as the murderers themselves.

Based on this experience, we started assessing justice systems in other Latin American countries and how our foreign assistance programs could strengthen them. I had a great staff of Carl Cira and Luis Salas to carry out the justice sector assessments. They worked initially with the UN's Institute for Latin America for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders (ILANUD), which had been working in the justice sector for a few years on a low-key basis. From that international organization, we branched out to doing bilateral assessments in LAC countries that requested them.

Soon we had AOJ projects, or as the central USAID labeled it, Rule of Law projects, in most LAC countries. It became a major focus for USAID. Starting as a high-risk initiative in the LAC Bureau with the State Department political and legal officers taking a keen interest (after all, it was their turf), it grew into a major Office of Democratic Governance, including the Rule of Law in the newly established Global Bureau in central USAID. This was just in time for the fall of the Soviet Union and the new democratic transitions taking place across Eastern Europe. Exciting to be on the cutting edge of this initiative.

The justice system programs included not only the prosecutors and the court system with

judicial training for the judges, but also investigative police and other law enforcement entities. Therefore, USAID got back into police development, including community policing. (In the early ‘70s, USAID was involved in police training. The experience ended badly when the news of the Tiger Cages being used by us in police training in Vietnam was revealed. USAID dropped out of police training at that time.)

ICITAP (International Criminal Investigative Assistance Program), which was a part of the Department of Justice, was formed and supported by USAID to help us with strengthening investigative police in Latin America. Prosecutors in the Department of Justice were hired to help us with developing prosecutorial expertise in the justice systems in the hemisphere. It was all very heady stuff. And culminated in the Justice Study Center, based in Chile, established during one of the Summits of the Americas in the late 90s. To this day, the Center is still a viable institution, mostly supported by the Government of Chile. It does mostly judicial training. We also did a lot of the training for human rights groups in Costa Rica. The Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, which we supported, was very prominent in this area.

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Q: Absolutely. Let me ask you, in that period, so the Latin America Bureau was beginning to get into human rights, administration of justice, what was happening in the other regional bureaus?

PARKER: Good question. We were clearly leaders in this area. But with the fall of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, this became a very hot topic, as you can imagine, transitioning these authoritarian governments into some sort of democratic governance. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, not so much the administration of justice, but certainly democratic development took off. It had already spread to the rest of Latin America, particularly the Caribbean. Mexico, for example, with its own money, set up its election administration system, pouring a billion dollars into the Election Administration Institute. Other countries, with our assistance, were doing the same. I don't really know what was going on in Asia in those years, because I was so busy with the LAC countries. Who knows about the Middle East, that was its own thing. Africa had some beginnings of democratic development. It was all very rudimentary, though, to tell you the truth.

Q: And as you pursued your time, as we'll discuss in the future, becoming a Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Latin American Bureau, you were able to oversee and I suspect influence the continuing strength and burgeoning of the Democracy Program in Latin America, right?

PARKER: Right. It did become a personal love. I also had another wonderful mentor, and you know him very well. At that time, the Bureau was led by Mark Schneider, who was a very strong proponent of human rights and democratic governance. With his leadership and support, it was very easy to continue this work at the DAA level.

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Q: Today is Thursday, December 14, 2023, and I believe, Norma, you will be focusing on your time as Deputy Assistant Administrator (DAA) in the LAC Bureau.

PARKER: One of the more interesting things I did as DAA was to participate in the planning of a possible US invasion of Haiti after the democratically elected leader was overthrown. The planning for the civil-military intervention in Haiti followed the failure of the US intervention in Somalia, where some of our soldiers were shot down in a helicopter. A movie was made about this incident. In Haiti, the current Ambassador, Vicki Huddleston, was roughed up at the tail end of the Papa Doc Duvalier Administration. The point here is this was one of the first planning and implementation exercises with USAID joined at the hip with the military. Civ/Mil planning it was called. A peaceful transition was brokered by Robert Pastor, who was the NSC representative, and Ambassador Huddleston. I believe General Powell was involved as well. Beforehand, we had done a great deal of civil-military planning in the East Wing of the White House, and we were hoping that we could go in and broker the transition from Baby Doc to Jean Bertrand Aristide. Baby Doc would leave peacefully, and free and fair elections could then be held. As it turned out, the NSC rep, Robert Pastor, and the military reps, General Wes Clark and General Colin Powell, and the U.S Ambassador, were able to convince Baby Doc to step down.

We moved then to set up the administrative apparatus within the Haitian government to hold free and fair elections. I was part of that discussion. The elections were to be observed by international and national observers. In my case, during election day, they assigned me Danny Glover to go with me around to the various election sites. He had no idea how to do election observation, being a movie star and all that, he just didn't know. I spent half my time training him and the other half observing the various election sites. The end result was a clean and fair election with Aristide being democratically elected. Then we were able to mount a major assistance program, which you're familiar with. Larry Crandall came in as Mission Director and managed a large assistance program.

Also, in the AA's office, almost every major issue facing the Bureau, as you know, eventually ended up there. One of those issues was human rights, with Mark making sure that one of his DAAs, either Eric Zallman or myself, met with every human rights group in Washington or, if traveling, meeting them in Latin America. We also spent a lot of time with the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, that we were supporting.

The collaboration with the European Union through its European Commission (EC) was also a new effort on the part of Brian Atwood's Administration and proved to be very fruitful in that we were able to coordinate some of our programs in LAC countries with the EU. We got very well acquainted with each other. What was interesting from a bureaucratic perspective was that we would have one DAA representing an entire region, and the EC would have three or four. Our people stood out because we had a handle on a lot of issues, more so than the individual EC reps. It was also fun heading the US team to Consultative Groups in Paris and speaking on behalf of USAID to the World Bank and to the host countries that we were trying to assist. It made me understand the importance of donor coordination and become familiar with the various donor countries.

The other part of the job that was not particularly fun was writing the reviewing statements for all the performance reports for the LAC mission directors. Eric and I knew very well what the various mission directors were doing. But we had to put it in Mark

Schneider's language, so that he would sign it. That took a lot of effort and time on our part.

The most gratifying thing that I did when I was DAA was when the NSC called Mark and said they wanted someone to lead a multi-agency study of the small Windward Islands of the Caribbean. Mark asked me to do it. Okay, I want to stop there for the moment.

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Q: Today is January 29, 2024. And Norma, you are going to wrap up your description of your time as DAA of the LAC Bureau and then go on to the beginnings of your first retirement of several retirements.. Norma, you're on.

PARKER: Thank you, Marcy, I just wanted to add a few things I did during the five and a half years that I was DAA. We did a lot of budgeting for the Bureau. Eric, the other career DAA, was really good at this. I learned a lot just watching him in action on the budget reviews. We'd start out requesting a billion dollars every year, which was constantly cut by the Congress. The other highlight of my time as DAA was the special interagency report I made on the Windward Islands in the Caribbean at the request of the NSC. I think, Marcy, you were involved in this to a certain extent.

Q: Not really, but okay. I think I was gone by then.

PARKER: Mark got a call from the White House, Dick Clark, who asked that this study be done by someone in LAC who was a senior foreign service officer. The scope of work was an interagency team led by LAC would visit five or six of these islands and find out what their needs were, and why USAID left the Eastern Caribbean. We had closed down our Mission in Barbados and all the projects on these small islands. It was for budget reasons back in 1996. Mark chose me to lead the team. I headed an interagency team made up of people from Agriculture, Commerce, and Treasury, as well as LAC's own specialists in various development subjects and the Director of Caribbean Affairs. We went island by island and talked to the Prime Ministers and other members of the cabinets of these islands: Dominica, St. Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and ended up in Grenada. A dream trip if ever there was one. We came up with a set of recommendations for the White House.

I wrote the ten-page report on the plane coming back, which explained what the islands needed and requested thirty million dollars to reopen our mission in Barbados, with a small office on St. Lucia. This report went to the President. I know this because his comment back to Dick Clark was, 'Why did we screw these islands?' It was for budget reasons, of course. But the President liked the report and immediately authorized the thirty million and the reopening of our mission in Barbados. The Bureau did not like the idea of an office in St. Lucia, so that was dropped. Then the Bureau was charged with the implementation of this, which involved quite a lot of work to recruit people and put a program together. There were two aspects of the program: one was the rule of law for these islands and human rights, and the other was trade and development with a strong emphasis on the trade side of things. This was a fun assignment.

That sort of terminated my time in the front office. At that point I had to retire because my 93-

year- old mom needed to come back from Arizona and find a place to live near me. I couldn't handle a full-time DAA job, clean out her house, and bring her back. So, I retired in May of 1999 and went out to Arizona.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

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Washington DC., U.S.A.
(2000-2007, 2008-2013, 2014-2017)

Neil Levine was born in 1961 in Teaneck, New Jersey. He completed his undergraduate education at Earlham College. He joined USAID in 1993, however, he primarily served in Washington DC. in a variety of capacities. He retired in 2017 and was interviewed by Carol Peasley in 2024.

Topical Focus – USAID DRG programs, USAID-State Department Relations, USAID-NGO Interactions

Q: How did you decide to become the chief of the governance division in the Democracy Center at that point? I think it was still the Democracy Center.

LEVINE: Yes; Democracy Center in the Global bureau.

I think there was one internal factor and one external factor. The internal factor was, I'd come aboard as a political appointee and legislative specialist, but my academic training was in Latin America. I'd served on the desk, and I thought I had no technical development skills or any sort of expertise, and I thought that to make a career at AID, I should have some technical background. International political economy had been my training, but I felt more at home with political science and what was then the embryonic DG sector. I'd been involved as an advocate in human rights organizations and was interested in democratic institution building and democracy promotion. But that field really didn't exist as a coherent and identifiable field. thought if I was going to develop a technical expertise, that would be it. And so, that was the internal reason for going to the Democracy Center.

The external reason was that the leadership there, Jennifer Windsor, had been a Hill colleague of mine, and then a political appointee at the beginning of the Clinton administration. She came to the agency as a Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) and then was deputy chief-of-staff as

political, and then retained a political position as the deputy of the DG Center. We had one of those professional conversations that took place over several years about "when are you coming down to work in the Center?"

A GS opened up for a division chief, and I competed for it. My strong suit was leadership and political savvy, but there were probably stronger technical officers who were candidates for that position. What I realized and which informed the rest of my career was there was no shortage of able technical experts at all levels. But there were very few leaders and managers who really understood that you need both. You can't do one without the other, and you can't be a good manager unless you have some technical knowledge. As a governance division chief and then later as an office director, my job was to bring together talented technical officers and remove barriers and develop them as technical experts. And that worked for me over and over again. Along the way, I developed a good understanding of technical operations. There are certainly better program designers than me, there are certainly better local government experts than I am, but I saw a real lane for creating the conditions where those people could excel in their work.

Q: That's an important point.

So, you became the division chief for the governance division. What kinds of things was the governance division supporting? In the early days, there was a lot of attention on elections and parliamentary work. What were the earliest efforts on the governance front that you all were focusing on?

LEVINE: Yeah, it's a great question, and again, from the outside, the DG kind of office and theory of the case is very opaque unless you've kind of lived through it. But what I liked about it, there was a model of basically, how democracy works, and the office was structured to implement that model. So, there were—the characteristics of democracies are free and open elections, we had an elections division; governed by rule of law and justice, we had a rule of law division; civil society and the non-government role in media play an important role in strengthening; there was a civil society media division. And then, the governance really took what might have been called public administration, and as a management challenge, while it held together in terms of basically supporting accountable, transparent and responsive institutions, but there are a lot of those. There's legislatures, there's local government, there's ministries, and there's the policymaking process or legal environments that allow all of those to exist. So, that's a fairly sweeping bit of territory within democracy, human rights and governance.

So, very simply, we were structured with experts in each of those—as many of those as we could staff. So, we had one or two local governance experts, we had a legislative

strengthening expert, we had an anticorruption expert or two who kind of worked across sectors and across other parts of the democracy programs to promote good governance. And so, the governance division as a technical office was basically to bring that technical expertise to inform AID strategies, AID project design. There was a large interagency role in representing what does USAID bring to the table in terms of those technical areas, particularly on anticorruption.

Q: Were your staff members direct hires, or were they fellows, or did they come through some sort of institutional mechanism?

LEVINE: It's a great question because I experienced all the hiring mechanisms. I had to be very entrepreneurial in getting staff, so I had civil servants, U.S. direct hire civil servants, a few Foreign Service officers along with staff hired via Participating Agency Service Agreements (PASAs) and Democracy Fellows, a special program that we used to bring more specialized talent.

Q: And as I recall the Global bureau centers had staff that went out and helped missions with strategies and programs, as well as managing their own global projects. Do you recall what kind of projects you had within your portfolio and that balance between providing services to missions and doing your own thing?

LEVINE: I'm a big believer in form following function, and so, as a technical support office, we should be supporting the field. There wasn't a lot of money for global programming. What we did do is spend a little money on putting in place indefinite quantity contracts (IQCs) that field missions could buy into. We designed a global omnibus capability that whenever a mission wanted a local government program, it could buy into pre-competed awards. The DG Center created IQCs (Indefinite Quantity Contracts) for local government, anticorruption, legislative strengthening and policy reform. The core staff, with contracted support generated technical publications, guidebooks and handbooks, all under the rubric of field support.

We also supported certain organizations that we believed should exist as a public good in the democracy field. For example, we had a grant with Transparency International, a premiere anticorruption organization. Under the strategy, I thought it made a lot of sense to partner with the best of the best in the field. It's typical in the agriculture field. Rather than giving a grant to a single farmer, we would have a flagship relationship with an agricultural school, or a business school that was going to turn out tens of thousands of graduates and multiply our investment. By supporting this flagship organization, we were associating ourselves with that kind of brand. The grant was for a couple of years at $500,000 a year. It was a very generous grant to get them started. In the scheme of things

and versus the anticorruption problem, it was a very small amount of money.

Training, I think, along with field support—so we sort of divided up field support, all the things we do to support the missions including mechanisms that are available for buy-in. Technical leadership, which is the development of handbooks, guides, programming tips. What we call cadre development, which was training. You know, if you think about it, there were no—there were folks that would have a public health degree and come in and become a health officer. There wasn't really a particularly obvious path, professional path to becoming an AID democracy officer and so, that—what we considered the kind of training that everybody needed to have had to be developed and then delivered by the staff. And we did most of that in-house. That would not have been contracted out.

Q: I assume that you yourself and your staff also provided support to some missions in developing strategies or programs. I'm wondering if there were any particularly significant efforts that you all might have been involved with in any specific countries or missions on the governance front.

LEVINE: Yeah, you're testing my memory synapse now. Certainly, at the time there were really robust, what I would call full-service democracy programs in many of the countries in Latin America, so there's a good chance that there was significant assistance to local governments across Central America and in the Andes during that time. I'm trying to remember; by this time, I'm thinking that a lot of the NIS (Newly Independent States) countries had their own mechanisms, and that was run out of the bureau directly. They had the resources to support those programs there.

One of the things we did, I think one of the big achievements, was that the agency's first anti-corruption strategy was developed during that time. That would have been about 2003. And that was the result of leading research coming out of the governance division, but also a task force or working group that was formed internally to give input. And then, contracting out with experts in each of the sectors to come up with a unified strategy or inputs into a strategy that could speak for the whole agency. And I would call that a fairly—a landmark publication coming in, and the roots of it are still, I think, operative today. So, it sort of stood up the test of time.

Q: You mentioned that the anti-corruption strategy also looked at the corruption issue in different structures. I'm wondering whether there were some sectors —whether it was health or agriculture or education or others – that might have been particularly interested in your work. Did they come to you all to discuss governance issues?

LEVINE: Yeah, it was always an uphill fight to sort of, you know, we're from the

governance office and we're here to help you with sector colleagues. One idea we had that took some time to take off was that in the strategy we recommended that we formalize this anti-corruption working group and that the chair of it, it would rotate through the bureaus so that each bureau would designate somebody to chair that effort for six months at a time and then it would pass. And we did get some resonance at the time, and our office would serve as the secretariat for the working group. And I think the rotation, the chair passed once to Global Health, and at that time we were able to offer then Gloria Steele, who was a DAA in the—as chair—there was the release of a Transparency International report on corruption in the health sector at an event that she would be able to speak at as she took the leadership of this. And it was just to keep momentum and policy focus on corruption issues on an ongoing basis. It kind of ran out of steam after one rotation and—but I still think it was a good idea. I think it did have subsequent life in, you know, almost a decade later when the Democracy Center created a cross-sector programs team that was to more thoroughly embed governance practices throughout the sectors, and really devote both programs and staff to exploring that. And that was pursuant to the next iteration of the democracy strategy for the agency.

Q: You had mentioned interagency as well. Were you involved much with interagency meetings, and did you have many discussions with the State Department and the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL).

LEVINE: Very actively involved. At the time, it was the first time in the international scene where you would have global anti-corruption conferences. They seem very pedestrian now, but that was at a time when corruption was not talked about so openly. At Transparency International they started the annual International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) and that was the largest non-governmental international conference, and at the same time, a few years later, governments created to Global Forum on Fighting Corruption where governments at the ministerial level would gather to assess the state of the global fight against corruption. My first experience with the Global Forum was a part of the U.S. delegation led by then-Attorney General John Ashcroft. These conferences sought the buy-in of the ministers and high government leadership to sign onto international anti-corruption commitments, like the Anti-Corruption Convention.

From the development standpoint, the goal was to educate and raise awareness of what could be done to address corruption through strengthened democratic institutions and civil society watchdog efforts. We were very active in preparing for those conferences, in particular, we would share our strategy as a development agency working on corruption with other donors as I did with the Organization for Economic Co-operation Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) in that period.

In terms of other areas of intense inter-agency activity, we worked in security sector reform. It was always quite controversial, and it became more and more relevant to countries in transition to democracy. We were involved primarily with the State Department Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), sometimes State Counterterrorism Office, and the Department of Justice Office of Professional Development and Training, OPDAT for prosecutors, or the International Criminal Investigation and Training Program (ICITAP), which handles the police training function.

Q: When you first started the work in anti-corruption, were there any issues with the State Department or DRL? Was there any concern about AID getting involved with this kind of work? And if so, how did it get worked out?

LEVINE: For the anti corruption work, for what could have been a fractious State Department relationship, we had very, very good relations, and mostly because they were very small. There were only a few full-time staffers and there was a heavy amount of diplomatic work to be done. What generally foments State-AID rivalry is overlapping programmatic jurisdictions. In the anticorruption space, State had very few programs so we could work very well with them. Our counterparts were positive collegial personalities and that certainly helped, particular when we staffed large conference delegations.

Q: You went into this new position shortly before the election. There was a change in administration in 2001, and I know that that ultimately led to a restructuring. Did the change in Administration lead to other changes in priority? Also, do you recall the discussions when the Democracy Center, which was part of the Global bureau, moved to the new bureau for conflict and humanitarian assistance. Do you recall the discussion that took place in making that change?

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. I would say that, first of all, going back to my every two-year conversation with Jennifer and finally going down to the Democracy Center, we worked together for six months before the elections and then, she was out. So, that was a long incubation and then very little time of overlap.

The creation of the DCHA bureau, Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, happened fairly quickly. And I would say, I don't know if it healed over. It wasn't a wrenching kind of thing, at least for me. Our day-to-day function changed very little. We were certainly wholly moved into this new bureau. It suffered from, I guess more so in terms of not having a front office that was focused on our issues. That wasn't the case in the Global bureau. In the Global bureau front office, every so often your day would come up as democracy and you would be able to get a principal involved in one of your issues. But they were even more spread across development issues in the G bureau front office.

The problem in the DCHA universe is that there is always a more urgent crisis going on that calls on the attention of the administrator. And while there's a devoted deputy assistant administrator, they—oftentimes you need a Senate-confirmed principal to carry the weight of the agency into these discussions, and those folks are often busy on—today it would be Ukraine, let's say.

Q: Yes; who was head of the Democracy Center when the move was made? Did that person move on to head up the office in DCHA?

LEVINE: Jerry Heyman was the political appointment there. And then—

Q: And you retained the same kind of divisions with governance and actions?

LEVINE: Yes, there was no real change under the DCHA formulation.

Q: And the assistant administrator was Roger Winter – I believe he spent much of his time on Sudan, as I recall.

LEVINE: Yeah, Roger Winter at first.

The DAA was Paul Bonicelli, who was largely an academic, and was fairly hands-off on the day-to-day running of the office, although he took a real inordinate amount of interest in our travel budget.

Q: So, you didn't really see any significant change, then, with the—

LEVINE: I think I would say there was—there were two—there was one personnel change that's important, and then some policy changes that were very important and relevant to history. The internal change was the creation of a legitimate democracy officer backstop or—now, if—and it wasn't even a democracy—they created a backstop for the bureau, which is problematic in itself in that the bureau is a mixed bag of specialties. Very unlike Global Health, for example.

Q: Yes; it was a very mixed bag. There's a difference between humanitarian assistance and democracy.

LEVINE: Right. And so, if you're sitting—so we created a—what was called the Conflict Stabilization and Governance backstop, CSG Backstop 76. And that accorded with the formulation in DCHA, which doesn't exist in the field. And so, the theory of the case was that in the course of your career you would likely spend time in a stable developing

country, a country in transition, and at some point in your existence it would encounter a natural disaster in which the skills of a humanitarian response officer would be needed. The problem is that that's not how we staff—that's not what the Foreign Service tends to do. It staffs heavily in the steady state development country and the bulk of positions are democracy officers, and there are very few U.S. direct hire humanitarian response devoted—it's all program-funded contracted personnel.

Q: Yes.

LEVINE: Which makes sense for surges and everything else. So, there was a classic disconnect of form following function in the creation of the backstop, which they're in the process, as I understand it, of unwinding today.

The other structural problem is that the policy around democracy issues in specific countries really calls for an assistant administrator to represent that area and so, we were always underrepresented, I thought, by level and bodies in the interagency meetings when we were in DCHA. That—not everybody agrees with that view, but I think for folks who come out of that tradition, they certainly felt different, could point to examples of that happening.

The dominant policy issues were in Iraq and Afghanistan, What I observed was that when the country goes to war and it's a military mission under the direction of the Department of Defense, the concerns about reconstruction, post-war what happens next were not adequately addressed, even by the best efforts of the State Department up to the Secretary of State. And that all has been well-documented. What I would say was that AID had tried and failed to get its best analysis into the interagency deliberations to raise some of the issues that were likely to unfold and did unfold.

Q: I believe there was an AID task force that was doing some planning for what would happen after the invasion of Iraq. Were you involved in any of that as an AID person or was anyone from the Democracy Center there?

LEVINE: For AID, there really was no center of gravity. Two stories – one involves the operational level where we were able to communicate—I would say, not influence—because I don't think we influenced that much. The State Department organized a Future of Iraq Task Force that did a very thoroughgoing, sector by sector, political and developmental analysis of what would be needed. This is a very familiar situation of AID trying to get its views into policy discussions with the State Department. At this time, the State Department was having the same trouble getting its views on policy into deliberations at the Department of Defense.

Q: Right.

LEVINE: So, we were now twice removed from the center of gravity. I remember the one apocryphal story about someone asking, "Where's the interagency on Iraq?" The answer was simply stated "The interagency is Wolfowitz," meaning it was the undersecretary for defense policy who was basically making the decisions. So, there was effectively no interagency that we could plug into.

Remember, there was the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that was stood up right after the invasion. At that time, USAID had its first responders from the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). But these folks were not working on longer term reconstruction issues.

Q: Right. My question really is, did you have any personal involvement in any of this or did your office?

LEVINE: I have two war stories. The then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice asked Larry Diamond, a colleague from her days at Stanford, to go and be an advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority. Larry is a renowned expert and democracy advocate and had been a speaker at our annual conferences and we knew him quite well. He did us the favor of stopping by for a consultation before he took the job and I recall then DG Director Jerry Hyman sitting in Jerry's office and talking. We were discussing the question "What's the fundamental governance problem in Iraq?" You had these three very distinct ethnic groups—Sunni, Shia and Kurds—trying to hold power collaboratively in a way that keeps the country together. And in all the planning and all the things about what they were doing in terms of the strategy, very little was being done to address that fundamental governance problem. Instead, our military was focused on the question, "How do we get U.S. forces out as quickly and as safely as possible?"

What DOD wanted was evidence of civilian activity and stability. They asked AID to design and deliver a local government program. They wanted to make sure that civil society is activated so we got resources to work with civil society. Let's do rapid community reintegration, so there was a sizable OTI (Office of Transition Initiatives) effort. All good things that helped on that mission, perhaps, but not really touching the central issue of the governance problem. All this was remarkably frustrating, but look, our own secretary of state could not get his counsel listened to, so what was AID's democracy office going to do?

The second story came later once we had reopened an embassy and USAID mission and AID/Washington was asked to evaluate the democracy and governance office's first

strategy. And with great ceremony, it was brought to Washington for technical review. But it was a bit of a charade in the sense that all the key decisions about USAID strategy had already been made. This was really to satisfy the bureaucrats. We were smart enough to ask, "Do you want us to review this?" We were told, "We want nothing less than a full, candid, technically sound evaluation." So charged, we went off and did our job. We identified significant issues, we made technical comments for the benefit of your colleagues working at the mission, and we presented them at the strategy review.
It was evident that we were basically listened to politely, but it was clear that we weren't getting anywhere in terms of getting our issues considered. At the end of the meeting, the mission director said we would take this all back with us but the strategy had already been approved by the State Department and the commanding general there! So, we were disheartened by that, but that was my kind of teachable moment there when your influence is so circumscribed.

Q: So, if you all realized that you weren't going to have much impact working on Iraq, were there other countries or other issues that you spent particular time?

LEVINE: That's exactly right and that's what I took away from that issue. It definitely informed my thinking about Afghanistan. I knew that in Iraq and Afghanistan technical issues were going to be among the last considerations of policy there and so, we would work in those areas based only on demand signals from the missions, where a mission colleague needed help for a particular problem or wanted us. But it ended any kind of entrepreneurial leadership because there wasn't a lane for us. It was the first time I heard this phrase "stay in your lane." I didn't think that was a good thing.

Q: So, you ended up spending a lot of time on Iraq, even though it wasn't a very satisfying experience?

LEVINE: Absolutely. It was all hands-on deck. It was very frustrating because we were just told to stand up programs.

Q: Right.

LEVINE: But we were told which ones to do.

Q: Okay. So, you were having an impact because you were getting programs started, but they weren't really asking you whether these were the right programs to be doing.

LEVINE: Exactly. Yeah. And the right programs—

Q: Local governance was a big part of the Iraq program. Was that one of the things that you spent a lot of time on?

LEVINE: We were told to run a competition from a short list of offerors to stand up a program on civil society and local government.

Q: So, there were three different projects for which your office did all the bureaucratic work to get those contracts put in place, or grants, whichever they were?

And local government, I know, was a very big one, and that went to RTI (Research Triangle Institute International), I believe.

LEVINE: Exactly. There was also a ministerial program that MSI did, which was very interesting although what we found was that there was basically the inner cabinet, or the power ministries that were off-limits because they were headed by what were seen default actors on the political scene and too hot to touch in terms of the politics. We were left with the peripheral ministries to do, basically public administration programs. And I'm sure, did good work. They just weren't central to the problems the Iraqis faced.

Q: Right, right. Did you make any trips to Iraq?

LEVINE: I did not. I have been to Iraq, but as a congressional staffer in 1988, which was fascinating. Looking back, I was very interested in working on Iraq because not many people had been to Iraq. I really was quite interested in not just the governance division, but the office as a whole because I thought we had a capability to offer.

Q: Now, as I recall, there was an Iraq task force in Washington that in 2004/2005 met on an almost daily basis with the administrator. And were you involved with that task force?

LEVINE: No.

Q: They would just come to you if they needed something from the Democracy Center?

LEVINE: Exactly. Jerry Hyman participated in those meetings as the DG office director. I remember Wendy Chamberlin was very involved in representing the agency. I recall a quote she used during inter-agency budget deliberations: "You've created the neutron bomb budget. Where are the people?" The budget was heavy on infrastructure and building things, but no kind of engagement with the Iraqi people.

Q: (Laughs) Yes. Well, it doesn't sound like it was a very fun experience for you, that you

spent most of your time on something that you felt you didn't really have any influence on.

LEVINE: It was a real education, and certainly when you disagree with a policy, some folks sort of turtle and don't get involved. We didn't really have a choice. You make the best technical recommendations you can and then, if they go against you, you salute smartly and execute, and that's kind of what we ended up doing.

Q: I recall that President Bush declared democracy as one of his highest priorities. And I remember sending a note to Andrew Natsios asking if he thought the Office of Democracy should be buried in this big DCHA bureau, or should it be pulled out to show the priority that the president had given to it? Obviously, he didn't agree with my assessment.

But I'm just wondering, since it did get such a high profile from the president, did that filter down to you all in any way?

LEVINE: Absolutely. I think rhetorically the Bush Administration's language on democracy was probably the strongest we've ever had. The problem was that it became inextricably fused with the invasion of Iraq. And so, democracy promotion was fused with regime change. It lost all of its potency and all of its kind of bipartisan support. I think it's unfortunate. There would have been a different narrative had we not elected to invade Iraq.

Q: Yes. You've mentioned the downside of having the Democracy Office in that broader bureau focused on post-conflict and humanitarian assistance. I know other Democracy Officers object to it being integrated into a bureau focused on broader development issues. I'm wondering if you have thoughts about where it is best positioned?

LEVINE: What I struggled with is how much does its bureaucratic position really mean anyway? Most good AID folks figure out how to get things done regardless of how the boxes are drawn. In the DCHA formulation, it's a crowded field. The front office operation has changed because of their other responsibilities. In terms of the workaday level, very little changed if the office is here or there.

I have the same feeling about whether you centralize your technical people in pillar bureaus, or put them in the regions. In the regions, it may give you more customized programming, but you lose sharing of lessons learned across the agency. Decentralize, you get much more uniform programming, but you have less people in the bureaus doing customized programming. That issue certainly is not at the cutting edge of what ails our effectiveness.

I am always amazed as people coming into AID as political appointees arrive and start

re-working the Agency's mission statement and advancing new policies. That's expected and it's fine. Elections do matter. But to be effective as a federal agency, it comes down to moving money and people. And they don't take up either of those two systems, they don't take that on generally. Maybe Samantha Power is different. I hope she will tackle the procurement system and change how we do business. I hope she will tackle the HR (human resources) system. I'm a big believer in localization as an attempt to really change the business model. I think she's talked in a serious way about meaningful structural change.

Q: You had mentioned the OECD's Development Assistance Committee earlier and I know that the DAC really took on the Democracy Governance issue. And I'm wondering if you did have many discussions with other donors and the World Bank and/or the British and others about these issues around democracy and governance.

LEVINE: Yes, particularly with the World Bank and the World Bank Institute (WBI) around anti corruption. WBI created the first global data set called Governance Matters, and that became important to the MCC (Millennium Challenge Corporation) because they used it as part of their eligibility criteria for country selection.

In terms of bilateral donors, we worked closely with the Brits. We invited our British counterparts and subject matter experts to sit in on our anti corruption training. And usually on the margins of these anti corruption conferences we would do a lot in terms of donor coordination, particularly around countries. The hard part was after talking headquarters to headquarters, it was about how to take the next step to particular countries, because none of us really have decision making authority on what happens at the country level. So, I found there were a lot of good things you could do in terms of policy coordination and training with your counterparts. When we took the step to try to do in-country coordination, that was really the country team's prerogative and depended on how big we were in the country, how big the other donor was, and what the relationships were like on the ground. So, we could advocate, but from where we sat, we really couldn't execute all that much with other donors.

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Q: How did it work within the Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau? Could you talk a little bit about the whole dynamic of that bureau and whether you saw it differently from the CMM perch than you saw it previously?

LEVINE: DCHA was established during the Bush Administration under Andrew Natsios, and the theory of the case was that you needed specialized response for humanitarian assistance, so the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Food for Peace office as

the first responders to a crisis. You had the Conflict Office, the DRG Office, and the new Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation. You had a program office, the Office of Private Voluntary Cooperation, and ASHA, American Schools and Hospitals Abroad. Many of these have long tenure in AID, fifty years in the case of Food for Peace, almost as long with ASHA. PVC (Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation), a creation of the Congress in terms of first building out an American non-governmental capability to deliver assistance and now, more recently focused on local capability, all with congressional champions. And then, the Office of Transition Initiatives. So, there's a lot of capability, much different than a regional or the other pillar bureaus in terms of both specialized missions, humanitarian and lifesaving operations, and then politically flavored programs in the case of the Office of Transition, Conflict and Democracy and Governance.

The dynamic, in terms of putting all those capabilities together, is that the urgent sometimes will crowd out the important because there will always be a "hair on fire" complex emergency kicking off, and as a result of this kind of complexity, conflict and climate change, these were getting more severe, violent and frequent. So, in a given year, OFDA and Food for Peace might be responding to two or three major emergencies each year. During my time there, it was much more like five or six multiple, long-lasting conflicts. And that would get the attention of the bureau principals.

Q: Were there cases when, for example, you would be identifying potential conflict in a country and perhaps working with the regional bureau, and the OTI would be brought into the process, perhaps to come in with some kind of resources on the ground? Was there a strong synergy between you and OTI.

LEVINE: Absolutely. There were multiple countries when five or more offices from DCHA would be involved. During that time, DCHA created Action Coordinating Teams (ACTs) so that we would meet regularly to coordinate and have visibility on what each office was doing in a particular crisis country. It got to a point where we might have four or five ACTs operating at the same time.

The ACTs definitely helped us work together better and present to the rest of the agency in a more friendly fashion. The ACT could also plug directly into the cases of an agency task force. Now, it multiplied the number of meetings for our front office because, you know, at 9:00 a.m. they'd go to the agency task force, then they'd go to State, then an NSC meeting later in the afternoon. They'd come back at the end of the day wondering what they accomplished.

Q: Did your office do much with the two behemoths, Iraq and Afghanistan? Or were they

pretty much handled by other people? Just curious if you have any insights on those.

LEVINE: The answer is yes in the case of Iraq, and no in the case of Afghanistan. In the case of Iraq, there was a call in the late going, not in 2003 but more in the 2009-2010 period for a conflict assessment, which was sort of a bust in that our staff could not deploy outside of the Green Zone. People had to be brought in. What I recall being the major finding was that our presence was a defining factor of the conflict in that the heavy Green Zone occupation footprint was a source of many complaints among the Iraqis we talked to. Our team couldn't deploy meaningfully to really talk to Iraqis in terms of the Iraqi political situation, not discounting the fact that the Iraqis we talked to had a real problem with the U.S. footprint.

In Afghanistan, less so. I do recall, in terms of one specialized case, they were really interested in our staff working on the deradicalization and reinsertion of former combatants. We had some but not much expertise in the form of a staff member who had studied this and followed the literature, and he was asked to do highly specialized work with an interagency task force that was working that issue.

Q: One other thing that occurs to me that was taking place during this time was—in fact, when your office was under threat, the QDDR (Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review) and I believe that there were a lot of discussions about whether your office should remain in AID or whether it should go over to State —

LEVINE: It really ended up being OTI that caught somebody's eye. This was seen as a potential outcome or splashy reform coming out of the QDDR at the expense of OTI and USAID. It got elevated very quickly and resolved that it would not be a good idea. This was an example where our interaction with the Conflict and Stabilization Office really was heightened because we were called on to write the chapter of the QDDR on conflict together. We had no problem reaching agreement on the importance of conflict prevention and being better able to predict and respond to crises. However, in terms of deciding who does what, there was no way that, as representatives of folks with an active interest, we were going to resolve or recommend anything. So, it had to be taken out of the staff's hand and elevated. I think principals had no way of determining a right or wrong answer to that. OTI became more of a political football of wanting to do something bold, but I think the cost and disruption of doing that and the fear of breaking an asset that was working, keeping the status quo prevailed. It was just seen as too disruptive a change and whether anything was gained by the move.

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Q: Okay. So, in 2014 you do get the okay from the White House and become the head of the Democracy and Governance Office, which is quite large.

LEVINE: On paper it's probably a hundred folks with between seventy-five and eighty-five folks onboard at any one time. Nine divisions. I thought it was really built for purpose, organized to implement the 2011 DRG strategy, emphasizing those elements of the strategy that were seen to be the most important: elevating human rights, evidence and learning and emphasizing democratic principles across all development sectors.

Q: And what were those priorities that your office had set for itself?

LEVINE: Going all the way back to the establishment of the Democracy Center in the mid-1990s, our democracy promotion efforts were structured around supporting competitive elections, a vibrant civil society, rule of law and good governance. Looking at that structure twenty years later, we asked, "What's the next horizon?" First, we wanted to continue and strengthen the work we had done to establish good practice across those four core areas. Second, we wanted to elevate human rights so there would be a distinguishable mandate for work on these issues, not just as a by-product of having elections, functioning judicial systems and good governance. We saw the need to spotlight and address human rights abuses in our programming. And so, we created a Division of Human Rights that would bring more specialists and more specialized programming.

Third, we identified governance issues and issues of power and participation throughout the development mission. We need to better understand what those constraints are in health programs, in education, and other sectors to see how we might achieve even greater results by fully understanding who holds power, how decisions get made, how to open up the processes to participation and working closely with civil society. So, the new division for Cross-Sector Programming worked with other technical offices to learn the vocabulary, identify the pain points and constraints on programming in other sectors. Were the challenges they faced technical? Political? Are they power based? Can we understand and kind of analyze and recommend fixes together. And I think that remains a potent part of our strategy.

The fourth area was learning and having a robust learning agenda. That meant putting money into research. Everybody wants to have their decisions be evidence-based, but they tend not to want to pay for the evidence that creates the base. We spent a lot of time in partnership with academia identifying the burning questions the field has for which you want to generate evidence, and then going out to folks who know how to do top tier research with advanced social science methods. That expertise doesn't exist naturally in the Civil Service and the Foreign Service. So, guided by the experience of the direct hire staff to generate the

questions, and identified academics, practitioners and others to get the answers. This involved a much more systematic and collaborative approach to learning which I believe we were responsible for during that time.

Q: I know during the Obama Administration, there were lots of debates about government-to-government work, and the financial management people put in place a slew of new processes. I believe the democracy folks were also raising lots of questions about when it was appropriate to work directly with host country governments and when it wasn't. Some thresholds were set. Were you familiar with that dialogue?

LEVINE: There was a big case about Ethiopia that became the center of controversy, as well as in Rwanda. What do you do in cases where there are increasingly authoritarian governments with highly successful health or education programs? Democracy teams looking at the human rights performance and closing political space would point this out while the health and education folks would say that in all of Africa, no one is performing better on certain measures. And I won't swear to those statements, but that was effectively the argument. What do you do? We assess their ability to oversee and transparently manage funds in a government-to-government way, but would working government-to-government convey an endorsement of authoritarian policies? That was the essence of the policy debate.

Q: Right. And where were you on this issue? I'm going to try to pin you down.

LEVINE: I felt that if our strategy for underscoring the commitment to human rights was to mean anything, we would have to object to providing government-to-government assistance. We lost that argument.

I think the investment in the health sector in particular was very, very heavy, and there was a legitimate counterargument to ask, "who would suffer were we to cut back our investments in health?" I would counter that counter argument by pointing out that there are other ways besides working with the government to deliver results. We do it everywhere around the world when we don't work with the government. But I think the idea goes back to constructive engagement and are you likely to get better performance by maintaining your engagement with the government. Again, as a democracy and human rights advocates, we heard the same arguments with South Africa and chose a different course.

Q: Right, there's a little bit of a difference there. (Laughs) Okay. Were there other big policy debates like that that you can recall?

LEVINE: Yeah. At the very end of the Obama administration, a similar debate arose

around aid to the Philippines. The issue was whether to renew a compact offered by the Millennium Challenge Corporations to the government of Philippines. At the interagency discussion, traditionally the regional bureaus of the State Department will, in essence, defend continuing the relationship. In this case, we developed some unlikely allies. We expected that the DRG office and State DRL would have something to say about deteriorating human rights conditions, the appearance of death squads, and dehumanizing speech to characterize political opponents. Interestingly, State/INL had a police training program going on, and they raised the issue about reputational risk of being associated with poor human rights records of folks they were training. They didn't want to end the program, but they raised the concern, which allowed us to amplify our argument. It became a moot point because President Duterte rejected the compact for what he deemed U.S. meddling in domestic affairs.

Q: And this would have been preparing Gayle Smith, the administrator, to attend MCC board meetings and vote?

Right, this was the preparatory meetings that—and it never came to a vote because Duterte rejected the compact.

Burma was another big policy question.
Q: That program was just starting up, is that correct?

LEVINE: There was a lot of anticipation of progress following the democratic opening in Burma. The concern that arose involved the atrocity risk involving the Rohingya. There were some difficult comments made by Aung San Suu Kyi relevant to the Rohingya that reflected a leader very much locked into traditional views of the Rohingya, which were not very progressive. There was no doubt that we wanted her to succeed but there were tensions in the relationship and debate in the interagency on this issue in terms of justifying or recognizing any kind of rights for the Rohingya.

We also had Sri Lanka, another transitional case and a breakthrough election where the USG got very involved in terms of how we might work early with a reform minded government to support progressive moves to address longstanding conflict risk and democratic backsliding. Again, we witnessed a lot of pent-up demand and expectations, and then almost immediately there was backlash, and the window of opportunity shrinks before our eyes. I think there's a scope for a learning agenda in what seems to work, what holds that window of opportunity open longer and gives oxygen to forces that are looking to change things.

Q: As office director, you now also have to coordinate with the rest of the DCHA bureau

on issues. How were things with CMM? All happy?

LEVINE: One thing I wanted to see us move on was the atrocity prevention agenda from both offices and felt that I needed the collaboration of CMM. We couldn't do it alone. I proposed increasing the staff in both offices, in essence creating an interoffice team of two people in each office working these issues. I hired two fellows, one to work in DRG and one to work in CMM -- with DRG paying for it. I thought it was so important that CMM be part of it that I was willing to cover their stake.

Q: That's a good technique to remember if you want buy-in from someone. (Laughs)

LEVINE: Exactly. I guess that was a buy-out as opposed to buy-in.

Q: Right; giving them a staff member.

LEVINE: I'm very proud of that work because it allowed me to go out and hire the best people in town working on these issues. I hired two people: the first one worked at the U.S. Institute for Peace and had been the staffer who wrote the Albright-Cohen task force report on preventing genocide. The second hire came from the Friends Committee on National Legislation. She co-chaired the non-governmental advocacy group called the Atrocity Prevention Working Group. At the end of the day, USAID pulled in the top policy analyst and the top advocate and had them come work for us for a year to drive this agenda. For me, it was a rare opportunity to not just get the policy right, but also get the people. As they say, personnel is policy. That staff developed follow-on policy, initiated field support, designed training, wrote technical publications, and really put us on the map as an interagency player.

Q: Right. I was next going to ask about the interagency, the degree to which you had any sort of a single counterpart at the State Department. Certainly in your work to prevent atrocities, obviously you must have had to collaborate with the State Department.

LEVINE: We're often twinned with State's Human Rights bureau. What was an education to me was that they have a very different perspective. While we look at the same problems in very similar ways, bureaucratically they operate very differently. When we briefed the Hill, DRL would discuss their budget, not about human rights policy around the world. They defer to the regional bureaus. They would talk about the programs they managed. Often, they would defer to us to give that presentation on the "state of democracy" from our analytical perspective, not a diplomatic perspective, because that really wasn't their role within the department. They were probably smarter from a bureaucratic and resource mobilization perspective, but it didn't accord with my

idea of representing the administration's human rights and democracy policy. That was a tough lesson for me to learn.

Q: Did your office or those working on human rights play a role in the annual human rights reports? I know that the reports come in from the missions, but I'm not sure if the State Department does anything to those reports in Washington.

LEVINE: No, they hire a lot of former State Department folks to review the country reports from the mission. We definitely clear on those, but we're not going to play a heavy role in editing what was generated from the field. We would assume that AID has chop at the field level.

There were always half a dozen cases where we had national security and human rights concerns at play. We discussed Burma, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and those are the kind of cases where we'd really scrutinize the language to see if we were soft pedaling the human rights concern. That was our job. I don't recall fights over the human rights report. It would really be what do you do from a policy perspective about it.

Are there other important points about the Democracy and Governance Office during that period? You were there 2014-2017, so presumably, you left shortly after the change in administration?

LEVINE: Yeah.

Q: That was the one disadvantage of a political appointment.

LEVINE: Yeah, but I was ready. You know, I knew I was coming up on my thirty years and age and tenure and so, it seemed like a natural transition. I definitely felt like I was going out on a high. I think like many folks who live through that transition, that we did our level best to—we were very proud of the work we did and wanted to see it continued, and I think my experience, I was there long enough to go through the transition, which was the landing team from the Trump Administration was theorized but never witnessed, that the landing team got as far as the State Department, but—and AID would brief the folks that were over at State. And in contrast to, you know, having just read Erin's recounting of the Obama transition where that transition was loaded with folks who had AID experience, were fans and were eager to get briefed up on and made use of what they were—what was shared with them, the exact polar opposite, no team, and that did not bode well. What I was watching as I left the agency was, you know, how long it took to get an AID administrator in place and what kind of leadership would come in. I think AID counts itself lucky in getting the likes of Mark Green during that time.

Q: Had Mark arrived before you left?

LEVINE: No, but I had a funny experience with him. As part of my duties as director, I get to meet with the—what's called the consortium, the CEPPS consortium (Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening)—

Q: Right. He was the head of IRI (International Republican Institute), wasn't he?

LEVINE: He was the head of IRI. I get to meet regularly, every six months, with Mark Green and Ken Wallach from NDI (National Democratic Institute) and at the time, Bill Sweeney, who was the head of IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems). And in my last—I did a kind of a round robin of—this was related to the transition, so we're preparing—in preparing, we said, "What are the big issues in democracy and what should the next administration do?" And I know that all the implementing partners are doing much the same thing, and I would meet with a lot of these folks to share here's our look, what are you seeing, or let's compare visions of what needs to be done. I met regularly with the CEPPS folks and so, I'd open the meeting, I said, you know, "I know you guys. Before we get down to the business of elections and what's on your minds, I know you're interested in the transition, and I'd really like you to be up to date on what's going on with the new incoming Trump Administration. Mark, would you like to handle this?" Because he was already rumored as the nominee—and he sort of laughed, but he was—he said absolutely nothing except to say that he was encouraging the IRI staff to express interest—for those who wanted to serve because he saw that, you know, there was a real divide between the never Trumpers and the folks that he wanted. And I think, you know, Mark Green would be on anybody's short list on the Republican side no matter who had won the election for that job. So, I was glad that he came and stayed as long as he did. And he also brought in a fairly good team with some notable exceptions who did not honor the agency in any way.

Q: Yes. Now that you mentioned NDI and IRI, could you maybe talk a little bit about the roles that the two of them play and what you've seen? I've seen them primarily from the field side, but your observations on the roles they have played the last twenty, thirty years would be valuable.

LEVINE: Yeah. I've had a chance to watch them over time and I really enjoyed that special opportunity to regularly talk to the leadership and to get the sense—. I think the first thing I would say is that NDI and IRI, you know, are born of the same NED (National Endowment for Democracy) universe, but they institutionally have grown in very different ways with very different missions. NDI has a much more ambitious view

of both its size and mandate, whereas IRI has remained much smaller and more focused in its work.

And I think that has played out institutionally in some weird ways in that because of the need for bipartisanship the—as the donor we want to be evenhanded in—but we're finding the capabilities because of the way, by their own choice, are quite different, and they are unequal. And this certainly is the view held by NDI, in saying, like, you know, in the crass—the crassest explanation is we can always count on half the money going to—of any money that is offered, half of it will go to IRI because of this evenhandedness, even if we have more capability, longer time in the country, you know, better idea, whatever it is and so, that's kind of a weird political economy that I didn't fully appreciate until having to oversee them. They're fractious and call for a very strong and savvy management as a program manager within the AID office. We've been doing it for thirty years, I think, and so, I think it suffers from any kind of monopoly where sometimes they can be counted on to do just excellent work at the highest level by virtue of their experience in the country and their contacts. Other times, they phone it in and take very little care, so the quality suffers.

So, a USAID program manager stirs up issues at his own peril. That said, on balance it's been a very, very successful partnership. I think there are headaches, and I think we've gotten much better at being very savvy in handling issues at the appropriate level, otherwise, you know, it would be phone calls from the presidents to the administrator or worse, to the Hill, and then to the administrator. I would say the division in charge of our elections and political processes program is one of the best run divisions we've had over a long period of time. I don't know if you had this experience, Carol, but like, there are offices that you oversee that started good, stayed good, and enjoyed that reputation, and then there were others that were sort of born under a bad sign. I remember one mission director told me about her experience with office dysfunction, saying, "you could feel it in the walls of the mission."

Q: Yes. Yeah, there were missions like that; regardless of the people, there was friction in the air.

LEVINE: And what is to be done about that. I think it persists to this day. When I was briefed by our elections team, they had been doing this for so long that they knew the principal technical issues, they had a fix and a recommended course of action, and they had sussed out the politics and how that was going to line up. And what more could you ask for as a leader? Other times you'd walk in and get a technical briefing and you didn't know where to start because they didn't understand what information was needed or could not communicate their issue at any level.

Q: Right.

Let me ask you about another group that you just mentioned. While it doesn't get USAID money and is very independent, did you have much involvement with the National Endowment for Democracy, NED itself, that is a grant-making institution.

LEVINE: I would say that two things that I didn't do well as the head of the DRG office, I didn't cultivate a relationship with my counterpart at State at the assistant secretary level. And I did not reach out more to the NED. One of the things the Hill really wants to know is what is the level of coordination between our programs and the NED, so it's something that you avoid at your own risk. I did not have the level of personal connections nor contact with NED that I should have had. The reason you want to do that is because of the danger for duplication, particularly in smaller countries with fewer grantees. The NED tends to make smaller grants and they reach a level that we're probably not reaching.

Q: So, but if you were recommending to someone heading up DRG in the future you might suggest that they spend a little bit more time with NED?

LEVINE: You know, yeah. And I would say it's a target of opportunity because it's in transition now to new leadership, and there are probably things that we could have done that for lack of exploring. I would see it as a possibility now in a way that it hadn't been. I also am excited that Liliana Ayalde recently joined their board.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

LAWRENCE E. HARRISON
USAID

Lawrence E. Harrison was born in 1932. He completed his undergraduate education at Dartmouth. He then joined the Navy in 1953 before attending Harvard in 1959. He joined USAID in 1963 and served in a number of postings, including Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua. He retired in 1982 and was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1996.

Topical Focus: DRG Theory, Democratic Institution Building in Latin America

HARRISON: Let me digress for just a moment on the whole question of institution building. It gets back to my cultural obsession, but indulge me, if you will. I think we kid ourselves a lot about institutions and our ability to strengthen institutions beyond a certain point. Institutions are a reflection, after all, of what a society is all about, what it thinks is important, what it thinks is unimportant, the way it views human relationships, the way it views the role of government, the way it views relationships between private sector and public sector and so forth. In Democracy in America, Tocqueville makes a compelling case that institutions are ultimately limited in their capacity by the "customs" of the society. In a relevant case, you can take the military forces of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua in the early part of the century; conclude (incorrectly, in my view) that all of the violence and the instability that they caused is at the root of the problem; you can send in the U.S. Marines and train them over a period of 10, 12, 14 years to become professional military forces under civilian control; and when you leave, this great institution building process will quickly revert to a platform for dictatorship, which is exactly what happened.

Q: You would say the same for educational institutions, research institutions, universities...?

HARRISON: The educational institutions are the great hope, as I suggested earlier in this conversation, because they can help bring about these changes in values and attitudes that are so central to real progress. I'm reminded of the case of an American with very little experience in Latin America who's now a dean at INCAE, the business administration institute in Costa Rica. He's a former Arthur D. Little official. He's giving a course on something related to entrepreneurship at INCAE. In one of his first sessions, he described how a very successful American entrepreneur had started at the very bottom in the stock room and worked his way gradually up to top. He sought the reaction of his students to this way of going about a career. Roughly 1/3 of them said, "I would never do that. It's below my dignity to work in the stock room. I am, after all-" So, the problem is there. The people who attend the Zamorano School in Honduras tend to see the world differently, maybe very differently from what has been the case for people in comparable Latin American schools where there is less U.S. influence So, those institutions are in my view the most important things that AID has been associated with over the years.

Q: Would you say, by and large then, that the institutional, educational aspects of the foreign assistance program in Latin America over the period that you were engaged, now that you're able to look back on it, were unsuccessful?

HARRISON: No, I wouldn't say unsuccessful. I would say was substantially less successful than we had hoped, and that the principal reason that that is the case is because we had not been aware of the burden on development that culture places.

Q: But there were some positive contributions?

HARRISON: Absolutely. The money that's gone into infrastructure has been useful. The money that's gone into education, generally, I believe, has been useful. The money that's gone into family planning has been useful. And into health. But we have very few cases of transformed societies in Latin America, maybe one--Chile--and we cannot take the credit for that.

Q: That was one of our hopes, to transform societies?

HARRISON: Within a 10 year period. Done by 1971

Q: Our expectations and visions were relatively grandiose.

HARRISON: Yes, and unrealistic.

Q: And it wasn't an issue of resources. It was more a matter of understanding

HARRISON: Absolutely.

Q: Let's turn to your books and come back to some of these questions, unless there's some particular point about your experience.

HARRISON: Let me just mention one thing that doesn't have to do with the books that I was involved in that is relevant to this, in a way. When Jean Bertrand Aristide was ousted by the Haitian military in the fall of 1991, the Organization of American States formed an emergency team designed to restore him to power, headed by the former Colombian Foreign Minister, Augusto Ramirez Ocampo. I was asked to be the American member on that team. So, I worked the Haitian crisis for about six months, in later '91 and early '92. That was another experience that screamed "Culture!" Aristide has been, on occasion, lionized as a great Haitian, but a good deal of the crisis was attributable to his abuse of power when he was the president. I went back to Haiti several times with the team and was reminded again of how difficult the problems of Haiti are, even with high levels of assistance, high levels of technical assistance, because of the legacy of the slavery experience and African culture and the voodoo religion. We finally worked out a solution that everybody agreed to at the OAS building here on 17th Street (March, I think it was, of '92) and it collapsed a few weeks after that. That was the end of my association with the Haiti crisis, although I did write an article that appeared in The Atlantic on Haiti.

Q: Was there any particular background of why that didn't work out?

HARRISON: It involved forcing Aristide to accept as his prime minister the head of the Communist Party, an excellent guy, Rene Theodore, whom he viewed, I think, as a potential rival. He signed the agreement and subsequently worked, I believe, to undermine it.

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Q: One of the main themes, as far as this, with AID today, is this whole democracy, governance question. Is there any significant role for this in Latin America?

HARRISON: Sure, but the solution won't be found in "institution building." Providing computer systems for parliaments will not consolidate democracy. That's reminiscent of the training of the Nicaraguan, Haitian, and Dominican military forces to become professional constabularies. In the two consulting assignments I did in Nicaragua and Haiti that were focused on democratization (these were both done in 1991), I stressed the importance of promoting values and attitudes that are congenial to democracy and capitalism - civic education being one instrument that can do this, but there are a lot of other things that have to be done as well. So, the democratization focus is fine, but you have to appreciate that this is not something that you do by strengthening political parties, although that may be marginally helpful, that you do by training judges. If the judges are prepared to take money from anybody, no matter how skillful they may become in reading legal texts and using computers and so forth, they're going to continue to take money from people. So, there is a fundamental, if you will, Tocquevillian foundation in values and attitudes for democratic institutions.

Q: But if we try to teach values, ethics and so on, isn't that likely to be opposed because it's another version of Yankee imperialism?

HARRISON: This is why you need people in the countries who recognize the importance of this, who take the lead. We can help them if they do it, but we can't go in and say, "Okay, folks, we're going to make white Anglo-Saxon Protestants out of you," although I might mention that there is a significant movement of Pentecostal, principally, Protestantism in Latin America today. Perhaps 50 million or more Latin Americans are today Protestant.

Q: Do you find that the Hispanic parts of the world have grassroots initiatives growing out of recognition that government has not helped much and, therefore, grassroots, nongovernment organization type community groups are beginning to take the initiative on their own? It's happening in other parts of the world, but I don't know about Latin America.

HARRISON: When you run into such groups in Latin America, they are often (I'm not even sure I can think of an exception) promoted by U.S. PVOs. My sense is that, like so many other development initiatives from the outside, if the U.S. support were to vanish, many would

collapse. On the other hand, these kinds of intermediating organizations and groups have a very important role in a pluralistic society. As I say in the chapters on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico in the new book, one litmus test for the prospects for enduring democracy will be the survivability of these institutions, these private institutions. But they are inconsistent with the cultural mainstream. Spontaneous association is alien to Latin American culture. It's the family where the association takes place. So, there is an important cultural -

Q: Are there any movements toward a decentralization of government?

HARRISON: That's another part of the set of prescriptions that I touch on in the book. Decentralization is alien to the Latin American traditional culture. It's a very centralized view of the world. The experience in Italy, as chronicled by Robert Putnam in his very important book, "Making Democracy Work," suggests that the simple promotion of decentralization in itself may help to modernize values and attitudes. It certainly is part of the phenomenon in Latin America of opening up opportunity to people heretofore denied opportunity. That's why democracy and free market economic policies, in addition to their demonstrable least bad way of organizing societies, are also important because they help to change the mindset of people who have been subjugated for generation after generation after generation. They do open doors for them that have never been opened before. That, in turn, has value and attitude implications, important ones.

Q: Looking back over this whole period, with the U.S. presence in the Latin American area, do you see any fundamental shifts? Is it changing or is it more of the same?

HARRISON: It's changing. I don't want to say it's just on the surface because it's more than just that , although there is still a long way to go. The change is measurable by the fact that you have, today, only one dictatorship in Latin America. That happens to be in Cuba. It's changing, as is demonstrable by the fact that all of the governments of Latin America (and this may apply, to some extent, to Cuba) are pursuing capitalist free market economic policies. This could spell the end of what de Soto described as the "mercantilist tradition" ("patrimonialist tradition" is another way of describing it) in Latin America where there is a very cozy relationship between the rich and the bureaucrats. So, that is an encouraging reality.

Q: Is that just surface or is that fundamental?

HARRISON: It goes below the surface but it is much too early to conclude that it is fundamental in most cases. Democracy is fundamental in Costa Rica. It is probably comparably fundamental in Chile and Uruguay. The economics is, I think, quite firmly in place in Chile, as is evidenced not only from its performance in the last 15 years or so, but also from its economic history. Chile had a very dynamic economy in the 19th century. It has an entrepreneurial tradition which, I

believe, is importantly related to the disproportionate number of Basques who migrated to Chile in the 18th century. But certainly, Chile is not representative of most Latin American countries. In the cases of Argentina and Brazil and, above all, Mexico, it still is uncertain that the new economics and pluralistic politics are going to endure. (In Mexico's case, you still don't have pluralistic politics.) To say that democracy and free market economic policies are irreversible in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico would be rash. They are, I believe, irreversible in Chile.

Q: Why do we find that most of the countries are democratic?

HARRISON: The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe was a major factor. It discredited the Latin American Left. The result was that a lot of prominent Latin American Leftists started moving towards the center. The loss of the 1990 elections by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua was another body blow to the Left. Over the years, the prodding of the United States and Western Europe about human rights issues and pluralism issues has had impact. That, combined with the traumatic collapse of the Marxist model is what basically explains why they're pursuing democratic-capitalism today.

The decisions to pursue market economics are partly influenced by the failure of socialism in Eastern Europe, but also importantly by the success of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and increasingly Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, and now the Philippines.

Q: Apart from our expectation and the over-ambitious ideas, was the foreign assistance that was provided over these decades of any fundamental contribution to these changes?

HARRISON: It made them easier once the decision makers, the people who controlled the destinies of the countries, decided that democratic capitalism was the way to go. It made it easier because there were some stronger institutions in place. By that, I importantly mean trained people that otherwise would not have been there. The infrastructure that we helped to build has facilitated the gathering of the fruits of democratic capitalism. I've been asked by media people on a couple of occasions to say that the foreign aid program is a failure and a fraud. I simply don't believe that. I think it's been useful. The problem is that we presented it to the American people, particularly in the Latin American context, as capable of producing miracles. Obviously, it wasn't able to produce miracles. We have been naive and arrogant in the way we have viewed our role in development in the Third World. But what we've done has been useful. I think it's been worth the money that's gone into it, generally. It's just that we didn't realize how vast and complicated a problem we were trying to deal with. We assumed that Latin Americans were no different than Americans. Like all good economists, we knew that, if we got them to put the economic signals in place, singing the right song, so to speak, they would dance like we dance.

Q: We're out of most of the Latin American countries, are we not, in terms of foreign assistance?

HARRISON: It's vastly reduced.

Q: Therefore, our role through foreign assistance is pretty well diminished?

HARRISON: It's a chapter that will be closed in a few more years. We've been closing down missions rapidly, I think.

Q: Is there any different perspective of how foreign assistance might be relevant to the future evolution of this region, not in the traditional way?

HARRISON: From my point of view, the existence of democratic political institutions that are largely defined by elections is not enough. A lot of the other elements that go with political institutions, including an independent judiciary, professional police, and intermediating private organizations, are not in place.

There are a lot of people who say, "Just leave democracy and the free market in place for long enough and Latin America's problems will be solved." I want to point to an example that a Cuban friend of mine has emphasized as a way of countering that very comfortable view. He points to Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has, for almost 100 years, lived in a democratic capitalist environment, with very substantial subventions from the U.S. government. Whether you measure it from the per capita income in Puerto Rico itself (about one-half of the poorest state in the United States) or the per capita income of Puerto Ricans in the continental United States, the economic achievements of Puerto Rico are not impressive. There's something else at work. So, that's why I say, for the Latin Americans themselves, and it's so gratifying to see so many of them saying the same thing, directly focusing on values and attitudes is something which has to be central to the development effort. As I wrote in the book, AID, the World Bank, and other donors should be focusing on cultural change.

There's another very frustrating irony in this. You probably didn't see my piece in Outlook in early November. I talked about Latin America walking away from the dependency interpretation and looking at itself and looking at its culture. I talked about the symposium that I mentioned that took place at INCAE at the end of June. The last paragraph says, "We invited - I personally invited through the Executive Secretary of AID, through Fred Schieck at the IDB, and through a contact in the World Bank - those institutions to send somebody to these really stimulating three days of discussion. None of them did."

Q: No response?

HARRISON: Fred believes it was a wonderful opportunity, but he doesn't run the IDB. My name is mud in AID because, I believe, the Chief of Staff there thinks I'm a racist. So, the simple fact that I was associated with it may very well have deterred them from attending, even though Aaron Williams, who was the Executive Secretary, is former a colleague and friend, but he couldn't call the shots. There are some people in the World Bank- I've done a presentation there for a large number of World Bank officers and it was very clear (there were more than 100 people present; this was a brown bank lunch discussion, which they have periodically) that a large number of them were very enthusiastic in pursuing these ideas. But it was also clear that some of them saw them as unpalatable for their institution. So, that's a source of great frustration. But, if I'm right that the reason that we feel that the world's effort to promote development in the last 50 years has fallen significantly short of what we had hoped it would do, if the reason for that is importantly because of cultural obstacles to development, then these institutions have to focus on this issue.

Q: Or leave it alone.

HARRISON: That's basically what they've done. I believe that they will experience a lot more frustration.

Q: But you, as many others, have put a lot of emphasis on the importance of education and training. You still think this would be an appropriate area with a different orientation perhaps?

HARRISON: I would do more of it. I'd modify it and try to emphasize more this question of promoting the values and attitudes that have worked for us and the Canadians and the Western Europeans and Japanese and Koreans and so forth. But certainly, education is the place where I would be putting most of the emphasis. As the first order of business, eliminate illiteracy. That can be done in a generation. We've got the resources in the world to do it. But then there are a lot of other things involving the promotion of the idea that human creativity is at the root of progress, that what government does and what families do and what religions do should be promoting that idea and nurturing it.

GERALD F. HYMAN
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
Democracy and Governance

Gerald F. Hyman was born in Chicago in 1942. Hyman has a B.A. in philosophy and a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Chicago and a J.D. from the University of Virginia. He is a senior associate with the Office of the President at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as well as a member of the Advisory Council to the Center for International Media Assistance of the National Endowment for Democracy. He conducted democracy and governance

assessments for USAID in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Serbia, South Africa, South Sudan, and Ukraine. Gerald F. Hyman was interviewed by Ann Van Dusen on November 16, 2016.

Topical Focus – Reflections on Governance Programming at USAID

HYMAN: I was at CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies) for nine years or so. I'll make this brief because I don't think it's very interesting. I went from AID (United States Agency for International Development) to CSIS and worked on a governance program which I felt was underappreciated. I should have emphasized that 3 more when I was director. It was one of two regrets that I had actually, was that other parts of the democracy effort were emphasized, and governance I thought was not, and that was my fault; I was the director so I could have done something about it.

Q: Well you had to bring along the whole apparatus of program decision-making of course.

HYMAN: Well yes and the governance area itself was divided into a bunch of different things and the team wasn't all that coherent and each one was doing his or her own part of the governance thing. So, it really didn't have a gelling dimension. But I could have done something about that and I didn't. And so one of the things I wanted to do after I left was to concentrate on governance. So, this opportunity came up in the form of a man by the name of Rod Hills who had been among other things for a while the chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission. More prominently is his wife, Carla Hills, who is literally eight inches from you on that side of the wall.

Q: Okay.

HYMAN: And so Rod and Carla Hills established, more he than she, this program at CSIS. These think tanks are not as independent as they may seem. You've got to raise the money for your program. So, they put some money in for this program. They called it a trust but it wasn't really a trust; it was a sinking fund. And to make a long story short, over about nine years it sunk. Rod had been the main person interested in it. And he was unhappy with CSIS and the new building. I don‟t know if you know about the new building over there.

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Q: But it seems to me you were ahead of your time, because although we talked about Democracy and Governance (D&G), it was democracy that got the attention. I don't know whether people just found it boring to think about governance or-

HYMAN: I think that is part of it actually. But it was very clear, Ann, for many years that the biggest problem in the consolidation of democracy where there had been a transition was the performance failures of the new democratic government.

Q: Right, yes.

HYMAN: And so, people said well wait a minute. Yes, we wanted this and this and this, wanted elections, wanted free press, etcetera, etcetera, but we also want a government that performs. And if you guys can't provide it then what good is that? And that has still not pervaded the so-called democracy and governance community yet. All kinds of other things do, human rights and this and that and the next but not that.

Q: Well maybe it's easier to focus on the external trappings of democracy programming.

HYMAN: Maybe, yes. These are very difficult problems because you have so many of these countries, including after these "transitions," there are entrenched elites who are often nepotistic or corrupt or kleptocratic or all three and they don‟t want to give all this stuff up. And so, you can talk all you like at AID about political economy analysis but if you don't understand and come to terms with governance it‟s just blowing in the wind.

HYMAN: Which, by the way, is what happened in Sudan, South Sudan.

Q: Okay. Well I hope we get to that but I mean clearly that's what happened at the end of the Soviet period.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

LARRY GARBER
USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Coordination (PPC)
Washington D.C. (1993-1995)

Larry Garber was born in Brooklyn, New York. In 1983 he joined the International Human Rights Law Group as a lawyer and contributed to shaping election standards. In 1993 Garber joined USAID holding leadership roles focused on democracy and human rights. He served as Mission Director in West Bank/Gaza and as Deputy Assistant Administrator in USAID's Africa Bureau among other roles. This interview was conducted by Alex Shakow in 2018.

Topical Focus – Developing a Democracy and Human Rights Program

GARBER: I joined as senior advisor for democracy and human rights. This was very much part of Brian Atwood's effort at the time to make democracy a full component of sustainable development.

Q: This was new to AID at the time?

GARBER: Historically, AID had been doing various types of programs that ultimately we could fit under the rubric of what we now call democracy and governance, but they had been one-offs and haphazard, not part of the broader international development strategy. Two developments before I got there that were precursors to this were the 1984 Kissinger Commission about Central America, which emphasized the importance of building up institutions, particularly judicial ones, as part of our effort there to reestablish democratic governance. And obviously, the end of the Cold War. At the end of the Cold War, AID was tasked with working with State on developing economic development and democracy programs in Eastern Europe and then in the former Soviet Union. What Brian wanted to do, drawing from his experiences at NDI, was to integrate democracy as core to development. His initial approach was Strategies for Sustainable Development. His idea was we wanted to have only four core themes. The four core themes he identified were economic growth, health (which included population, health, and nutrition), environment, and democracy and governance. So these were the four pillars of sustainable development.

Q: Not quite the same as the four pillars of Peter McPherson in the 1980s.

GARBER: Right, a shift from them. Whereas democracy and governance had been a subfield, as things evolved it was now going to be elevated as one of four. So I came in in September 1993 and the overview piece for the Strategy for Sustainable Development was about done, although I had contributed even before I got in there. The next task was to develop what we called the technical annex for each of these four areas. I was responsible for drafting the technical annex for the democracy sector, about a 20 page document describing what we were going to prioritize, what conditions we were going to use in determining entry into a country and what types of programs. And also the relationship between democracy as a concept and our overall development effort. So going back to some of the things you were probably familiar with in terms of conditionality issues, gross human rights abuses, how would that impact our development program?

Q: These were meant to apply to any country? Universal concerns?

GARBER: Right. Not just Eurasia, but Africa, Latin America, et cetera. So that was one piece and took up some time, and I think is still an interesting document historically to look at in how things evolved over the last 20 years in terms of institutionalizing democracy. When we did a revision of the strategy in 2013, we changed some of the verbiage we were using. The programming remains much the same, but we changed some of how we are defining our objectives.

Q: Do you want to say what the basic change was?

GARBER: In ’93, it was focused on four sectors in democracy programming, focused on what we did. So we did elections and political processes, rule of law, what we call governance programs, which include everything from legislative programs to some institution-building for executive branch ministries (anti-corruption came under this governance rubric), and the fourth area was civil society. In 2013, we changed to more outcome-oriented things so we talked about accountable governance, protecting human rights, the integration of democracy principles across the entire sustainable development effort. So more outcome focused, whereas in ’93 we were talking more about what we were doing.

Q: In either case did you have measures by which you would judge whether countries were living up to…?

GARBER: This was always the big issue – measures for country performance and measures for programmatic performance. One of the points I made over my career is that the upside of getting democracy into mainstream AID was tremendous financial and field resources, all of which I viewed as positive, and also the synergies with other sectors. The downside was you were bound by the AID bureaucratic rules and among the issues that we often found challenging in the democracy sector was measurement. So we can do evaluations of programs comparing them from one country to another, but it was much more difficult to track both programmatic and country performance on a year-to-year or quarterly basis. I’ll talk more about that when I talk about the work I did with the National Academy of Sciences when I left AID in the 2000s, but that’s been the challenge all along. There’s been a tension between do we want democracy programs to “opt out” and not be part of that AID bureaucracy or as Andrew Natsios called it the counter-bureaucracy, trying to imposed all kinds of measurement tools on our efforts? Or do we want to try and figure out how best to adapt democracy programs to this culture of often quantitative measurement? Let me go in sequence but this became an important issue. After we developed this technical annex, the next thing (again, part of the reorganization at the time) that Brian had committed to was setting up global centers of excellence. Each sector would have its own center – there’d be a health center, etc. The others already existed, with all kinds of technical people and it was just moving them into this new box. With democracy, we were starting from scratch. Initially, we had Peter Kimm serving as an interim head, but when we formally set up the center, Brian asked Jennifer Windsor and myself to lead the formation of the center. We started with three people – two were folks who were working on a project that had been in the E3 (Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment) called implementing policy change. It was a project being implemented by MSI (Management Services International), with Larry Cooley as the person running it on the MSI side and on the AID side there were two folks, Jeanne North and Pat Isman who were responsible for managing the program. Then there was also a political appointee who had come in but had no place to sit in until we came and said “Okay, you’re part of the center.” His name was Patrick Isman-Fn’Piere. Those were our first three recruits to the new center.

Q: Was the center for democracy a structure within PPC?

GARBER: No, it was in the global bureau. For this purpose I was dual-hatted, and we were dual-hatted to be the acting heads of the center to get it launched - I remained in PPC and Jennifer remained as Brian’s special assistant..

Q: Were these other pieces also in the so-called global bureau?

GARBER: Some were pretty well established. For example, the Population, Health and Nutrition Center was an existing entity. Duff Gillespie was in charge of it, and he just moved from where he was to the new Center. Business as usual for him. Environment was more a conglomeration of several units that had existed previously within AID, and the same was true of the Economic Growth center. Brian had been very focused on getting us down to four core areas that we would talk about and within a couple of years various pressures from interest groups led to our calling the Economic Growth Center the Economic Growth and Agriculture Center, and we had to add a fifth center, which was the Education Center. We were back in a sense to where we had been when we started, but those sectors, agriculture and education, clearly had support internally and externally.

Q: What you were doing was really carving out a substantially new area. Did you get pushback from the staff as you tried to…?

GARBER: The big decision Brian made (and this affected all sectors to some extent), was that the Global Centers would include the technical people in the regional bureaus, plus those in existing central bureaus. We didn't have any people in central bureaus, so the only people we were going to get from within the systems were technical officers from regional bureaus. There were one to three democracy officers in each regional bureau, and the question was how many of them would have to move physically to the democracy center.

Q: Pre-existing officers?

GARBER: These were people who had been hired mostly in the last five years who had been given this designation. So again, for Europe and the former Soviet Union they had brought in Jerry Hyman as a non-career person and brought in a couple of Foreign Service Officers to serve as program managers for democracy programs in Europe and the former Soviet Union. More generally, back in 1990 an officer in PPC set up what he called and what has become established, the Tuesday Group. This was a really informal group of democracy officers and people working on democracy programs.

Q: This wasn't Silverstone?

GARBER: No, Michael Morfitt set this up. They met every Tuesday. The Africa bureau had hired a couple of academics who brought their perspective to the discussions. They had (what I was told) very heated debates about the nature of democracy, where it fit, what type of approaches we should use. So when I came in, I assumed responsibility for this Tuesday Group as the policy bureau vehicle to share with folks what was going on in the democracy sector.

Q: Did it work?

GARBER: It worked wonderfully. We kept it going – I think it's still going 25 years later. During those years, it worked particularly well; we brought in speakers, started off with 15 people then

had 30 or 40. At one point, one of the folks decided the conversations were so useful that we should share them with the field, so there'd be a write-up circulated to the field every week. It was a way to jumpstart deliberations about what democracy meant for an agency like USAID amongst a disparate group of folks beyond just people managing programs.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

TODD AMANI
Democracy and Human Rights Deputy Team Leader (1995-1997), Governance Senior Advisor/Team Leader (1997-1998)
Latin America-Caribbean Bureau

Todd Amani studied at Wartburg College and then proceeded to join the Peace Corps. While in the Peace Corps he was paralyzed, leading him to instead complete his graduate studies at Johns Hopkins SAIS. He joined USAID in 1990. He served in a number of postings while at USAID including, Egypt, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras. Todd Amani retired in 2014 and was interviewed by Marcia Bernbaum in 2023.

Topical Focus – Latin America and Caribbean Bureau - DRG Programming

Q: When did the democracy office come into being? You were there at the beginning of the formation of the democracy office?

AMANI: No, the democracy office in LAC was already in place, I don't know when that started. I think it was already operating, I just came in and joined that team. But my recollection is it was fairly recent and expanding more broadly. They had a team of mostly local people, not Foreign Service officers, but a couple of Foreign Service officers as well.

Q: Do you remember who some of the key people were?

AMANI: I'd have to go back and look. LAC was somewhat forward leaning on this and we had a team there focused on democratic issues, including some programmatic focus on local governments. I remember going to Bolivia to help develop a local government program that was just getting underway. While I was in Washington there was an effort to develop a focus on democracy in the Global Bureau. Chuck Costello and Jennifer Windsor were part of that effort and they recruited me to help with that endeavor with a particular focus on local governance. I learned a lot in both LAC and the Global Bureau and was stimulated by these new efforts focused on democracy and governance. I'm a real believer in the need to see development through a democracy lens and the need for people to address issues of corruption, elect their

leaders, and find ways to improve policies that have positive impact. I enjoyed focusing on the democratic issues we faced in so many countries.

Q: Can you comment at all about what was happening in the Global bureau at that time on the focus on democracy and issues?

AMANI: I think many of us felt that it was important to focus on the issues of democracy. It wasn't really development if people were living under strongmen without a democratic process or weren't involving the people in decision-making or even free and fair elections. There was a sense this democracy programming had been a missing part of what could really be a key focus in developing a country. I thought it was a really interesting time because there was a need to figure out what we can do in an organization like USAID, what we would be allowed to do in some countries, what are the really important structures that keep a democracy working and staying focused. For me it was interesting intellectually in figuring some of this out – to figure out what we can do as a foreign country working in other countries on issues like democracy, and what are the things that are most important: what could we do that would be helpful to many countries? And then there are also the issues of so many countries having strong men or strong women who don't want to see a democratic process taking place. So how do you deal with the issues of going to another country and trying to remake a system into something more democratic, knowing that the people in power don't want to see that because they came to power apart from much of a democratic process.

I found it intellectually stimulating to figure out the kinds of programs we might be able to do and to try things and be innovative about dealing with issues associated with democracy in the countries we worked in.

Q: Can I play devil's advocate here? I agree that working in democracy is critical but there have been a number of observations that the U.S. exports its use of democracy without taking into consideration the realities of countries. I'd be interested in your comment on that.

AMANI: Moving toward democracy in a poor country when there are "strong men/women" in power unwilling to share some of that power is one of the hardest things to make happen. In the United States we have a pretty literate and educated population, and many of the countries in which we work don't have that. That is a hard hurdle for us to deal with when there are so many people who aren't educated, who haven't lived under a country with democratic principles. There's a whole issue of the history and mores that are difficult to overcome. The way things have worked for so long in so many countries, pushing for democracy can be really difficult and sometimes that turns to violence. The issue of strongmen/strongwomen in many countries, that's just what's expected by so many people, and trying to move from those kinds of states into a democratic country, is

a long-term thing and there's lots of setbacks.

But I think it's a worthy effort, and I think it's good for people and I believe it is empowering for people, but it's very difficult. It's one of those things you just plug away on and maybe sometimes find an opening, but very difficult.

Anyway, I did find it stimulating to work in that area while in Washington. Then I'm not sure exactly what led me to go to Honduras as a Program Officer, but shortly after we went to Honduras, Hurricane Mitch hit. That was one of the biggest hurricanes ever to hit Honduras, if not all of Central America. So very quickly I ended up having to put together a whole new strategy based on dealing with the impact of Hurricane Mitch, just a tremendous impact. Even in Tegucigalpa, it was hard to move around, and that wasn't the most heavily hit. There was concern about whether we needed to evacuate. Once it was all over, there were tremendous needs in the country. We were lucky to have Elena Brineman as our Mission Director and Wayne Nilsestuen as Deputy Director as they were both seasoned and smart about dealing with all the issues and contacts needed to develop a response to help those in need after the hurricane. And we were also fortunate to have former USAID Mission Director Frank Almaguer as the U.S. Ambassador during this crisis. I was the Program Officer at that time, so it was my job to pull together, from all of the people in the mission, what were the things that needed to be done, how do they need to be done, what do we need to get them done, and come up with a proposal for review by USAID Washington about the hurricane response. A lot of work. I had pulled it all together but we had lots of people to help out. Bob Gersony was there and he went to one part of Honduras to see what was really happening up there. We had lots of people checking out other parts of the country. So the process required figuring out what was most important to do right away, what was most important to do long-term, and put together a strategy for what USAID was going to help Honduras recover from a really massive hurricane that touched almost all parts of the country.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

PAIGE ALEXANDER
Regional Mission for Europe Desk Officer
Prague, Czech Republic (1993-1995)
Bosnia Reconstruction Task Force
Washington, DC (1995-2001)

Paige Alexander grew up in Atlanta, Georgia in a very politically and socially active family. She got involved in working on election campaigns and working as an intern in political offices while attending college at Tulane and moved to DC following her graduation from Tulane to work in

non-profits in the area. She continued her work in non-profits following her move to Prague in 1990 and worked in non-profits both before and after both her forays into working with USAID under the Clinton administration and the Obama administration. Mrs. Alexander currently works as the CEO for the Carter Center in Atlanta.

Topical Focus – Setting up SEPs, and overseeing FSA and SEED activities

Q: When you started on the desk, what kind of a budget was there?

ALEXANDER: Yeah. I still was so amazed that people threw around millions of dollars as opposed to tens of thousands, which is what I had worked with, with the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Mott Foundation. I wouldn't be surprised if our budget was more than fifteen or twenty million, but I actually don't remember. I mean, I could go back and look, we had a very confined program as to what we were looking at–primarily market adjustment, privatization, economic restructuring. There was some agriculture–there really wasn't that much on the democracy side. I think it was 1995, and Jerry was trying to put the SEPs (Strengthening Electoral Processes) mechanism in place, to support elections and political processes. That was the first. It's funny to think about it. That was the very first panel I ever sat on, in 1995, for the SEPs mechanism. And I think that Jerry Hyman and Gerry Donnelly at the time sort of ran that. "Let's put together the privatization/economic restructuring unit with these IQCS [Indefinite Quantity Contracts]" which were kind of a new instrument at the time. And Jerry was trying to get a "leader with associate" or some sort of IQC type of award on the democracy side. So, I remember sitting out by the pool in Fairlington with proposals, my highlighter and circling things and putting post-its on them saying, "Well, what do they mean by this? And sort of getting my education on election and international election observation at the Time."

…

Q: But basically, it was money being transferred from AID to these other government agencies.

ALEXANDER: We were trying to start recapturing that in '95 and '96. We were trying to bring it back in-house. So, there was a lot of hiring. I mean, we had PSC [Personal Services Contract] authority–which no other bureau had. So, we were shocked. I mean, I was very fortunate to work in a bureau that was not the typical AID, because we were special. And I really enjoyed being special and getting out of the bureaucracy.

Q: And also being able to get the staff you needed, through whatever mechanism. I'd like

to talk a little bit about the relations with the State Department at the time, and whether you personally were an interlocutor or whether you were just an observer of what was happening?

ALEXANDER: In the first part of the Clinton administration, I was much more sort of the country desk officer. The FSA–Freedom Support Act–and the SEED–Support for Eastern European Democracy Act–had been passed by Congress in like '92-'93, so suddenly there was money. And how to spend the money was sort of the main conversation, but also, there was a mandated Assistance Coordinator. The first one that I remember on the SEED side was Ralph Johnson. And he had an office, and I would occasionally interact with him. But that came later, like in '96 or '97, when we were doing a little bit more on the Balkan side with the Balkan War. And on the FSA side, I guess it was Bill Taylor. I'm trying to figure out who Bill's predecessor was, but I think it was just Bill Taylor. I wasn't doing the NIS side until the second part of the administration. And we were just becoming flush with money after FSA and SEED legislation happened. And there were a lot of benefits to having the assistance coordinator, because we were able to freeze out the Department of Labor and some of the other domestic agencies that didn't have any international experience. They really wanted it, but it was taking more time to try to explain to them how to work in these areas. For example, you go overseas with someone from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Authority, and they'd never been in a foreign country before. And they were supposed to be the experts. And so I think we saw the benefit of the assistance coordinator to help with country team organization back in DC. But they quickly expanded their remit, and we started thinking they became less helpful as time went on.

…

Q: Your initial AID career developed as the Eastern Europe Program was getting under way. So, you started out in the Czech Republic, you had responsibility for the Balkans, because that's where things were happening. You did Poland at some point. You were chief of staff for the entire bureau. The Bureau was very lucky to have these special authorities. Would you say there were any things that we (USAID) missed at that time or any mistakes, anything that could have made a difference?

ALEXANDER: When you're inside the belly of the beast, you think you're very nimble. And I moved over to do the Bosnia Reconstruction Task Force in '95-'96,with Ted Morse. Brian Atwood and Kelly Kammerer had put Ted in. At that time, the E&E [Europe and Near East] Bureau resulted from the merging of NIS and the regional mission for Europe. The E&E Bureau under Tom Dine and the BHR [Bureau for Humanitarian Response] under Doug Stafford were fighting about [the question of] when does humanitarian aid

become post-conflict and get a longer-term reconstruction focus? The regional Bureau was trying to get involved in Bosnia reconstruction, while the Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs was saying no, this is our work to do. And so the two of them were just fighting: there was a lot of money and who was going to take it. So Brian said, “I'm putting Ted Morse in to run the Bosnia Task Force. I'm gonna give him one person from BHR,” which is Mike Mahdesian, “and one person from the E&E Bureau” who was actually a political appointee and a speech writer. They wanted sort of equivalent ranks—Mike was the DAA. But Tom could not carve out Carlos or Barbara to do that. And so he hired one of his many special assistants. She was professionally mature. She worked on the Hill, she was a speechwriter.

Mike and this woman—can't remember her name—did not get along. So then, Brian said, “Paige is going to work with both of you.” Ted ended up working directly with me on that. And then the government shut down, furloughs happened. Remember the furlough snowstorm? Three people were chosen in the Europe Bureau to be essential. And Tom chose Barbara, Carlos, and me—because I was doing the Balkans. Suddenly, I'm at the State Department every day when only Strobe Talbott and a handful of people are there. And I ended up more-or-less running the Bosnia Task Force. Ted Morse got prostate cancer and went out for surgery. And so Kelly Kammerer, who was the counselor at the time, stepped in, and Kelly had other things on his plate. So he just kept asking me to take care of this, take care of that. And I thought we were incredibly nimble. But given that I, at the ripe age of twenty-eight, or whatever, was suddenly in charge of reconstructing the Balkans after Dayton, we were probably not leading with our best. I would say that we probably should have spent a little bit more time on staffing, which I will tell you was very interesting, because when the furloughs happened after that, AID had figured out how to say no, we don't have to put anyone on furlough. And I think that was a big game changer from the '95-'96 furlough to what happened in the 2000s when we were able to keep people on so we could keep things running. David Coles, Jerry Hyman, and I would say, we got to do something. I mean, it was very hard to be nimble in a situation during a furlough, but I think we did the best we could.

Q: Can you talk about relations with the Hill? I mean, obviously, I think Congress felt a proprietary interest, especially in the East European and the NIS programs. Were you going up to the Hill all the time to brief them?

ALEXANDER: The woman who was the other co-chair of the Bosnian Task Force with Mike Mahdesian, her name is Delena. I can't remember her last name. I was not the point person for the Hill; Tom Dine was. Back in the day, everything rolled up to the AA [Assistant Administrator]. I was doing a lot of briefing papers, and getting them prepped for those meetings. But aside from backstopping Brian Atwood in a couple of situation

room meetings, I was very behind the scenes and getting everyone prepared. But the Hill conversations were interesting. Bill Schuerch had set up the enterprise funds and I had seen the start of them. Coming back in 2011 and seeing the wrapping up of the enterprise funds was quite interesting to me.

There were a lot of good ideas for the Freedom Support Act and the SEED funds. And it was a bit like Whac-A-Mole, because everyone had a good idea, right. But it was also sort of like, let's see if 1,000 flowers will bloom, let's see what sticks. And I think a lot of good intentions just went astray. But on a whole, I still think we did a really good job. The U.S. government was far more active and faster than the EU [European Union]. Everyone thought that AID was nimble, listening to advice from on the ground and trying to build up programs based on that. And I think where we fell short was after two to three years of those programs, we always have a hard time cutting things off. If they weren't working we didn't get out. We just continued and said "Well." Sometimes it was good–you need to make mistakes and figure out how to adapt–but some programs we probably continued past self-sufficiency. I think these countries could have taken over, but it became a donor feeding ground for bottom feeders.
Q: A lot of money chasing ideas.

ALEXANDER: Exactly.

Q: Can you remember any good ideas that didn't get picked up?

ALEXANDER: At the time, when we set up the enterprise funds, it would have been better to know what the long-term projection was. No one thought they would make money. And when it was set up, everyone thought it was going to be a grant program. So, there were really no rules of engagement or rules of the road. When we started getting returns on those funds, what were we supposed to do with them? I think we could have probably made use of reinvestment at the time, as opposed to holding funds to full liquidation at the end. And then comes 2010, like, "Oh, now what do we do with it?" It probably would have been better to recycle the money within the period of time that these countries really needed it. But hindsight is 20-20 on that. I think the rehabilitation for the damage done during the war for the Balkans was the first time that I, as an international development specialist, saw the synergies that need to happen in this development continuum. And given that I came from a regional bureau that has longer-term development aspirations, getting us involved earlier so we could do work hand in glove with the emergency responders was really important. Sort of a lesson for me.

…

Q: Right. Did you see any of the backsliding that we're now seeing in Poland and Hungary? I'm trying to figure out when things started to go south, because at the beginning these two countries were considered the bright lights.

ALEXANDER: Tom Dine used to have this chart that showed democratic reforms and economic reforms, where they met and where AID could then graduate countries. You started seeing this decline in democratic reforms. Economic reforms were still doing well. And the Czech Republic is a prime example. I mean, Václav Klaus—who is the Minister of Finance—was incredibly conservative. And then when he became prime minister, he took the country in a different direction. But the shock that Poland went through—based on a Jeffrey Sachs model of how things had happened in Latin America—set back democratic reforms a bit. Not all of those shock therapy options would work in every country, especially while you're trying to build democratic principles. I think it set back democracy a bit because people didn't have a say on particular reforms. But on the other hand, no one would have said, "Sure, you should start taxing my gas." The backsliding hadn't really started in the '93–'96 period. You saw non-democratic actors coming in, but I don't think we really saw the backsliding because we were just all about graduating—we were going to graduate out of the northern tier. From 1991 to 1997 was when we were graduating all the northern tier countries—that was the goal. And so we weren't looking for backsliding, and we were kind of keeping blinders on. Because the Freedom Support Act said these funds will be available for three to five years, though they lasted a lot longer than that. But Congress was also like, "Get out, it's not going to be our problem anymore."

…

Q: Today is September 15, 2022. And this is our second conversation with Paige Alexander. And when we stopped last time, we were talking about coming back to AID [Agency for International Development] after a distinguished interlude in the nonprofit sector. Paige, do you want to talk a little bit about coming back to AID?

ALEXANDER: Sure. Well, I was surprised to have gotten the call for the AA [Assistant Administrator] job. I expected that to have gone to somebody else. …That sort of intrusion into your life is something that a lot of people at AID are not aware of when you go through a Senate confirmation process. You really do put it all out there to serve the government. And especially when you're taking a job where you're getting even less money than you were making at a non-profit. It's really because you want to serve and you're anxious and you're excited and honored. So, I came back to AID that way. People were happy to see me. They had known me before. They knew I had started as a desk officer and suddenly I was coming back as an AA. So, I had women saying you're the

epitome of what we can aspire to, that you can start as a desk officer and come back as both the mother of three and in this position. So, coming into the bureau was wonderful. But even in Washington people were saying you have to get out to the field, things have changed. And because I've been out for nine years, and although I'd seen and overlapped with colleagues at AID in Central and Eastern Europe, I knew it was going to be a different experience going in.

…Also, we had an administrator, who, I think, in retrospect, rightly said his focus was going to be on Africa, Latin America, and Asia. And so he sort of said to me, "You need to care enough about the bureau so that I don't have to." And I considered that great, because that meant I had a lot of authority and was empowered to pursue things that I understood and knew. He didn't really want to. But he also said, "You're coming in as an AA to a bureau that I don't think has a longevity to it." Because the SEED [Support for Eastern European Democracy] account and FSA [Freedom Support Act] account were supposed to be three-to-five year programs, and we were in our twenty-fifth year! He said, "I'm going to ask you to do other things." And I thought, "That's such an odd thing for you to say after I went through this whole confirmation to prove my credibility in this bureau and in this region." I came in in December 2011. And by gosh, I'm getting confused now. I should get back and look at the dates. But I was first asked to run the Middle East Task Force, which of course had nothing to do with E&E. But the issue was with people running the Humanitarian Bureau and the Middle East Bureau. The Humanitarian Bureau was Nancy Lindborg and she was Senate-confirmed. But there was no one for the Middle East Bureau who was Senate-confirmed. Just George Laudato and Chris Crowley—great Foreign Service officers who knew what they wanted to do. So it was just not working as it tended to happen with DCHA [Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance] at the time. So, he said, "Can you come in and just run this Middle East taskforce?"

VENEZUELA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

OTTO J. REICH
Ambassador
Caracas, Venezuela
1986-1989

Otto J. Reich built a career in U.S. diplomacy and Latin American affairs. Serving in USAID, the Reagan administration, and as Ambassador to Venezuela, he focused on Central America, public diplomacy, economic development, and U.S. policy toward the Sandinistas, Cuba, and regional security, while navigating contentious relations with Congress, the media, and foreign governments.

Q: When you went out there what was America's interest in Venezuela and did you have any set agenda?

REICH: Sure. First, Venezuela is our first or second, depending on trade numbers for that particular year, trading partner in South America. Our number one trading partner in Latin America is Mexico. So Venezuela was very important from an economic standpoint. Also, politically they have always exerted a very strong influence in large part due to their economic power. This is the country that had the highest per capita income in Latin America. With a surplus of petro-dollars in the ‘70s and ‘80s as a result of the oil crisis, they put their money where their mouth is--supporting democracy. They have the second longest record of democratic government in South America. After Costa Rica, Venezuela with the overthrow of the Perez Jimenez dictatorship in 1958 has now had, today, 33 years of democracy, which is a good record.

We saw and still see Venezuela as a very important player in regional issues and in support of democracy which was our goal in Central America. They had been working independently of us to support the same governments...the Christian Democratic governments in Latin America–the Duarte government, the Christian Democratic government in Guatemala which was trying to gain power through elections, the Democrats in Costa Rica, Honduras or Nicaragua. They did not support the Sandinistas after the first few months. They were very disappointed with the Sandinistas, as we were.

YEMEN

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

PETER O. SELLAR
Program Chief
Near East Program Office
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Yemen
(1975–1976)

Peter O. Sellar was born in Connecticut and grew up in New Jersey. He graduated from Harvard University with a degree in American History and Literature and later completed a master's degree at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. After joining USAID in 1963 as a Management Intern, he served in a wide range of positions over a 30-year career, including assignments in Guinea, Liberia, and Washington. His Washington postings included senior roles in the Africa Bureau, the Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation, the Near East Bureau, and the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, where he worked on the Central America Initiative and helped develop USAID's Democracy Program. He retired in 1993 after serving as Senior Program Officer in the Office of Democratic Initiatives. Following his USAID career, he consulted on democracy and governance programs in Guyana and Nepal and authored a paper on USAID's first decade of democracy promotion. Throughout his career, he focused on program planning, democracy promotion, governance, and development policy.

Topical Focus – Agricultural Development, Private Sector Stimulation, and the Establishment of the Agricultural College of Yemen

SELLAR: I went to Near East DP and that was not because I wanted to, because I really liked Latin America and the Latin American Bureau and would have liked to have stayed, but I was in the situation where I had to move back into a GS-15 job within one year or lose the grade and lose the pay. Brad Langmaid offered me the job.

Q: He was the Head of DP at that time?

SELLAR: Yes. He offered me the job of Program Chief, which was also de facto Deputy, because he didn't have a Deputy. What I did was supervise on a daily basis about four program analysts and two budget analysts in reviewing and recommending disposition of projects and programs from 15 Middle Eastern, North African and European countries. The total budget was over two billion dollars. In time I also supervised the Bureau Controller when the Controller's functions were decentralized to some extent to the Regional Bureaus. And, somewhat unusually, I thereby had responsibility for analyzing operating expenses as well as program funds. And also staffing levels as well as program budgets, which was unusual.

Q: That's a big program to be reviewing and overseeing.

SELLAR: Well, it was certainly big in terms of the money. The fact is, many of them were rather small in terms of numbers of activities. Egypt, however, was huge and kept getting bigger and bigger. So, averaging those out, I guess you would say, yes it was a pretty big program. Spain, for example, was just basically a military base payment, and for Israel we just wrote them a check that accounted for a lot of money, but didn't require any programming.

Q: What kind of issues were you having to deal with?

SELLAR: Well, we had continuing issues with the State Department about the level of the ESF/SSA Programs. Originally, they'd been called Security Supporting Assistance. By now, I think they were called Economic Support Fund, which was a more indirect way of saying politically motivated programs. There were two programming processes, AID's and State's. Most AID Bureaus had very little contact with the State process, nor did AID's Central Office of Policy and Program Coordination (PPC), because the ESF money was almost entirely, at that time, within the Near East Bureau. So we sort of had to discover how that programming process worked and how to interact with it. That was the way we often argued for different ESF levels than the State Department was arguing for. In any case, Egypt and Israel were sort of sacrosanct. Those levels were pretty well set. But, in many cases, we were able to influence the levels going into some of the other countries, and we saw that as our job to try to hold those down, because to the extent those levels were held down, there would be more money for development assistance. Not necessarily in our Bureau, but worldwide. We sort of felt an obligation to the Agency to try to do that. I can remember one example that sticks in my mind where I got our Desk Officer, who was also an economist, to go to a meeting along the chain of what was called the SAPRWG process.

Q: What does that mean?

SELLAR: Security Assistance Program Working Group.

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Q: Well, what about some of the other countries that you were concerned within that office?

SELLAR: Actually, we had a couple of development assistance countries. I tended to concentrate on those. This is the way Langmaid wanted to do it. Initially, we had a very split, sort of schizophrenic situation in the office. Because with the Development Assistance countries, we had to take our tin cup and go begging to PPC for money and fight very hard for whatever money we could get, because the host countries were relatively advanced with the exception of Yemen. The advanced ones were Morocco and especially Tunisia. I think those were the only three. The rest of the program was ESF funded and there was never a question of getting enough money, it was just a question of, in fact, trying to hold the levels down, as I mentioned before. So Brad took that part. He gave me the hard part, the tin cup detail. But it made sense, because the ESF Programs were, of course, the most important. Yet the Development Assistance programs required a lot of time, because you had to have a totally separate budget and do all the same

things in terms of programs and missions.

Q: What were the Development Assistance countries that you were working on?

SELLAR: Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen. Yemen was a fascinating situation. I spent a good deal of time on it, because its needs were so great. It was sort of rushing headlong out of the fourteenth century, as people put it. It had been completely closed to the outside world for a long time and it had only recently opened up and allowed foreigners in and decided that it wanted to develop. So they needed everything, but we didn't have the budget to do everything there.

Q: What kind of program do you recall?

SELLAR: It was pretty heavily concentrated in agriculture and agricultural education. Some general education and training, participant training programs, as well. Also, there was an effort to stimulate the private sector. In fact, the Mission Director invited me out to put together a sector strategy for that.

Q: Was there a private sector?

SELLAR: There was, but there wasn't much of one.

Q: What kind of strategy were you trying to suggest?

SELLAR: Well, to be honest with you, I don't really remember much of the details. One thing that was notable about the private sector was the way egg operations sprung up everywhere. Egg farms, chicken farms. Once we provided them with some technical and managerial knowhow, they sprang up, so that gave you a clue that the Yemeni were inherently entrepreneurial and something could be done if you could eliminate the barriers. I think, as I recall, that it came down to the kind of customary problems of no laws on the books that would facilitate private enterprise and make contracts mean anything. No training facilities for people to learn business management. So those needed to be taken care of.

Q: What did you do in a situation where, for example, no laws on the book. Were we involved in trying to do something like that?

SELLAR: We would offer to help them, and draft the legislation.

Q: And we did that?

SELLAR: Sure, yes, we did that.

Q: And they had a system for applying the legislation?

SELLAR: Well, the next problem, of course, was enforcement.

Q: Not necessarily the custom to proceed that way, I guess?

SELLAR: Right. Extremely tribal country. The Northern tribes regarded themselves as being a law unto themselves, which in fact they were.

Q: Were there more aspects of the Yemen program that you had to deal with?

SELLAR: The only other thing I really remember is spending an awful lot of time working on the Title XII consortium of U.S. agricultural universities.

Q: What was that about?

SELLAR: Well, they had a very large Title XII program there. It was kind of out of control really.

Q: What is a Title XII program?

SELLAR: It was a consortium of U.S. agricultural land grant universities. Legislation had been passed by Congress to encourage us to do things under that title. It met resistance in a number of AID countries, but in Yemen it seemed like a natural, because they just had nothing. So they were trying to start a university there, among other things.

Q: Who was the consortium, do you know?

SELLAR: I can't remember the individual members, except that there were a lot of them. They were also doing everything: extension, research, starting the university. Sending people to the States for training.

Q: When you say they're out of control, what does that mean?

SELLAR: Well, neither we nor they really knew how much money they were spending, for example, in local currency, and what it was going for. So, I straightened that out. The Mission sent me a letter of commendation. Forced them to just keep books that would enable us to tell.

Q: This was local currency spent by their contract money or was it local currency generated through other programs?

SELLAR: My recollection is that it was local currency generated through other programs, which was assigned to this project. There were other programs going on that generated local currency - a big PL 480 Title II program.

Q: Did they get the university established?

SELLAR: They did, they did. How the research and extension turned out, I'm not sure. We had a problem, for one thing, with competing with the World Bank for personnel, because the Bank was out there doing a lot, too. Their favorite technique was to set up a special authority, which wasn't subject to Civil Service regulations, and then take anybody they wanted in the country,

because they could pay them more. That was a problem.

Q: Do you know what the name was for that university? Do you remember what it was called?

SELLAR: Yes, the Agricultural College of Yemen.

Q: Is it still going as far as you know?

SELLAR: I really don't know, but I would expect that it is. I know there's been some political turmoil in the region, a question of North and South Yemen unifying and then splitting apart again. But agriculture is absolutely basic to that economy, so I would imagine it is still going on.

Q: What about some of the other developments in other countries?

SELLAR: The others were much more developed than Yemen. We've already spoken about Tunisia a little bit. They were always on the verge of being graduated, and we were always having to defend the continued existence of the program. I promoted phaseout internally, but then when I was overruled, I would go forth and defend continuing it up the line.

interview was conducted by W. Haven North on January 21, 1999.

YUGOSLAVIA

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ROBERT RACKMALES
DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION / CHARGEÉ
YUGOSLAVIA
BELGRADE, YUGOSLAVIA
(1989-1993)

Robert Rackmales was born in Baltimore in 1937 and graduated with a degree in history from Johns Hopkins University in 1958. Rackmales received a Fulbright scholarship to go to Mainz, Germany before spending a year at Harvard with initial intentions of starting a PhD. He entered the Foreign Service in 1963 after working for the Department of the Army. In the Foreign Service, Rackmales served abroad in Nigeria, Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Italy. Robert Rackmales was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Topical Focus – Ethnic Tensions in Yugoslavia

Q: As these forces are beginning to gather, you're sitting in the embassy, you're reading more about politics, and whatever the papers are, you're watching TV and meeting people, were there times when you and Warren Zimmermann, and maybe others in the embassy, would sit together in the glass bubble, or the plastic room, and talk about whither Yugoslavia, and what were American interests?

I might just put in a qualifier, prior to that, American interests when I was there, and when you were there the first time, we didn't want to see Yugoslavia split apart because this would give an opening for the Soviet Union and could mean World War III because it was one of those places as long it held together, and was somewhat out of the Soviet orbit, it meant that they wouldn't be attracted, and we wouldn't be attracted and we wouldn't get into fighting with them. A very clear interest, but now things are changing.

RACKMALES: That's right, and what we eventually came up with to replace the former Trinity, which consisted of independence, unity, and territorial integrity (through the '60s, '70s and most of the '80s, we would repeat that as kind of a mantra) was a duality-unity and democracy. As we saw it, if either were suppressed or shattered, you couldn't have the other. In other words, you could not in the context of a split, a destruction of the Yugoslav state, you would not have democracy because it could not happen peacefully given the ethnic tensions, given the structure of the country. You didn't have groups neatly in areas that if you drew borders around them, they'd be more or less content to be there. In particular the Serb and Croat population was scattered and the Muslims were intermingled, not in a well-defined separate area. Anyway, we argued forcefully that our policy should be based on support for both unity and democracy, and emphasizing the interdependence of the two. At that time, the Slovenes and the Croats were making the argument that what Milosevic wanted to do was to impose a non-democratic system. While he may talk a less communist game now that he sees the handwriting on the wall for

communism in Eastern Europe, he's basically a Bolshevik at heart, so you should view Serbia as a threat to a democratic Yugoslavia. There was certainly something to be said for that argument. But what we were promoting was the concept that you could not have a survival of democracy in a chaotic breakup of Yugoslavia. Unlike the CIA's analysis that got into the press which said that a breakup of Yugoslavia was inevitable within 18 months. (It turned out to be pretty close to the mark.) Our view was that a breakup of Yugoslavia was not inevitable but was a strong probability. In February 1990 I told Ambassador Thomas in Budapest that the odds were 3 to 1 against Yugoslavia staying united at that point. But CIA felt that there was a chance of getting a peaceful agreement on separation. We were very skeptical of that in the embassy. We felt it almost inevitable that we were going to have widespread violence which would, of course, undercut democracy.

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Q: How about in Slovenia? Slovenia has sort of passed over our radar so much that one doesn't think about it anymore. How did we see that situation?

RACKMALES: The Slovenes were always the easiest to talk to. We, of course, knew that they did not have the kinds of internal problems because they were a homogeneous society. We tried to encourage them with very limited success to stay involved. We also supported Baker's message that a unilateral declaration of independence would set off the Croats but the Slovenes basically didn't give a damn about the Croats or anything else. They wanted out, they didn't particularly care what the consequences would be, and they wanted to simply go their own way, and the less they heard about the subject of Yugoslavia the better. So, basically, they would listen politely and then shrug.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

LAWRENCE I. PLOTKIN
USIA
Personnel Office for Europe
Washington, D.C.
(1990-1991)

Lawrence Isadore Plotkin was born in Chicago in 1939 and graduated from the University of California – Los Angeles in 1961 with a degree in English. Plotkin lectured full-time at Indiana University for five years before joining the Foreign Service with the U.S. Information Agency in 1973. In the Foreign Service, Plotkin served abroad in Poland, Panama, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, and frequently received assignments in Washington DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Topical Focus – Democracy Implementation Process in Eastern Europe and the Balkans

PLOTKIN: Every time we faced dramatic events in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, especially liberating events like the fall of the wall or the creation of 15 "new" countries out of the USSR and five out of the former Yugoslavia, there was the same divergence of expectations and opinion. Administration officials, especially political appointees in USIA (United States Information Agency) and State (United States Department of State), had what most FSOs (Foreign Service Officers) saw as very Pollyannaish views on how quickly things could be done and how much immediate impact the changes would have. In short, they seemed, though not without exception, to think that once the countries of Eastern Europe were free, their citizens would immediately become democrats and capitalists. Those of us who had served in the area knew that bureaucracies were entrenched, that whole generation hadn't any experience with democracy and capitalism, that the structures of civil society, of rule of law had to be created, and that we could not simply pull products off the U.S. shelf and expect those products to work in other cultures. I could go on, but I'm beginning to rant.

FSOs and other serious students of the region were right, of course, and the reforms we have fostered in the region have taken longer to institute and have taken more hard work and patience than some anticipated. In the long term, the process is taking hold. In the short term, there was a real need to try to impose—I hate the phrase—a "reality check" on those people whose enthusiasm was admirable, but whose sense of what could be done, how quickly it could be done and how people out there would react was unrealistic.

Q: Did you deal with any of the rest of Eastern Europe or only with the Balkans?

PLOTKIN: Theoretically, I dealt with all of Eastern Europe, excepting the former Soviet Union for which a separate office in State had responsibility. There were times when I did deal with issues regarding the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and the other countries north of Romania, but those countries were so comparatively stable and were progressing democratically and economically in the ways so much better than in the Balkans that they took up a relatively small percentage of my time. It was the Balkans for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, with side dishes of Greece, Turkey, and Hungary—countries that were often seen as part of the solution to the problems in the region.

Q: In Eastern Europe, were we trying to replicate the success of our America House program in Germany after the war?

PLOTKIN: The American centers we had in each of the republics of Yugoslavia were created on the model of the America House, with computer information centers, libraries, and programming facilities that hosted everything from exhibits to lectures by visiting
American scholars—all the usual programs. They were also involved in academic and professional exchanges and working with local media. Our centers in the other countries of the region operated on a much quieter level, largely because of limits placed on us by the communist governments there in power.

But aside from the expansion throughout Yugoslavia in the years following Tito's break with Moscow, USIA never had the level of funding there that was available to support our efforts in places like Germany after World War II. There was some expansion of USIS (United States

Investigation Services) programs during the ’90s in almost all of these countries immediately after the fall of the communist governments: increases in educational and professional exchanges, of the programming we could import into the country, and in our ability to work with the media. By the time I retired in 2000, those increases were dwindling away everywhere except in the former Yugoslavia. Our overall budget was in decline and the only way we could maintain a degree of stability in funding for trouble spots was to bleed resources from more stable countries in Europe.

That process began during my year in personnel, 1990–91. The Soviet Union collapsed and suddenly we were told we had to have public affairs officers and resource centers in each of the newly-freed countries of the former USSR, and consulates with Branch PAOs (public affairs officers) in places like Yekaterinburg and Vladivostok. Where are they going to come from? No one in the Latin American Bureau or elsewhere was going to give up positions. Our only recourse was to raid larger Western European posts. There wasn’t a major Western European embassy that didn’t lose USIA officers and resource funding. All were cut in order for us to increase our presence in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

WARREN ZIMMERMAN
U. S. Ambassador
Belgrade, Yugoslavia
(1989-1992)

Ambassador Warren Zimmerman was born in Philadelphia in 1934 and graduated from Yale in 1956. Zimmerman received a Fulbright scholarship to study European history at King's College, Cambridge. He entered the Foreign Service in 1961 after completing a six-month active-duty program in the Army and some time as a news correspondent. In the Foreign Service, Zimmerman served abroad in Venezuela, Yugoslavia, the USSR, France, Spain, Switzerland, and Austria, and as ambassador to Yugoslavia.

Topical Focus – Eastern European Leadership

Q: Then after the speech and all, work was nuts—just with Serbia of course, I mean you had the other five republics, too. How did you find your ties with these various ones? Were things beginning to split up? What were the various attitudes?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, every other republic—all the other five republics—were enormously friendly to the United States and to me personally… Of course, just at this time, there was a new prime minister of Yugoslavia, Ante Marković who was a reform-minded Croat. He had been a businessman and an official in the Croatian communist party. He had very western ideas about how to develop the economy. He had seen what was going on in Hungary next door where they were on a take-off point with their economy and getting a lot of help from the United States. He wanted to do the same in Yugoslavia. He was very impressive to talk to. I took George Soros to

see him once, and after two hours of the Marković treatment, Soros left saying that he had been the most impressive leader Soros had met in eastern Europe.

Q: Soros being...

ZIMMERMANN: George Soros being the multibillionaire financier who had founded a very effective organization for democratic assistance to eastern Europe called the Open Society Institute [now the Open Society Foundations]. So, Marković was trying to make his mark on the United States, and I felt that my job was to persuade Washington that he was a good man…

Q: How did you see the various republics by the time you were there after about six months or so and well into your tour? Was Croatia and Tuđman on a train that was going to end up in one place: independence of Slovenia? Was this something you could do anything about?

ZIMMERMANN: It wasn't apparent in 1989. They hadn't had elections yet in the republics in 1989. That was in 1990. You still had communist leaderships in all of the republics. In some republics they were quite good leadership. For example, Slovenia had a very progressive communist leadership, arguably the most liberal communist government that ever existed… In some of the smaller republics like Montenegro and Macedonia, you had some very good people—young people—in charge who were quite interested in democratizing. So, it was a very mixed picture, but Milosević was terrifying everybody in the approach he was taking. I think many of the leaders in the republics realized that Milosević really wanted to take over Yugoslavia and run it in Serbia's interest. Of course, that horrified them.

interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

E. ASHLEY WILLS
USIA
Coordinating Operations Office
Belgrade, Yugoslavia
(1988-1991)

Ambassador E. Ashley Wills was born in Jackson, Tennessee in 1949 and graduated from the University of Virginia in 1971 with a degree in international politics and economics. He joined the Foreign Service with the U.S. Information Agency in 1972, and later received a master's from John's Hopkins University in 1984 in economics and public affairs. In the Foreign Service, Wills served abroad in Romania, South Africa, Barbados, Yugoslavia, Belgium, India, and as the ambassador to Sri Lanka from 2000 to 2004. Ambassador Wills was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

Topical Focus – Economic Objectives in Yugoslavia

Q: Okay, in the first place how effective—and what were you trying to do—was USIA with its—

WILLS: Programs?

Q: — programs to various places?

WILLS: Well, we had several objectives. One was to keep the federation together; one was to introduce more democracy than even Yugoslavia allowed. Yugoslavia, as you know very well, was not a typical communist dictatorship, very different from the start and had evolved to the point where it had the appearance of democracy in some ways even though it was a one-party state. We had big economic objectives. I spent a lot of time on the economic parts of our program because we saw this worrying disparity and that this was undermining the stability of the state. I'm trying to remember the word that was used to describe self-management. What the hell was that word? Samo...

Q: Samo...

WILLS: Something like that, and they were running their factories into the ground because nobody was running the factory if you let the workers run it. So, we were trying to get them to move as quickly as possible toward a freer market. Meanwhile, you will recall this was all happening while Nicolae Ceausescu had been taken out and executed next-door. The Soviet Union was becoming unstuck and all of Eastern Europe was moving with greater or lesser alacrity away from communism. The Yugoslavs who had started off well ahead in this respect had in some ways fallen behind because of their political disagreements amongst themselves. So, we spent a lot of time on economic issues. Of course, the Slovenes and the Croats were very keen to do just exactly what we were suggesting. The Serbs were not so keen; the southern states generally were worried that free market economics would impoverish them. In fact, we were arguing the opposite—so I spent a lot of time on that, we as a USIS post did.

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Q: What were we doing and what was the response and all in Kosovo at the time?

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WILLS: [The Serbs] were committing atrocities down there of generally small scale meaning at a time three or four Kosovars would be rounded up by Serbian police and roughed up or killed. There was nothing on a large scale until later after I left. But we were very sympathetic with the Kosovar point of view. We made it plain that some new arrangement had to be arrived at, that 88% of the people of Kosovo were ethnic Albanians and they were being dominated by a police force that was overwhelmingly Serb. It was just an untenable situation even then and it became less tenable after I left.

ZIMBABWE

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ROBERT JACKSON
U.S. Department of State
Chief of Political Section
U.S. Embassy
Harare, Zimbabwe
(1989–1993)
Zimbabwe/Botswana Desk Officer
Bureau of African Affairs
Washington, DC
(1993–1995)

Robert Jackson was born in Tennessee and raised in Maine. He received his education at Bowdoin College. After working in education abroad, he joined the Foreign Service in 1982. He spent most of his career working in Africa or DC, working on democracy and development. Ambassador Jackson was interviewed on February 21, 2019 by Mark Tauber.
Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

Topical Focus – Early 1990s Zimbabwean Political Development

Q: Today is March 6, 2019. We are resuming our interview with Robert Jackson as he goes into his tour in Zimbabwe. When did you arrive?

JACKSON: My wife and I arrived in August 1989. The Lancaster House Constitution was no longer technically in effect, but Parliament still had white members occupying reserved seats from the 1985 election. Robert Mugabe had transitioned from being prime minister to president. Mugabe had ruthlessly deployed North Korean-trained troops to suppress unrest in Matabeleland as he pursued his dream of a one-party state. In fact, Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front [ZANU-PF] and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union [ZAPU] were just five months from their historic merger. Ideologically there were no major differences between them; the divisions were ethnic. ZANU-PF was dominated by Mugabe's Shona ethnic group, which actually has several subgroups, and Nkomo's ZAPU was dominated by the Ndebele and Kalanga who inhabited the southwestern part of the country along the border with South Africa and Botswana. The Ndebele are related to the Zulu. It is also important to remember that white settlers only arrived late in the nineteenth century—approximately a hundred years earlier. At its peak, the white population numbered about 250,000, but that number had declined to about a hundred thousand by 1989 due to emigration to South Africa, Great Britain, Australia, and the United States.

Zimbabweans were optimistic about their future in 1989. Infrastructure was expanding rapidly; the country was largely at peace, although South African special forces occasionally acted against the African National Congress [ANC], and members of the Mozambican National Resistance [RENAMO] staged raids from Mozambique. Hopeful about political and ethnic reconciliation, Zimbabweans wanted to focus on economic issues.

Q: You mentioned that a fair amount of the economy up to independence had been principally agricultural.

JACKSON: Although there was industry based largely upon import substitution, it was still principally agricultural in 1989. Four thousand mostly white commercial farmers still produced the bulk of Zimbabwe's gross domestic product. The industry was largely in and around the cities of Harare and Bulawayo, but a lot of that was agricultural processing because of the sanctions during the fifteen years following Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of independence [UDI] in 1965. Import substitution developed during the UDI period up until 1980, and people were looking at whether those industries were viable or not. Zimbabwe was the bread basket of Southern Africa in 1989, also producing tobacco, gold, and exquisite emeralds. This was before any effort to drive white farmers out of the country, but Mugabe was very intent on having his one-party state with himself as president.

Raphael Hamadziripi, our Zimbabwean assistant, was the son of one of the founders of Mugabe's political party. Raphael was very well politically connected, and we learned later that he harbored his own political ambitions when he helped to launch the Zimbabwe Unity Movement [ZUM], the only real opposition party in the early 1990s.

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Q: Wow. What an unusual way to begin your tour.

JACKSON: The next big event was the ZANU-PF-ZAPU party congress, which took place just before Christmas 1989. Of course, I had been trying to learn as much as I could about the party congress, especially from members of the ZANU-PF and ZAPU Politburos and Central Committees who were embassy contacts. The Berlin Wall was torn down six weeks before the party congress, and President Ceaușescu of Romania, was overthrown during the congress. This was very significant because Mugabe was a big admirer of Ceausescu. When Mugabe learned that Ceausescu and his wife had been killed, he was quite upset, and the party congress ended with this somber news for President Mugabe who was so wedded to his dream of having a one-party state. He was clearly unsettled by events in Central and Eastern Europe, where one-party states were tearing themselves apart; yet his own belief in one never faltered.

With the merger of the two main political parties, Joshua Nkomo became co-vice president of ZANU-PF and a short time later co-vice president of Zimbabwe. In fact, ZANU-PF has maintained that structure of two party vice presidents and two national vice presidents, with one from the Shona from the old ZANU-PF and one Ndebele from the old ZAPU. That was the main political event of 1989, and I spent a lot of time learning about the implications of the restructuring. The next year witnessed the emergence of the Zimbabwe Unity Movement [ZUM] under Edgar Tekere, who had cofounded ZANU-PF but bitterly opposed a one-party state. Mugabe was very dismissive of this effort to resurrect a multi-party state, predicting, "ZUM would zoom to its doom." However, Zimbabweans had other ideas. Tekere garnered some support in the 1990 presidential election, and others also won a few seats in Parliament, which was now virtually all black. Mugabe appointed some whites to Parliament and as ministers, and a few vestiges of the Westminster system, such as question time, continued. The political transition from the Lancaster House constitution was now well on its way, but the economic transition would take a few more years.

Q: In the beginning, was the ZANU-ZAPU split ideological or ethnic?

JACKSON: It was both. It was ideological to the extent that the division was over a one-party state. However, Tekere also hailed from the Manyika sub-group in Manicaland—eastern Zimbabwe, whereas Mugabe was a Zezuru from Mashonaland. In reality, the parties were very personality based. Most of Tekere's followers were people from around the city of Mutare, which was called Umtali during colonial times. To the south is the home of Ndabaningi Sithole, another founding member of ZANU who had a falling out with Mugabe. In March 1990, ZUM won about 17 percent of the vote and two seats in the 120-member Parliament; Sithole's party, ZANU-Ndonga retained its single seat.

Unlike the Ndebele, who had been crushed by North Korean-trained troops, Manyikas were facing regular incursions from across the border from Mozambique, as RENAMO acquired provisions and kidnaped people. You might recall that RENAMO was the anti-communist political movement encouraged by then-Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith and the United States to counter ZANU and punish FRELIMO, Mozambique's socialist-leaning ruling party under Samora Machel. For its part, RENAMO was led by Afonso Dhlakama from 1979 until 2018.

The 1990 Zimbabwean elections were actually framed by two major events in Southern Africa: the release of Nelson Mandela from Robben Island in February 1990 and the beginning of peace talks between RENAMO and FRELIMO in neighboring Malawi. My colleague, Economic Chief Paul Larsen, who speaks Portuguese, went to Malawi for meetings with Dhlakama and his representatives in July or August 1990.

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More importantly, we did a lot of representational entertaining to build contacts—as I had in Burundi. I particularly remember one dinner that we hosted for Dan Mozena, the then deputy director of Southern African affairs. We invited Dumiso Dabengwa, the minister of home affairs; Patrick Chinamasa, the attorney general; Davison Gomo from ZUM; Welshman Ncube, the chairman of the Law Faculty who went on to become a founding member of the Movement from Democratic Change [MDC]; Reginald Matchaba Hove from the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association, and white journalist and businessman Eddie Cross, who also became a MDC leader. What was significant about this dinner is that we provided a neutral venue where people from different political parties could meet and break bread together. I have often thought back to that dinner as a model of how the United States can bring people together to promote dialogue.

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Q: When you got back to Washington, you were on a single-person desk—unlike the Nigeria Desk. What were the main issues that you had to take up from that position?

JACKSON: For Zimbabwe, I primarily followed the evolution of Mugabe's party and human rights issues in Zimbabwe. I also looked at trade and investment, as we wanted to promote more investment. At that time, at the beginning of my tenure on the desk, the climate was propitious. As for Botswana, I did not know a great deal about the country. I assisted Ambassador Howard Jeter with his swearing in and consultations as he prepared to depart for Gaborone to succeed Ambassador David Passage. I sought to learn a lot more about Botswana and its diamond industry. I got to know Maurice Tempelsman, who was a major investor in Botswana, and we looked at how to promote more trade and investment in Southern Africa broadly. With peace coming to Mozambique, we even started to think about investment there.

In April 1994, South Africa held its first non-racial election. I returned to Zimbabwe and Botswana a few months later, making an orientation trip to Mozambique in the run-up to its successful elections in which RENAMO came in second but accepted the results. I found that the economies were springing back from the drought, and things were looking positive.

One of the sadder experiences of my career also occurred during this period. Having served in Burundi and having been to Rwanda, I volunteered to serve on the Rwanda Task Force during the genocide. While we successfully evacuated our embassy in Kigali, we quickly became aware of the slaughter. I remember unsuccessfully fighting to secure a seat on Tipper Gore's flight to Goma, Zaire, for Deputy Assistant Secretary Pru Bushnell. That—along with failed efforts to get the National Security Council [NSC] to evacuate the Botswana contingent from Somalia after we

pulled out were low points. The limits of State's power and influence became very apparent, and Susan Rice, who was a director at the NSC, first emerged on my radar screen.

During my final month on the desk, President Mugabe came to the United States for an official working visit with President Clinton. I served as one of the main organizers for that visit. I had the opportunity to practice when then Vice President Festus Mogae came for an official visit to promote commercial activities in Botswana. There were even negotiations with the Export Import Bank about funding a pipeline to bring water from the Zambezi River all the way to arid southern Botswana, and I became involved in those discussions.

By 1995, Zimbabwe was getting more attention in the United States, and President Mugabe met with Secretary Warren Christopher, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of Defense William Perry, and other Cabinet members. It was quite a successful visit and a wonderful end to my time on the desk. [superfluous information redacted]

As my tour ended, Botswana, Mozambique, and South Africa were doing well. President Kaunda of Zambia had been ousted in a democratic election. Long-time Malawian President Hastings Banda had suffered a stroke, with the Zimbabwean newspapers reporting that he had been evacuated to South Africa "for routine brain surgery."

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

ROY STACY
Director, USAID Mission
Harare, Zimbabwe
(1981-1986)

Roy Stacy grew up in Hawaii before studying political science at the University of California, followed by graduate degrees at The George Washington University and the Fletcher School at Tufts University. Stacy joined USAID in 1963 and had several assignments across Africa, including Somalia, Kenya, Swaziland, Cote d'Ivoire, and as Mission Director in Zimbabwe. He transferred to the State Department and served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs before retiring from the Foreign Service in 1988. He went on to work at the World Bank and the OECD in Paris before his second retirement at age 80.

Topical Focus – AID Democracy Programming in Zimbabwe

Q: Are there any other areas besides agriculture?

STACY: Education. Not all African countries have progressed as well as some on education, but those that have progressed have accomplished a hundred percent or close to a hundred percent enrollment in terms of their primary and secondary schools. A lot of that came from US support. Look at Botswana, Zimbabwe, Ghana, the universities in Africa. Although they've gone through

difficult times, they still have continued to provide an output of people that are very important to building capacity.

If you ask me what was our single greatest contribution to capacity, I would say some of the African universities. They're there all over the continent. As I said, despite the fact that they've fallen on some hard times, many of these faculties are still operating and many of them are improving in the last ten years. So I think that's a second area. In terms of population, although it's always been controversial both on the right and the left, AID has been very courageous in supporting the availability of services because there was a demand. The need was there; the demand was there. Despite being buffeted by all kinds of politics with the population program, AID has been able to help many countries provide services. In places like Zimbabwe where the contraceptive use has gone over fifty percent now and family size is dropping. These programs are probably the only delivery vehicles, albeit ineffective at this point, for HIV/AIDS prevention and dissemination of information on HIV/AIDS. So some of the infrastructure that we helped provide in the '70's and '80's with the beginnings of these family planning programs, have been terribly important now in helping with the delivery of HIV/AIDS related services. Infrastructure, people have forgotten that we did a lot of infrastructure in Africa. We did railways; we did dams and all kinds of primary and secondary roads. We got out of the infrastructure business with some of the fads that came along like basic human needs. It always seemed if you were doing basic human needs and people centered development you shouldn't do transport, and yet the record would show that... For example, the Canadians, who kept doing transport throughout the eighties, really believed that probably the greatest impact they had on agriculture was because they funded roads. I think it's unfortunate that we got out of transportation, but during our career, during the sixties, seventies and early eighties it was part of what we did. I think that in a way it was almost unfortunate that we got into democracy as a major element of the AID business. I know that could be controversial in some quarters.

Q: Were you more concerned with that in the early days?

STACY: We didn't call it that. We called it "Popular Participation and Development". As we began to call it "Democracy" we began to excessively look for democracy through the optics of multi-party elections and not all of the other democratic things that were happening. We also understood poorly the traditional elements of African democracy. The "kgotla" where everybody from a district or a village would get out and sit under a tree and talk for days and weeks, if necessary, in what really is a very horizontal discussion. It's not vertical. It's not hierarchical, but very horizontal. Everybody has his say. And eventually there's a consensus that happens. Sometimes people will talk way around the issue. The issue may be a livestock head tax but people are talking about somebody else's goats eating somebody else's grass. So Africans' sometimes have very basic ways of approaching issues that are very democratic. Sometimes we haven't looked for African democracy where it is, because I see it in this explosion of newspapers and journalists, private radio, NGOs, and civil society organizations. And yet multi-party democracies as we know them, are almost always flawed. I've watched some countries, which are in some ways doing very good things developmentally. They're even improving governance but they've taken a couple of steps backward on multi-party elections. So they get bad marks on democracy and we close up and yet they're progressing very positively on improved governance. The way we approached democracy as a kind of litmus test as to whether

a country was developing or improving the lot of their people, we have to look for democracy where it is and not just through multi-party elections.

Interviewed by: W. Haven North
Initial interview date: March 26, 1999
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Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

AMBASSADOR CHARLES A. RAY
U. S. Ambassador
Zimbabwe
(2009-2012)

Ambassador Charles Ray was born and raised in Texas and educated at the University of Maryland. He served in the United States Army for 20 years before entering the foreign service in 1982. He served as the Ambassador for Cambodia and Zimbabwe, as well as held posts in Sierra Leone, Thailand, and China. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2013.

Topical Focus - Social Media and Zimbabwean Opposition Support - 2009-2012

RAY: We had thrown our lot in with the opposition, completely cutting ourselves off from Mugabe's element of the government, which was in a way counterproductive because by, by being seen as so close to Mugabe's opposition, we were actually weakening them. Because one of his key propaganda points was they were toadies of the west and puppets and we were pulling their strings. So the key in my view was first, try and identify key U.S. interests in the area, which, which one of the first thing I discovered 129 during my, during my consultations before going was we didn't have a very clear policy on Zimbabwe because nobody in Washington agreed on what it was we were trying to achieve there. I mean I -- the regime change thing of the previous administration really was stupid. I'm sorry. I just have to say there's -- why we should have the hubris to say we should go around saying which regimes need changing when there is no clear threat to us never made sense to me. Let the people in the country decide who should be their government. And, and I have to tell you. I actually did the almost three-year tour and I never got a clear statement of U.S. policy because Washington never could come to terms with what it wanted to do in Zimbabwe. One of the things I did right away was I, I basically said to the country team, "We don't take sides, we, we stand for certain principles. We stand for rule of

law, we stand for respect for human rights, we stand for respecting the will of the people. Those people who are willing to go along with us on that we deal with. I don't care what party they belong to. Those people who don't, well, we deal with them if we have to, otherwise we don't." I made it a point, for instance, when I traveled in the countryside and I went to every one of Zimbabwe's provinces, if I went to a project or a district that was primarily opposition, my next visit was to a project or district that was part of Mugabe's party. I would talk to anyone, I would go -- I got asked for courtesy calls on every government minister there to include some who frankly made me want to go home and bathe in lye soap after meeting them. But you know, my view's always been you can't do your job if you, if you, if you, if you're shutting the door in people's faces who have any information you need to do your job. And nobody's all bad or all good. I mean even the bad guys have some motivation. That took a while for -- to sink in there. I don't know that it ever totally sank in here in Washington that I was even-handed, that I wasn't siding with anybody, that I was siding with -- you know, my, my mission was to promote U.S. interests, to protect U.S. citizens. And frankly, who won Zimbabwean elections didn't matter to me as long as those elections were conducted properly. There were a few interesting incidents. I mean I, you know, Mugabe is a very interesting figure.

Q: You might explain to somebody coming to this for the first time what was the situation there.

RAY: You had a situation of the, the Zimbabwean Army of National Unity, slash, Patriotic Front Party, which was run by Robert Mugabe who'd been the country's prime minister/president since independence in 1980, had a -- for a long time had an iron lock on the political power and control. Very weak idea of how to run an economy and had driven the country into literally bankruptcy. They had hyperinflation. I have a, I have a calendar at home that has one of their bank notes on it, a 80-octillian dollar bank note, which was worth about five U.S. dollars. There'd been political violence, millions of the population had fled to neighboring South Africa and other countries. The economy had basically ceased to function. The commercial agriculture had been almost destroyed. And a, an opposition had -- and there'd been land seizures. A lot of the publicity was about the seizure of white-owned farms, but in fact farms of people -- of black landowners had also been seized, some violently. And the country was just not functioning properly. And its opposition party was created, which actually gave Mugabe the first credible opposition to his long-time role. I think it shook him when an opposition could be created and 130 overnight win an election. So using the army and the police it made it impossible for him to take power. The first time. Which would have been in I think 2004. 2008, they had another election which was also bloody, which the opposition also won but not by enough to constitutionally take power. Mugabe called a run-off and called out his dogs and it got really bloody until the South Africans stepped in and forced him to, to form a coalition government of the opposition in Mugabe's party. And that's what I walk into. Oh, and they switched to the U.S. dollar. Which stabilized the economy, which got rid of hyperinflation. Got rid of people's assets, but got rid of their debts as well.

Q: Mm-hmm.

RAY: So when I arrived you had -- they -- the coalition government had been in place maybe nine months. The U.S. dollar had been the official currency for about nine months. Some sanity had returned. There were still occasional acts of violence, but nothing like 2007, 2008. Goods were back on the shelves. And I won't say that things were normal, but things were relatively peaceful. And as I said, the first year was difficult because none of the hardliners in Mugabe's party actually believed me when I said I would talk to anyone. And there, there were efforts to provoke me into some kind of reaction. I mean I would, I would be attacked in the press. I mean I was called an Uncle Tom and House Nigger and, you know, war criminal. I was -- I mean I got the embassy in Zimbabwe because of my success in brutalizing Vietnamese during the war. And it was just another, you know, American war criminal sent out -- oh, and my expertise in destabilizing governments. I'm not sure where that one came from.

Q: (laughs)

RAY: And there would be -- these would flare up now and then and I'd basically just ignored them. I started doing little opinion pieces that we would put on our embassy blog, our embassy website, Facebook page. And this happened to occur about the time that the independent press was starting to come back. And a lot of the independent press would occasionally take my little commentary on things like the role of the military and what is leadership and what is democracy off of our website and would run them as op-eds in their -- in the independent press. And this became such a regular thing that the government got a little upset by it and they started accusing me of being a journalist in the pay of the, of the, of the independent press. Then we started -- Secretary Clinton had had a big push on outreach to young people. And we, you know, more than 60% of Zimbabwe is under 35. So of course outreach to young people was a big part of our program. We had a very active program of going around the country and meeting with groups of young people and discussing things of importance to them, the economy of -- their education, of improving their, their future chances. Which the government didn't pay much attention to at first. And then when they noticed that we were getting larger and larger crowds at our youth outreach programs started trying to disrupt. Very skillfully, I might add, they would never try and disrupt a meeting once I got there and started a meeting. I mean they would send people in to, to, to like ask provocative questions or try to bait me in to saying something, but they would never come into a meeting where I was actually conducting the meeting and make people leave. They would try to get there ahead of me and, and intimidate people into canceling the meeting. Which they successfully did a couple of times. So we started doing virtual meetings on Facebook. The embassy had a Facebook page and we would set up live chats. The first one we did had about 250 people logged on. We had over 100 comments within the first 30 minutes. When the government got wind of it they went into orbit because they didn't -- they couldn't stop it. Then a

new series of attacks started. I became the Facebook or Google ambassador whose mission was to pollute the minds of Zimbabweans, young people, and they were warned to stay away from me. Which had just the opposite effect. At that point, my Facebook page -- my personal Facebook page had about 250 friends. Within three months of the government attacking my outreach through electronic media, I had over 2,000 Zimbabweans following my page. By the time I left Zimbabwe in 2012, I had reached the 5,000 Facebook friend limit and had to start allowing people to subscribe to my page. I, I think I left Zimbabwe with about 7,400 total friends and subscribers on my Facebook page. We did a -- we did a, an electronic book based reading club with Zimbabweans, both young and old, including government officials, which, which pulled groups together that had not been, been pulled together before. Actually start reaching out to the local business community there, hooking them up with businesses here in the U.S. Because for all the political instability, it's still a fairly good investment destination for people who know how to do, do diligence and do their homework properly. And I actually succeeded I think in, in, in making some contact with people in the government that we had lost contact with for over a decade. To include being probably the first American ambassador in eight or nine years to have more than one meeting with Mugabe.

Democracy and Elections Subject Reader

AMBASSADOR JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN
U. S. Ambassador
Zimbabwe
(2001-2004)

Ambassador Joseph Sullivan was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts, Georgetown and Yale Universities. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he served in the Department of State in Washington, D.C. as well as in posts abroad. His foreign posts include Mexico City, Lisbon, Tel Aviv and Havana. Mr. Sullivan served as US Ambassador to Angola from 1998 to 2001 and as Ambassador to Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2004. Ambassador Sullivan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Topical Focus – Mugabe Regime and Democratization Efforts

Q: Well then you are off to Zimbabwe.

SULLIVAN: Exactly, yep.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SULLIVAN: I think October of 2001 until about August of 2004.

Q: Well now who did you know that was handing out these choice assignments? I mean obviously you were living in sort of luxury on fun places, nice people, Mugabe and all.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well Zimbabwe used to be considered a luxury post...

Q: Oh yeah.

SULLIVAN: For one of the first times in its history, Zimbabwe actually had a political appointee as ambassador by the Clinton administration prior to me. Now he was somebody, who when the Bush administration came in, who resigned his position. Yet the post was considered sufficiently delicate and important at the time that the department sent out several senior former ambassadors out there to hold the fort until a permanent ambassador could get there; that always takes time. So I was nominated probably about April or May and got through the nomination process, I think, in maybe August, but that was par for the course; it wasn't a particularly problematic thing. I welcomed it; it was going to be an interesting assignment. I'm not sure frankly if the Democratic Party had won the 2000 election whether I would have gotten that assignment. I think there was some inclination to send another political appointee and yet when Gore lost the election, it was a relatively amicable transition at least on the Africa side and probably as well in the undersecretary's office side. So at that point I was told how about you going there and I said, "Fine." Yeah, I guess it would be considered to be a booby prize by some but I would rather be busy and in this case Zimbabwe remained a beautiful country and it was just a very problematic period to be there.

Q: What was the situation when you went there?

SULLIVAN: When I went, they were gearing up to presidential elections which had been scheduled for March of 2002. For the first time in his life, certainly in his presidency, Mugabe faced a serious political challenge to his continued rule. Mugabe had already begun a couple years before that this policy of deliberate land invasions particularly land owned by Whites as a political tactic to seek to gather support from the population. The Opposition had gradually built up itself and there was a lot of, I think, popular wish to get Mugabe out.

The economy had been in decline since the early '90s and people were anxious for change. Civil society had grown significantly and the U.S. had been supportive of that. We had a number of AID programs that were supportive of civil society, so, to a certain degree, the U.S. was considered the enemy by Mugabe and his ruling ZANU- PF government. That said, we had a moderate degree of ability to do our job and one of the challenges we faced was that we had something of a multi-headed operation without very much coordination. So one of my challenges

there was to make sure we were all working together and communicating with each other, particularly in the build up to the election. I worked very hard on that and even though nobody likes meetings; in that crisis situation, we were holding meetings virtually every day to make sure we were all coordinated among the major agencies and players at the mission including the USAID component; which as I said, was very heavily involved in democracy building efforts.

Prior to my arrival at post, bipartisan legislation, called the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act had been passed by the Congress in coordination with the Bush Administration and with the support of the black caucus. The legislation contained incentives to the government of Zimbabwe to hold free and fair elections, but also a number of sticks that would be used if there was interference in that process. The bipartisan US position toward Zimbabwe was a principal focus of the confirmation hearings that I had going out to post, which were very amicable compared to the previous hearings I had had for the Angola appointment.

So going out to post, U.S. policy was fairly clear and the policy instruments were clearer than they had been in the past. What was not as clear was our ability to achieve our policy objectives and how the Mugabe government would react to the conditions explicit in US legislation and policy. The Mugabe government apparently assessed that if they did hold fair and open elections, Mugabe stood a very good chance of losing those elections. In the typical call one makes on President Mugabe after presenting credentials, there was quite a bit of talking past each other. I was encouraging him to hold those elections openly to allow international observers freely, to allow domestic observers to be independent to do their job. Mugabe was going back and recounting his version of history; the history of coming to power in 1980 and his recollection of the British role in which he always believes conservative British governments were better from his perspective notwithstanding his own Socialist past. In any case, he really wasn't listening very much and I got no confidence that we would have much of a positive collaboration with the government. Sure enough, he effectively prevented observers from the Republican and Democratic Institutes from sending election observers. As the election approached, the government and election authorities began to put obstacles began to be put in the way of the opposition and in the way of election observer missions. The European Union eventually withdrew its observer mission due to obstacles placed in the way of its activities. There was significant violence against opposition organizers and a good degree of obfuscation in the cities where ZANU PF felt itself particularly vulnerable. The government deliberately slowed down the voting process in the cities so that many people, mostly opposition supporters, were not able to vote. In rural areas, where ZANU-PF could control the process, ballot boxes were clearly stuffed and we were able to document this.

We, as an embassy, built up our own major observation effort and my deputy Bob Whitehead, who deserves the credit for this, organized and came up with the plan whereby we dispatched around 40 people from all around the mission and filled behind them at the embassy by securing volunteers, mostly from elsewhere in Africa. We did this so that our observers in the field would

have the proper diplomatic carnet, should they be harassed, while out doing the observer mission. We succeeded in gathering pretty good information from our observers which enabled us to reach quite solid conclusions about the conduct of the elections. One of our observer groups did get detained by local police for three or four hours until we could raise enough Cain to get them released. No embassy employees came to harm, although a number of Zimbabweans linked to the opposition were beaten badly and those trying to carry out independent observation efforts were also mightily harassed. We concluded that the opposition would have won a free and fair election, but that the election had not been held freely and fairly resulting in Mugabe's election. In addition to our observation, we had other information that the Zimbabwean government had deliberately manipulated the election and stuffed or altered sufficient election results to assure that Mugabe would win the electoral commission's official count. That, notwithstanding, the South Africans had their own election observer mission and they concluded, I think, with not a lot of credibility the election was fair enough to merit recognition and Mugabe took office.

We began even before the election to implement some of the penalties called for in the Zimbabwe Democracy Act. Most of those penalties were targeted at individuals, removing and canceling their visas, their ability to travel to the United States. We coordinated with the European Union and later with Australia and other countries and they began to implement similar polices. Zimbabwean authorities were certainly upset at these and then some financial restrictions as well as their ability to hold accounts in our countries, but at the end of the day, these measures did not affect the behavior of Mugabe, who was above all, and remains today determined to hold onto power at all costs.

Q: As you went out there were you getting psychological profiles or had you been in Africa long enough to get a feel for this. I mean this is a very common trait, look at Mubarak today people don't give up power and privilege easily.

SULLIVAN: Right. I remember actually coming back and meeting with Colin Powell one time and he was quite convinced and correctly so that people like Mugabe "don't get off the back of the tiger; the tiger will eat them." I only had three or so years in Africa, but many of my staff had been there much longer and they saw these traits and the outcome might be predictable, but the question was "can we influence it in anyway"; we certainly sought to, as did other international players. I think probably the most effective international players, and we recognize this, would have been other Africans but the majority of other African players, and certainly the key other African player from Zimbabwe's point of view, South Africa, declined to stand up. Some of it was Mbeki himself and South Africa's feeling that its own coming to majority rule was assisted substantially by Zimbabwe and Mugabe himself once he became president in 1980. Some part of it also was that Mugabe was considered a father figure, a senior independence revolutionary leader, by many Africans and, therefore, one who should be allowed to continue on and not challenged frontally. I think that was a major obstacle that we ever succeeded in overcoming.

I actually recall a visit to South Africa in 2003 by President George W. Bush, accompanied by Secretary Condoleezza Rice and they having after a meeting with South African President Thabo Mbeki announcing that they would look to him to provide the solution for Zimbabwe. Well, okay, except he was not going to really provide the solution for Zimbabwe because he was never going to ever challenge Mugabe. In addition to the other reasons I mentioned, Mbeki harbored some degree of anti-Western sentiments that led him to believe that if the opposition figure Tsvangirai and his party were supported by the West, then that made them illegitimate.

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Q: The obvious thing would be and I mean I don't know if you can even comment on it was the sitting around waiting for somebody to kill Mugabe.

SULLIVAN: As is often the case in regimes like that, the most efficient operation that the State runs is its own security operations. Within ZANU-PF, loyalty to Mugabe was ambivalent loyalty at a certain point; there were a few people who broke with him but not many. So it was that inner circle that controlled the security forces, that inner circle that controlled access to Mugabe and there is a long debate about Mugabe and how much he'd changed and how much he was always this way, because in the independence struggle and afterwards, he was ruthless at a number of times; effectively ruthless. It can be argued that's the way a guerrilla leader has to be if he is going to succeed, but Mugabe conducted reprisals against black civilian populations that didn't support him and forced them to support him. After coming to power, Mugabe also conducted a major military campaign in Joshua Nkomo's stronghold of Matabeleland and reduced Nkomo from being a figure with his own following to being a powerless, nominal vice president to Mugabe. So Mugabe had a long history of ruthlessness but because he had been what relatively amicable to the West, because he had allowed white farmers to stay on the land and talked about reconciliation I think there was some hope in the West that prevailed in the end that this was somebody you could work with. He used to win his elections with typically 95 percent support and that probably was relatively authentic because there was no significant opposition once he had eliminated Nkomo's political base. But then once he faced a significant political challenge in the late 1990s he became ruthless again with that opposition, including with some of the civil society people that he used to have good relations with.

I can recall one very good illustrative story of Mugabe who prides himself on having, I think, seven doctoral degrees; some of them are probably not much better than those off a cereal box, but some of them authentic and some of them achieved while he was in jail. In Zimbabwe and, I think, Zambia and a couple other countries the president of the country is often times the chancellor of virtually all the universities of the country and certainly all the state universities; Mugabe took that role with some pride. I became good friends with somebody who had been the vice chancellor of the University of Harare in the mid-90s. This individual was a close, long time

friend of Mugabe and he recalled the times when he was vice chancellor Mugabe, would invite him to drop by the president's residence and chat on a Friday afternoon. They would talk for two or three hours on problems at the university. He would call him Robert and Robert would call him Walter and they would discuss the problems in a very open way. Then in the late '90s, when Mugabe began expropriating farms, Walter who had diabetes and lost his legs and was no longer vice chancellor, asked to see Mugabe based on old time connections. Walter told him that he thought he was wrong in what he was doing and that he was going to bring the country to ruin and that it wasn't too late to correct this and so on. Mugabe listened to him, didn't comment, said goodbye and never spoke to him again.

Q: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: So that's…

Q: Well did you have any significant contact with Mugabe?

SULLIVAN: No, no I mean I had periodic contact usually in a pretty formal setting with a visitor but I would even regard my initial contact with him as two of us talking by each other without him really looking for common ground and not at all open to discussions about how we might be able to improve the relationship. So I had pretty good access to virtually everybody else in government and many of them remained close to Mugabe and I'm sure messages would get through with things that particularly bothered us and others that were perhaps areas of being able to work together but effectively we got no serious response. They were embarked on a course and were not to be deterred from it.

Q: Well did we have or do we have now sort of a plan when Mugabe goes what we can do?

SULLIVAN: Well I probably can't speak for what we'd do now, but we did then have some serious ideas about what we could do. We did work very closely with the opposition and had excellent relations with them and currently there is a coalition government of sorts in which the opposition leader Tsvangirai is prime minister while Mugabe is president. Mugabe does not adhere very well to the coalition agreement; he declines to name some of the people that Tsvangirai has nominated to the ministerial positions, has kept the president of the central bank notwithstanding the provision that that he was to be changed, but notwithstanding this, the opposition has succeeded in reviving the economy a little bit. Basically they've dollarized the economy and thrown out worthless Zimbabwean dollars, pay teachers in dollars at relatively reduced rates; I think it is about $100 a month but that's better than worthless Zimbabwean dollars they were begin paid before. Probably the economy more than anything else subsists on the remittances sent in from Zimbabwean immigrants living abroad. That said, Zimbabweans are very well educated people, very industrious, when given the opportunity and, I think, it could

come back relatively quickly if and when Mugabe goes and if and when there is a reasonable government.

Q: Do these people who have taken over the farming land have a real stake in it or is this just sort of a place to lounge in or something?

SULLIVAN: I suppose some of them thought they had a stake and thought they could make something out of it but it takes a lot of hard work, it's a seven day a week job, and it takes investment and most of them didn't have capital to invest themselves and the state by that point was so bankrupt that it did not have the capability of leaning money to them. The financial system in general had crumbled in ways that there really was no effective lending for agriculture available. What will happen there is a serious question. I think the opposition at this stage has said that it does not aspire to retake this land that would be a very unpopular act in an overwhelmingly Black African country, but instead try to make it productive again. To do that I would imagine that many of these people would sell their land for whatever the current value was to somebody who was capable and willing to farm on it.

Q: Well within Zimbabwe are there any people there who have the right skin complexion who could take it over? I mean…

SULLIVAN: There are some, and even among those people who were given the land, there are potentially good farmers, given the right circumstances. In addition, there are many black Zimbabweans who have farmed for generations. Even though the system of communal land under which many black Zimbabweans farmed is a dependency-inducing phenomenon in which people don't have land in individual title, but only as part of a community, they do have farming skills. In the right circumstances if black Zimbabweans were to receive land in a system in which the system designed to foster more productive farming and provide them with the means and the capital to do such, I believe many of them would succeed. Zimbabweans have written many excellent plans for how to do just that, but the Mugabe government has been making land distribution decisions on political grounds rather than on the basis of agricultural productivity..

Q: In a way could you say you in the embassy were essentially holding a waiting brief, waiting for the guy to die?

SULLIVAN: Well there were challenges and possibilities and, as I say, we supported the opposition. There was at least one more round of elections, where we tried to monitor to the degree that we could. Yet, at the end of the day there was no effective means of moving Mugabe. The opposition was unable to mobilize sufficient public in the streets to challenge him effectively. I'd say that in some ways Zimbabweans had a history of intimidation; intimidation certainly by Ian Smith and that regime, intimidation during the independence campaign by Mugabe and intimidation in the campaign against Joshua Nkomo in Matabeleland. Most

Zimbabweans or their parents have memories of that intimidation and never want to return to that sort of open civil conflict again. And Mugabe has used that in his favor.

Q: Often with embassies you end up with the senior officers, the ambassador, DCM and all you've been around the block you say okay this too shall pass and then you get junior officers who say for God's sake let's do something. Did you find that kind of split?

SULLIVAN: Not really I think that to the degree there was that phenomenon at the time I arrived, there had been a major and very activist AID mission very involved in democracy building, society building, etc., but in some ways doing their own thing without much coordination. I think we effectively implemented a system of a much more coordinated effort. That, notwithstanding, there were at least some individuals within that mission who were out on the edge, and the usual result of that would be that they would put themselves in situations where either people they were supporting would get arrested and we would try to intervene to prevent the worst. I wouldn't call it a policy dispute it was more differences over how to implement policy effectively.

We as an embassy were also fairly aggressive. We had one set of officers, who were documenting human rights abuses. They were out in the countryside and they were in effect rounded up by some so-called war veterans under the guidance of Mugabe's security apparatus. They amounted to sharp troops under Mugabe's political control. They came up and set upon our people, they beat an individual from an NGO who had brought our people to the site to talk to people. They laid a few blows on our embassy driver and instructed our group to follow them. Who knows what would have happened, but our embassy driver was wise enough to only follow them for a little and then speed off in the other direction. Our embassy people escaped the situation, but we faced viciousness like that fairly frequently.

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, for instance, was being charged at one stage on trumped up treason charges so we and other embassies insisted on witnessing that trial and even forcing our way into the court room, not physically but by our presence. At the end of the day, those charges were dropped and our having insisted on our ability to witness the trial, as provided in Zimbabwean law, helped assure there could not be a secret judgment against him. There were certainly frequent circumstances of human rights abuse and most of what we could do was bear witness to it, document it in our human rights report, complain of it, and seek to have the United Nations pass resolutions condemning such violations. Some of those positions were being undercut by the failure of many Africans to speak out.

Q: What sort of human rights abuses were there?

SULLIVAN: Well there were a couple people killed, not high numbers but probably in the tens of opposition activists killed. Many tortured, many beaten as well as failure to abide by the

commitments that Zimbabwe had made in their own constitution and elsewhere to have a fair judicial system, fair civil procedures and humane prison treatment; much of that became politically manipulated.

Q: What about the British embassy and you and other embassies. Were you all sort of united or doing your thing? How did that work?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I think we were quite united and the British embassy and we exchanged information closely. We had a somewhat larger embassy, but they had a lot of traditional relationships and a lot of information. We exchanged that information, we compared notes on how were could most effectively seek to influence the problems and most of the Europeans were in harmony. The European Union did take pretty strong positions, often at British urging. So the West was fairly united. I spent a lot of time with the Africans because I felt their taking strong positions was likely to be more effective than our taking strong positions. Many of their embassies, if not the majority, were in agreement with the criticism of Zimbabwe, but their governments back home took ambiguous positions. The most important country of all to Zimbabwe, South Africa did not take clear positions. Ironically the critical factor in breaking Ian Smith's government was the decision of the apartheid government of South Africa to end its support for Smith and, in effect, force him to negotiate towards a majority rule. This South African government, Mbeki, was not prepared to do a similar thing and wound up giving cover to Mugabe, even within internal African forums. I think South Africa's unwillingness to take a strong stand was the critical factor in having Africa as a whole not take a stronger stand against the abusive policies of Mugabe.

Q: It was far afield but was Qadhafi messing around in there?

SULLIVAN: Funny you should ask that but it was a little bit, a little bit, not a lot but a little bit. Ironically in the midst of my time, there were the beginnings of the great change in U.S.-Libyan relations in a way that made our concern about Libyan involvement in Zimbabwe moot. If the U.S. was now much closer to Libyan what was our problem with Libyan involvement in Zimbabwe. I think the broader point was that Mugabe found himself isolated from the West, which he used to admire. He speaks British English with a terrific accent and great vocabulary. He used to relish his trips to Europe, he had a new young wife who used to love to shop there and he was personally, I think, anguished over being excluded from this life. That said, he did what people do in circumstances like that. He turned to whomever he could and there were a series of countries and leaders willing to give him some comfort, Malaysia and several others. He used to travel there and had a close relationship with the previous Malaysian Prime Minister. He also cultivated better relations with China.

Q: Why would China care about there? I mean is it just…

SULLIVAN: Resources basically,. Zimbabwe does not have petroleum, but it does have a great deal of mineral resources. Zimbabwe's historic resource was chrome that was an issue way back when when the U.S. Senate sought to prevent the administration from boycotting Rhodesian chrome for fear that our only source of chrome would be the Soviet Union. More recently there are other newer resources such as titanium. Zimbabwe had set up in the '90s some investment vehicles for mining and some of it produced significant investment resources. There was also some diamond mining taking place which, I understand, has increased substantially in the last couple of years. The instability in Zimbabwe was diminishing Zimbabwe's attractiveness to Western and even South African investors. China saw opportunities and beginning to invest at the time I was there.

Q: Did you have many discussions with the Chinese ambassador?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I used to do some social events with him and so on. The Chinese at that time had a pretty common line whether it be in Cuba, Angola or Zimbabwe and it tends to be that, "Well sure we advise them to follow our economic reform model and yet we are not going to interfere in their internal affairs. We don't adopt political criteria in our assistance or our investments and, therefore, we are not going to raise political concerns in our conversations. And because we have a great shortage of resources, we acquire them wherever we can and will follow a strict commercial criteria."

Q: Well then you left there in 2004 was it?

SULLVAN: Correct.

Q: Whither Zimbabwe when you left?

SULLIVAN: Well I guess stuck, stuck and stuck in a bad place. There's been perhaps a slight improvement since then in that the opposition has joined the government and, at least, introduced some elements of economic rationality. But Mugabe turns 87 this year and doesn't think it is time for him to retire nor to prepare his succession. So it's a sad situation and I'm afraid the Zimbabwean people will continue to suffer until he does go one way or another. There is supposed to be a new election within another year, whether he will do that or he would ever agree to a fair election I am dubious. Certainly within his own party and we did have discussions with a number of people within his own party who wished that he would go, one of whom actually did put himself on the ballot as an independent candidate for president in the most recent presidential election about three years ago and received some modest support. But at the end of the day, most ZANU PF leaders are unwilling or unable to break with Mugabe. And ZANU- PF and Mugabe and his security forces are willing to use whatever force is necessary and whatever fraud is necessary in order to continue in power.