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MICHAEL SCANLAN

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INTERVIEW

Q: All right, this is part one. It is April 14th, 2025. All right. Mike, can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Where did you grow up? Where did you go to school?

SCANLAN: Sure. I was born in Washington, DC, but moved two months later to Warsaw. My father was a Foreign Service Officer. In those days, it was a very different world. There was the Iron Curtain and there were very few foreigners. Life was very immersed. We went to a local daycare, had a nanny, our friends were Poles, indeed, Polish was our play language and how we spoke to each other. We only spoke English to our parents.

Following Warsaw my father was assigned to Uruguay. He was a Soviet specialist. Back then Washington thought all leftist activity in South America was an extension of Moscow. My father had served in Moscow before I was born; he was a great Russian speaker. For the fun of it and to deepen his understanding of the local environment, he sat for the driver's license exams all Soviet citizens had to take versus just automatically getting one as a diplomat.

In any case, for homeleave, we first went to Hawaii, where my only grandparent lived and where my parents had bought a small house. It was before the days of a family friendly Service. My younger brother was due to be born but didn't come out on time. When my father asked to delay his arrival to Montevideo, he was told your wife can either induce labor or she can follow when the child shows up. And so, my father went ahead. It turns out shortly thereafter, my brother appeared, and then my mother had to take the four of us from Hawaii to Uruguay. Four kids, six, four, two, and a one-month-old infant. To complicate it, I fell out of the VW bus as we were pulling up to

the airport. I had a concussion, but my mom was full steam ahead. She says it was one of the most challenging experiences of her life.

We were in Montevideo for a couple of years. Again, it was a much more immersive experience than for Foreign Service kids today. We went to a, uh, a local, private school that catered to Uruguayans of English descent, thus some classes were in English, and some in Spanish, but recess and everything else was in Spanish as the kids were local. However, my siblings and I continued to speak to each other in Polish; it was just a habit.

We had a funny experience with that. When we arrived, our house wasn't ready, so we stayed in a hotel for a month. One weekend, my father decided to take a little tour of Montevideo in a taxi. My parents left my infant brother with a local nanny … people were so trusting back then. Plus, no cell phone to call if there is a problem. I mean, it's just amazing. In any case, we got into a taxi outside the hotel, my father and I in the front and my mother and two sisters in the back. My father spoke to the driver in Spanish, and my parents talked to us in English.

At some point, you know, as a little four-year-old, I got bored, so I turned around on the seat, kneeling so I could talk to my sisters … yes, no seatbelts back then … and started speaking Polish. Suddenly, the shocked driver uttered in Polish, "Why do these children speak Polish?" It turns out the man had been in Andre's army in World War II, and chose not to go back to Poland after the communists took over. He ended up in Uruguay and had eventually created a taxi company. My father and he became great friends. My father was a near-bilingual Polish speaker. Again, a very different Foreign Service than today. When we departed Uruguay two years later, he insisted on taking us to the airport in his best taxis.

The next two years were back in Poland, at the Consulate in Poznań. Four American families, two of which had kids. And it was really fun. I was seven and eight in Poznań. And you know, we were very happy to be back in Poland again; it was even more of an immersion experience than in Warsaw. The only other consulate was the Soviet Consulate. We quickly made local friends. We would just climb over the Consulate wall to drop into their apartment courtyard behind us. There was a great park across the street. We could get around on public transport and take various sports and art classes at the Palace of Culture.

We would have been keen to go to local schools, but my parents decided that we probably should start studying full time in English, because at some point we'd be back in the United States. But the State Department said, sorry, to few American kids - my older sister and me, and the Kristula's two daughters - so they would not pay for an American teacher, they said it was up to the mother to homeschool. Remember, up until 1974, my mother was a part of my father's work efficiency rating, even though she wasn't paid. It was just expected that she'd do it.

Both parents, the Kristulas and my parents, said no, they didn't want that kind of family dynamic. So, my father found somehow in Sweden, this woman who was interested in having an unusual experience as a teacher. Her father was the governor of a region. The two parents basically paid for her to teach us kids and paid for her accommodation. Our school was in the basement of an apartment building. One room, four kids: Michelle and Michaela Kristula, my older sister, Kathy, and me. And we're all in different grades. We'd come to school, and you'd have this little syllabus of assignments. And basically, once you'd be done with your stuff, you were free to go.

It was surreal, there was this ceramic stove in the corner where you had to put coal into it to warm up the room in the winter. So whoever got there first had to stoke the stove, and we took turns during the day to keep the place warm. But it was great for us, because in Poland, at that time, they didn't have enough schools. So, the kids were divided between morning and afternoon sessions. So, whenever we finished our individual assignment for the day, we were free to find some Polish friends to play with.

My sister actually joined the Polish Scouts, their version of the Soviet Pioneers. So, she had a red scarf, etc. My father said, it's not about politics, it was about my sister hanging out with her best friend Jola. At some point, a party apparatchik found out that a U.S. diplomat's daughter was in the Polish scouts, so she got thrown out.

Our whole world was in Polish; all our friends were Polish, as there was no expat community; my father was a very public figure because of his language skills, and very active. As for the Catholic Church, we got to know it quite well because it was one of the few areas of freedom still within communist Poland in terms of free speech, or at least trying to maintain an institution beyond the party. And so, we had a great time.

After a year there, my parents decided it would be good for us to get grounded in the US. Again, it was such a different world. My sister was nine, I was seven, and they put us on a plane in Warsaw to London and connected there to Chicago. My mother is from Wisconsin, my father from Minnesota, so they thought, you know, go back, see the relatives for half the summer.

We arrived in Chicago, and we had these gifts already wrapped from Poland. And the American Customs officials, for some reason, didn't recognize that we had American diplomatic passports. They asked us where we were coming from. We said 'Poland,' and, of course, my sister and I were talking to each other in Polish. So somehow, they assumed we were foreign kids or something. And so, they insisted that we unwrap the packages. And we're like, but we can't. These are for our uncle and aunt. And it is like, welcome to America.

But we had a great time. I remember that summer I learned about Baskin-Robbins. They had ice cream that was called Batman and Robin, and it was really my first big kind of exposure to the endless choices that exist in America. After our second year in Poznań, we came back to the U.S. for four years. We were in temporary housing for six months. We went to St Rita's Catholic school, uniforms and all. We continued to use Polish, the

kids that is, but when I started having some problems in school with English, my mom said, no more Polish, anyone. And it was too bad because it was our fun secret language, and it also started to fade.

My parents eventually bought a house in Falls Church City; it was a very different place than it is now. There was actually green space between the City and the Beltway; you had to take a bus into DC. I-66 didn't exist yet. It was a very small town experience; we ran free, it was great, much like we had done in Poland. Growing up in Poland and Falls Church was really a very liberating way to grow up in terms of just being free and on your own. Thus, we were all keen when my father was assigned to Warsaw in 1975. For me, it was seventh and eighth grade.

But this time it was a bit different. The international community, unlike in Poznań, was large enough to have an international school with close to 200 kids. So, it wasn't as much as sort of like living in Poland. Previously, we always felt like we had been a part of Poland. This time, I had international friends. A couple of American friends lived on my street the first year. Our common language was English. It was fun, but no more a real immersion experience. After that, we were back in Falls Church, where I did my four years of high school at George Mason.

Having spent most of my early years in Poland and Uruguay, I thought, you know, there were two religions in the world. One was Catholicism, and the other was soccer, of course called football over there. And, when I was old enough and came back to America, I suddenly realized, oh my God, you know, there are all these different religions, all these different sports, and at that time, very few people played soccer here. And so I remember my high school years, it was a bit tough, the things I loved, soccer, my foreign experiences, big city living, my peers couldn’t relate or didn’t share the same interests, so I had to, for the most part, put them aside.

And then I decided I wanted to have a very American experience but also go somewhere where I could play soccer and ski. And so I ended up going up to New England, to Vermont. My father was on the City Council, and the city lawyer had gone to a college called St. Michael's. I had gotten in early admission to UVA, but they were national champs in soccer - I would not make the team - plus most of the students were from the DC area, and no skiing. So, I went up to St. Michael's in Vermont, and you know what I found out: Boston is the center of the universe, Cape Cod is Nirvana, and the rest of the world doesn't exist.

If you talk about, you know, historical Italian stuff, it is really Italian Boston stuff or Irish Boston stuff, which really has little to do with Italy or Ireland. But it was a good experience. I mean, really good. Everyone had a nickname, all the local slang. And since my parents were overseas, I would usually spend the holidays in New England. And so, it really was an Americana immersion experience. I remember one guy, my roommate Sully, Tony Sullivan from Melrose, Mass, and his best friend, who was also there, was Cahn. After one semester, Con decided he was too far from home. I'm thinking like my parents are in Yugoslavia, and you think you're too far from home. So, he jotted down

what would be his mailing address. I said, “Oh, my God, your name is Carn, but I’ve been calling you Cahn, and you've never corrected me.” Their strong Boston accents meant no pronunciation of the letter R. For me, that was my real Americana experience.

But all the same, after my first year of college at St. Mike's, I went to my parents in Belgrade. I spent the summer there. My plan was to backpack in Europe in August, including swinging by Brussels, where my girlfriend would be playing soccer. My parents were supportive, but I had to earn the money for it. So, I got this job joining a laborer brigade to move furniture for the embassy during the summer turnover of housing. None of them spoke English.

The first day I came home and told my dad, you know, I'm trying, I'm working like a dog, but if we all get fired, it's not my fault. These guys are taking endless cigarette breaks, and the head guy keeps calling me a Polack. I associated that with the jokes in the U.S. at the time about Poles being stupid. My father laughed and said it's Yugoslavia. Cigarettes are a must, and what your foreman is saying means slowdown in Serbo-Croatian, yes, your boss is telling you to work more slowly!

This and all these different experiences in Yugoslavia and Poland growing up, you know, were very informative in giving me insight into ground truths, mindsets, experiences that later helped me in my career. For example, as a kid, we used to have to go from Poland to Germany once a year for our medical check-up at the U.S. bases. When you go to the military base, it's like a little America; you're not in Germany. And I realized how different a diplomat's function is from the military, you know, the military isn't there to influence people. They're there to train for something that hopefully will never happen. It drove home how important it is if you're trying to influence a foreign culture to immerse yourself in that culture to understand the mentality of the society you are trying to achieve an outcome with. As diplomats, we are basically selling ideas.

Also, I experienced the difference between the big country and the small country. Another time when we were driving from Poland to Germany for medical check-ups, we were driving via Czechoslovakia, overnighting in Prague. As we were driving there, we started seeing all these military vehicles. And my father, you know, told my mom to start writing down the license plate numbers. These were Polish vehicles getting ready to go in with the Soviets, as demanded, to put down the Prague Spring.

And so, you know, I looked back on my life and thought, Oh, I lived through these experiences, seemingly normal, but they were far from normal. But in any case, yeah, I decided after that summer in Belgrade, I love being part of a foreign culture and trying to understand it and integrate into it. And so, when I came back, I knew I wanted to study international relations, a major that didn’t exist at St. Mike's, so I applied to Georgetown School of Foreign Service.

My mentor there was Jan Karski, an amazing human being who was with the Polish underground during World War II. He actually was smuggled in to work in one of the Nazi concentration camps and then made his way out across occupied Europe to Spain,

and then on to the UK and the U.S. He told Churchill, Roosevelt, Supreme Court Justice Frankfurter, our members of Congress, what was going on, but you know, no one reacted or even believed him. It seemed too far-fetched. He said it was a heavy burden to have seen the atrocities, but being unable to get wartime leaders to act to stop it. For me, it was nice to have that Polish connection at Georgetown, as the Soviet bloc was the focus of my studies, and the program was fantastic.

I also spent one summer at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, right after martial law had been declared in Poland. My father was going to go there as the ambassador; he expected to arrive there at the beginning of 1982, so I withdrew from Georgetown to live with him for nine months, regain my Polish fluency, play soccer, and better understand the changing currents in Eastern Europe. Because of the declaration of Martial Law in December 1981, my father never went, and it was too late for me to enroll in Georgetown, so I worked in the spring, and funded my studies that summer in Poland.

And it was pretty amazing because I was reminded again of the power of the church in Poland. I remember going to where they have the Black Madonna in Częstochowa. You have this city, and then you have this park, and you have these trees around the park, and then inside you have the church and the Black Madonna. And so, you know, there's martial law. And I remember walking there with Polish students through the trees to the church. Suddenly, you see all these signs, and you think they are Solidarnosc signs, because of the way they're written. But when you come up close, it says John Paul, you know, the Pope, but it was just the script that made it look that way. When we walked back into the city, there were truckloads of ZOMO, their riot police, but they stayed off the grounds of the church. So, it was an interesting lesson in the uniqueness of Poland vis-a-vis the other East European countries because of some of its historical institutions.

When I graduated, I took the Foreign Service Exam, but that can be a long time in the making. So, what else do I want to do? I don't know. Maybe I should just go to grad school, which was not the smartest decision. I went up to Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After my first year there, I realized that I'm playing soccer a lot. I'm going to the Tufts pub a lot. I also realized most graduate students were in their late twenties and early thirties and, based on their work experience, had concluded that they needed Fletcher to get to where they wanted to go. And that basically told me I needed to do the same. So, I took a leave of absence from Fletcher.

I went back to DC and decided to try the private sector before I make any long-term commitments or something. So, I worked for BDM, a consulting company that was helping the State Department set up the Office of Foreign Missions. And I was hired because I had an East European background, language to help them set up the travel control program that we were imposing on Soviet and East European diplomats as reciprocity. So, I did that. And then the follow-on contract was won by another company. And they tried to hire us all. And I said, well, I've already done this for a year and a half, I need to try something else.

So, I stayed with BDM and worked on their net assessment, political-military war gaming contract with the Pentagon. I did that for 18 months. I didn't like it, but it was a very good lesson. I kept saying, you know, I think I'm going to quit. And they're like, oh, you are part of a team, and they like our team, you know, we'll give you a salary increase. So, I started making very good money quite early on. And in those days, I could go out every night and still work. And my friends would say you're just always complaining about your job. Please do something about it. You know now money itself doesn't seem to make you happy. To learn that was a very good lesson because I realized I really did want to do the Foreign Service or something related to service, and ideally overseas.

So I went back to Fletcher, finished up, took the exam, and the long process began. In the meantime, I interviewed with General Electric when they came to campus. I was surprised. I just interviewed for the fun of it and to get some practice, and I was actually the only student to whom they made an offer. But the requirement was to go live and work, I think it was somewhere in Pennsylvania, at one of their factories, learn their factory products for three years, and then go overseas and be, you know, their salesman. I was like, no, no, money is not the driver, plus that was too long to wait to go overseas. But I needed an income, so I interviewed at the Congressional Research Service, and I got a job there, it was, you know, 1989. Things were changing, I was going to be one of their analysts on Eastern Europe, particularly with a military focus, courtesy of my experience at BDM.

A great experience befell me when I was there. I got invited by the Japanese Embassy to participate in one of these exchanges for young and upcoming professionals who have no background on Japan to learn about their perspective. It was ten days in Japan learning about their politics. There were six of us, journalists, government folks, and me. It also turned out to be very insightful for me about the uniqueness of the European security framework, and how the Germans really owned WWII, including the Holocaust.

And so, I was exposed to how a different part of the world responded to that period. Whereas the Japanese did become pacifist, they really didn't talk about WWII or take ownership for it, whereas the Germans had been so much more upfront. I also came to appreciate the value of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In Asia, there was no equivalent to discuss the region's security challenges. I know they were trying to educate us about Japan, but the irony is that by going there, I came to understand Europe much better.

But the long and short of it, I was at the Congressional Research Service, waiting for the long process for the Foreign Service to pan out. During this time, I met graduates from the Kennedy School, and the School had put together a group of graduates to go to Poland to work on privatization. They asked me if I wanted to join. And I was like, yeah, I'll get my Polish back. It'll be a great experience for the Foreign Service. And so, I went home on Thanksgiving and told my parents, you know, I'm gonna go do this and gave CRS a month's notice.

And then I got a letter from the State Department saying you're in, and they offered me a January class. So, I remember I called up and explained the situation, "If I go over to Poland and have this experience, I'll come back with strong language, field experience, yada yada." And they said, "Oh, actually, this is the only class that is currently funded for this year." So, I thought, oh, my God, I'll have to wait another whole examination cycle, and other people will pass and push me down on the list, maybe I won't get another chance. And since I knew this is what I really wanted to do, I said yes.

It turned out that there were classes every couple of months. So, I must admit, I entered the Foreign Service with a bit of bitter taste. I remember the first day was January 2nd, 3rd, 4th, it started snowing in the Washington context. I recall when I was in St. Michael's, I said, you guys must have had tons of snow days growing up. They're like, come on, man. You always go to school. It doesn't matter. But at the Department, halfway through our first day, they are like, 'Everyone goes home.' They're shutting things early because of a couple inches of snow.

Q: Wow. So you didn't go to Poland again, right?

SCALAN: Yup, never made it to Poland. When you first start in the Foreign Service, there is a finite list of junior officer postings to bid on; we were still called junior officers at that time, and none were in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. I desperately wanted to find a way to keep getting language training in a Slavic language, an option open for me. By then, it was 1991. It was the thick of change. I'm a young person. Oh my God, I'm going to miss it all. I got to get there somehow. Therefore, I needed to end up in an English language speaking post, of which there were only three on our list: London, Hong Kong, and Toronto.

And I didn't want to go to Toronto because, you know, I didn't, no disrespect to Canada, see that as an overseas assignment. Having now lived in Vermont and visited Canada a lot, yes, there are many differences. I got very lucky. I knew Hong Kong would go to a tandem couple, I ended up being assigned to London, which kept me eligible for language training for my second tour. And I was thinking, you know, Czech, hopefully more Polish, because when I tested, I was at, you know, 2-2 or 2-2 plus, not at the 3-3 level, or of course I could get Russian, because, you know, obviously the thought was, is that going to be the next wave of change?

In London, for those of us on the visa line, in the slow period, they had three-month rotations to other sections of the Embassy. But I did my research because the group that had gone to Warsaw to do privatization, some of them had moved on to Kiev (now Kyiv) to work on a Kennedy School Project for Economic Reform in Ukraine, and this was still the Soviet Union at this time. I saw in the regs that Post could authorize 90-day leave of absence without having to get the Department's concurrence. So, I said, great. I went to the Political Counselor and DCM and pitched the idea. Both applauded me for being creative and said this is the kind of experience and knowledge the Department will need going forward.

As a courtesy, I was informed by the JO Career Development Officer in Human Resources. She said they would need to take it to panel as a formality. Of course, when they did they advocated against it. They were just covering themselves, as it was explained to me. One of a number of examples of bureaucracy stifling creativity I experienced in my career. However, I was really impressed when the Ambassador wrote an appeal for me, but he told me upfront, it wouldn't help. He said he wanted to show me there were many in the Foreign Service who valued creativity, and I should not stop bringing that mindset to my work just because of this unfortunate experience, which was a loss for the State Department.

So a few months later, I took his advice to heart. I was working at an event at the Ambassador's residence as a site officer. This had been the first G7 Summit Gorbachev had been invited to, and after it, Bush and Gorbachev had a meeting at the residence with a press conference. And so, whenever they do these things, they need junior officers to say, you know, move this way, or the bathrooms are over there, the parking lot is straight ahead, etc. But in any case, I'm there and they come out and they make this announcement that Bush, after his stops in Greece and Turkey, is going to go to the Soviet Union, Moscow and Kiev. I overheard White House and State officials talking about how hard it would be to staff the visit to Kiev. You know, the embassy in Moscow can handle things, but in Kiev they had just opened a Consulate with two officers.

And I thought, I can do this. I can direct people to bathrooms anywhere in the world. I had just been in Kiev on vacation visiting the program, and was keen to get some more ground experience. So, I went up to them and said, I've been to Kiev. In fact, I was there just last month, which was actually the only time I had been there. And I said, I would be happy to help. They asked me if I spoke Russian. I had taken only a semester of it, so I said, I speak Polish, and you know Ukrainian is like Polish, even though I knew Russian would be the working language, but I was confident I could finesse it.

Two days later, my boss says "Michael, go up and see the Admin Counselor." Embassy London is huge. I'm in the counselor wing. I don't even know where his office is. I had been up to the executive office because we had rotations, but most of the embassy, you don't know. So, I went up to the Admin Counselor, a very nice guy. And he goes, "Michael, the White House has asked for you." What? And he goes, "Yes, tomorrow a car will pick you up." You know, a car in London. To get a car in London from the embassy is like, you know, never. "And they'll take you to the Soviet embassy to get your visa. And this was like on a Thursday because he said we need it by Friday because on Saturday, a car needs to take you to Middenhall Air Force base to catch a US Air Force C5 Galaxy to Moscow."

Okay. So, it gets even more unbelievable. I get on the C5 Galaxy, you know, there is the Secret Service, the White House Communications, special commo truck, the special cars and the extra, you know, vehicles for the president and chase cars. I was the only State Department person. And then there's like six or seven White House advance, young staff people. And they just, you know, "oh, you've been to Russia?" And actually, I had been there. When we left Warsaw after eighth grade we crossed Russia on the Trans-Siberian.

We took a train from Warsaw to Moscow and then all the way to Khabarovsk, six and a half days during the Soviet period. Flew to Japan and on to Hawaii to see my Grandmother. So yeah, I told a lot of stories of what happened on the Trans-Sib or what we did when we were in Moscow for a couple days and what I had seen in Kiev the previous month.

So when we got into Moscow, that was the period when the Soviets had withdrawn all our Embassy's local staff, so they had like American college kids, who were Russian speakers, doing basically local employee jobs, but they were short on staff. At the Airport, I was told by Embassy Moscow staff, you're responsible for the White House advance team, here is a rented van and local driver who will take you to the hotel. So, I'm like, OK, but the advance team points out the prep meeting is not until the evening.

It was like, 2 pm or something, and they said, we don't want to go to the hotel. Michael, you speak Russian so let's see the city. And I'm like, "Hmm, I really don't speak Russian, what do I do? So, then I turn to the driver and in Polish say, "Please take us to Red Square?" He understands, and when we get there, I say everyone has a couple of hours to explore GUM, St Basil's Cathedral, etc.

Then, you know, around five o'clock, it was like, okay, we probably should head to the hotel to have dinner. They said, "We don't want to eat dinner at the hotel. Let's go to a local restaurant." I know I can't read the menu. And then I say, "You know, guys, just an idea, McDonald's opened recently in Moscow. It's the largest McDonald's in the world. How about we go there, and you can take pictures, and you can have your own experience." And you know the menu, so you can order yourself. They're like, "all right!" So we go, we go to McDonald's, and they're like, taking pictures and all, and locals are trying to talk to them—fun experience for all.

So, then we went to the hotel for the 8 pm prep meeting with embassy staff, Secret Service, White House Communication and White House advance staff. The head White House guy puts four chairs in the middle of the room and calls out the names for the leads for the Kiev portion of the visit: WHAC so and so, Secret Service so and so, White House so and so, and State Department Michael Scanlan. I'm thinking like, I've been in the State Department for a year. And so, I go up there, and I sit down thinking, what is going on? They introduced me to my two Office Management Specialists and added, by the way, Michael, tomorrow, you're responsible for taking all the non-embassy folks going to Kiev with their equipment.

After the event, I spoke to the Senior Foreign Service embassy person assigned to go to Kiev, and said, "Listen, I have no idea how this happened. No idea. And I have no illusions that this shouldn't be you. But why don't we do it this way? I will come to you every time and get your input, your advice, and your two Kiev Consulate colleagues, as you guys are the experts on the ground. And I fully appreciate that. Or we can go talk to them to see if they will change this. It's up to you." And he says, "The former works for me." So, I said, "OK."

So, the next few days it's just me and about 17 folks, Secret Service, WHCA, and White House advance. We are driven in a bus to the airport. And then the American staffer says, this is it. I'm too busy. I can't take you in. You're going to have to handle this yourself." I'm like, "What? Me?" He explains to me where the check-in counter is. So, I lead the 17 over there with all this extra baggage equipment, and there is like a sea of Asians, turned out Vietnamese students, workers, like in a scrum trying to get on flight and Russians, everyone's pushing.

I'm thinking, oh my God, what am I going to do? " And then I see this guy in his suit, clearly a European, and I go up to him and say, "Man, this is crazy." He goes, "Yeah, yeah, I've been here for a year. I work as a consultant. This is the norm." And I said, "So you speak Russian?" He goes, "Oh yeah, I speak Russian. And this is why I was hired to do this." I said, "Could you give me a hand?" He said, "Sure, why not?" So, I told everyone to give me their passports. And then, when we had pushed our way up to the front, I asked him to tell them that we're here to support the Bush visit. After that, everything just works. You know it's amazing. They could not be more helpful

On the day Bush visits Kiev, he is there for 8 or 9 hours, there were like 800 Americans in Kiev connected to the visit. For that one day, you know, we had a special WHCA van, satellite dishes set up at high points … This was before cell phones … . You could go to any beaten up Soviet telephone booth, put in 10 Kopecks, dial a number, and be like, connected to a White House switchboard? Can we help you? So, it was really an amazing eye-opening experience on high level travel.

And then I went back to London and suddenly, you know, the Soviet Union collapsed and they decided to open all these posts in these new countries, pin the map on the wall, so to speak. And they were looking for volunteers to set things up, and my Kiev experience gave me the credentials to qualify. And so, I ended up going to Almaty for the summer with seven or eight other folks. We lived and worked in Hotel Kazakhstan, but eventually rented a little, charming, historical one-floor building as the Embassy. I was the lowest man on the totem pole, so I did all the basic admin work. There was no history of local staff knowing the basics, so everything, with our newly hired local staff, had to be figured out from scratch.

My American colleagues were all around 50, and I was just 30. And it was a blast. The Ambassador-designate tasked me to organize the first Fourth of July ever in Kazakhstan. And you know, we have this big backyard, and it's the middle of summer. And he says, "I want this televised. I want American music to be played. I want this to be casual. We have to have burgers and chips or fries, and you know, it's gotta have this American imprint. This is going to be their first impression of Americans."

I mean, this was a really cool goal, but of course, the how to do it was left up to me. My local staff and I tried everything to figure out how to make hamburgers from local cattle, which were primarily dairy cattle. And so even when you grind up the beef, it just doesn't taste good. There were no western grocery stores like in Moscow. We were truly perplexed. Yes, getting it televised was easy; we were a novelty, same with American

music. Providing the local philharmonic with jazz music was not a problem, but the food?

Then I picked up the phone, “Hello, McDonald's Moscow, how would you like to be the sponsor of the first ever Fourth of July party in Almaty - oh, you're not willing to sponsor us, but can I buy burgers from you?” “Yes.” “How long can I keep them on the ice when transporting?” “Okay, eight hours from one freezer to the other.” I'm like, “Can you sell me mustard, ketchup?” “Yes”. “All right, we're expecting to have about 300 guests. How many 600 hamburgers?” “Yeah, that should be enough.” So how much ketchup? They told me how much ketchup I need for that, how much mustard, and relish. I recalled that the Finnish grocery store in Moscow sells potato chips, and we call them. Yes, good. So we were set. And in Almaty, we found a distributor of slightly expired Old Milwaukee beer and Coca-Cola. Good enough. It's American. Yeah. And so basically, we were like, OK.

Of course, we now had to go to Moscow to collect the food. My local GSO assistant and I flew out for a weekend to get this all done. Kolya was just such an amazing, great guy. It turned out his wife was originally from Moscow. His father-in-law was a retired Air Force general, former Head of Air Defense for Moscow. And so, we flew into Moscow, and at that time, Embassy Moscow was overwhelmed. The Embassy says McDonald’s can deliver the stuff to the Embassy, and the Embassy’s van can take you to the airport, but then you are on your own.

This was before coolers existed. So, we went to a civil defense bomb shelter and found these aluminum containers that, if we put ice in a trash bag, which the Embassy said they'd give us from the cafeteria, we could put the hamburgers on ice. And the flight time was four hours. So, we figured it would take two hours to get to the Moscow airport—two hours to get from Almaty airport to the refrigerators of a local restaurant in Almaty. We would be within the 8-hour transport window that McDonald’s had strongly advised us to meet. So, then I was, oh, how about the buns and condiments? So, I asked everyone who had hard suitcases to give them to me. So Kolya and I go with all this stuff to Moscow.

We do have dinner with his father-in-law. It turns out that a Defense Attache who was coming out to Almaty was in Moscow, so I asked him to join us. Rolf, he was an interesting guy; he had been born in one of the Baltic states. When the Soviets invaded the Baltic states, his mother and he were deported to Kazakhstan. Eventually, they had gotten their way to the West, and he grew up in the States. But he was a fluent Russian speaker because he learned it in Kazakhstan as a kid.

The General’s wife had prepared a feast, told us the food's on the table, the bottle of vodka in the refrigerator, this is a men’s night and headed out. So, of course, there is a lot of toasting, especially as it turns out the General and Rolf had been advisors in Vietnam at more or less the same time on opposite sides. The toasts were all about the new era of peace, everything's gonna be great, wonderful, the end of the Cold War, toasts and toasts and toasts.

At some point, you think, What am I gonna toast to? The General had mentioned he had another daughter who had gotten married but was divorced. And he was afraid that his grandson didn't have a father around to guide him to grow up to be a good man. So, the next time it was my turn, I pointed to the picture of his grandson and said how lucky my generation is not to have to live in the shadows of the Cold War, but can focus on our families so every son will have his father in his life to guide him. The General pushes back his chair, stands up, and walks over to me ... .and I'm thinking oh my God, I said something wrong. He picks me up by my shoulders and kisses me on the lips, gives me a bear hug, in traditional Russian fashion, and says I'm a good man. I think I'm the only Foreign Service Officer who has been given the sign of respect of being kissed on the lips by a General responsible for the Air Defense of Moscow.

The next day, we got to Domodedovo airport with all our containers, which at that time was jokingly called 'Doma Dreadova', because it was just chaos. This was the wild, wild East Airport. So, I ask Kolya to go check us in while I stay with our 13-14 containers of meat and stuff on the edge of the tarmac. I could see our plane. Unlike today there were no security controls. Kolya comes back with the tickets and checks for our cargo, but we had very little time. Then I see two guys driving a luggage cart, you know, the ones they use to load and unload planes. I wave and say here is $10 if you take all our stuff to that plane. I don't know where they were supposed to be going, but they were glad for the opportunity to make $10 dollars, a lot of money back then.

The next challenge was preparing the food in Almaty. Barbequing there was for shashlik, so you know, you don't have a grill to make hamburgers. So I drew a picture. I said, "Cut an oil barrel in half. And then you need to make this grill that we lay on top of it. And that's how you cook hamburgers." The potato chips, that's easy, no prep necessary. And then I said, we have to make tossed salad. And then, you know, they want to line up the tomatoes and cucumbers Soviet style. No, in America, you mix it all together, and so we had this little practice of tossing salad in a bowl.

Of course, it turns out when we were cooking, the oil drum they had used was not aluminum but metal, so cooking was a very hot experience on an already hot Kazakhstani summer day. The next day at our staff meeting, the Ambassador designate said not a bad job at all, thanks. As if it was a piece of cake, we almost broke out laughing. The local staff and I had a great after-party to celebrate our creativity. That was the best part, to begin to form a sense of team, with a can-do mentality among our new local colleagues.

There were many other experiences like that during those three months. But what it told me was I'd made the right decision; this was the part of the world I wanted to work in. When I got back to London, the Department asked if I would curtail from London, forgo my second Junior Officer tour, and go out and be the first permanent pol/econ officer at Embassy Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. I had an amazing two years there. Ten of us worked out of a small building in the center of the city, no Marines. I lived in an apartment building right behind the main government building. I could walk in and see anyone. Only President Akayev's wing had guards on it.

For the average citizen, we were quite the novelty, almost like Martians; most people had never seen a Westerner. But there were many challenges. During my two years there, there were no flights into the country; you had to come in and out of neighboring Kazakhstan. My ensuing year in Armenia, they had on-and-off heating and electricity, which I got to experience firsthand, living with an Armenian family for a month. Being in the first wave of American diplomats to the new republics of the Soviet Union to set things up and establish relations was so rewarding, and a complete immersion experience, no English was spoken, everything was problem-solving with little guidance from Washington, life was local friends and a small expat community, no service economy to speak of.

By then, the brutal collapse of Yugoslavia had occurred. Again, the Department was looking for a handful of volunteers to join the UNTAES field mission, responsible for overseeing the peaceful reintegration of the last breakaway Croatian Serb enclave in Croatia. I jumped at the opportunity. Initially, the UN sent me down to Ilok to open up a Civil Affairs office. Of course, they forgot to mention it was right on the border with Serbia, with the free flow of "Republic of Serbian Krajina" rebels and paramilitary groups.

And so, I go down with Biljana, who is a UN local interpreter. And luckily, she is from Krajina. And we go down there, and basically, the officials aren't very happy to see us. But it was already clear that something had to happen. We needed to have a presence there. But I had to find a place to sleep. And no one wanted to rent a room or a house to a UN official, especially an American. But my instructions were to plant the UN flag, and that wouldn't work if I commuted from the UN armed base up in Vukovar.

My only option initially was the Dvorac, it's a castle, an Austrian Hungarian big building, not you know, like English castles. And they had these cabanas behind it. But that was also where the RSK troops were staying. And the only place to eat was down in their basement, which was always full of cigarette smoke. I mean, people carrying guns, drinking, smoking. So, we went there, and luckily, the head of that detachment had been a classmate of Biljana's. And so she explains the situation, and she says, "My father had been ambassador to Yugoslavia, and my father was perceived as a balanced and thoughtful person by all sides." So that obviously helped us. And so, he said, "Ok, Michael's a normal person, I'll tell everyone to leave him alone."

But everyone's drinking. I mean, just like, you know, would people remember when they got drunk? I remember the first night I'm trying to sleep in one of the little cabanas; I could hear the singing, the toasting, the shooting of the guns into the air as they got drunker. Yeah, I'm like, oh my God, this is stupid, I should not have stayed here?

Whatever, it all worked out in the end, but it was an amazing experience. So many adventures, situations I had to sort out on my own. I was tasked to take the first person from the rebel zone into Croatia proper for a relative's funeral. It was a confidence-building exercise. Jacques Klein, who was our amazing, simply amazing

head of the mission, who was also a U.S. ambassador and a U.S. reserve major general, had worked this out with the Croatian Government's lead for coordination with the UN Mission.

It was simple: drive this person in a UN car to Vinkovci and back to Ilok. I had this paper with stamps, you know, it's so important, in that part of the world, stamps. So, when we drive out of the region, everything's fine. We go there, and I'm with Biljana, the same local staff person. Right. And the woman we transported attends the funeral and spends some time with her relatives. Our goal is on our return to spread the word, it's possible nothing happened to her.

On the contact line, there were the Croatian special police, UN Jordanian troops, and the RSK forces - we had to go through each checkpoint. On the way back, the Croatian police, armed with long-barreled guns, say, You can't go through. I said, "Excuse me, here's the paper. This has been organized." They said, "Sorry, the war crimes police want to talk to her." I said, "Excuse me, this is not part of the deal," and started telling these people it's supposed to be confidence-building. I still recall enough of the local language from my Belgrade days to handle simple things. And they just said, wait, and they had their guns pointing at us.

And then they started telling the woman from Ilok in the backseat, "Tell your Serb occupiers in Ilok we're going to come there. And if they (meaning Croatian Serb Krajina displaced persons) are still there, we're gonna kill them." And I understood it all. And the woman started crying, Biljana was smoking one cigarette after another. So, I turned around and said to the women, "Listen, tell me right now, do you want to talk to these officials when they come? I just need to know your position right now." She says, "I don't want to." I said, "Fine."

We end up being there for like 15, 20 minutes, and this car pulls up. A guy gets out, just like in the movies. I mean, just really looks the part, just a really tough guy. Comes up, speaks good English, and says to me, "Her husband's a war criminal, she has to come with me as I need to interview her." I said, "I have no idea what the status of her husband is, but all I know is that your government authorized this confidence-building measure, and here is the paper." He said that's not relevant and told the woman to get out of the car. So, I asked him to stop talking to her. He threatens me, says I could be charged as an accomplice, and continues to tell the women to get out of the car.

Driven probably by fear and knowing he thinks I am just a UN employee and there will be no consequences, I pull out my black American diplomatic passport. And say, you are going to have to punch me to get this woman out of the car. And if you hit an American diplomat, your career is over. I instructed him to tell the special police to open the barricade and let us through. I just went a little berserk, to be honest. And the guy is stunned and doesn't know what to do. I keep demanding action using all the local language expletives I know. And then he steps back and instructs the police to open the gate. As we drove through, I thought, wow, I could do that because I had an American

diplomatic passport. What if I were just a UN person? I gained a lot of respect for how brave our UN colleagues were to serve in a dangerous place without the safety net I had.

Q: Let me ask you, what was like traveling in the UN paper as a problem, you know, sort of like. not respected that much?

SCANLAN: Not respected, because there will be no consequence. In my case, they're like, Oh my God, if I rough up an American diplomat, there will be consequences. Even in this instance, I reported it to Klein, who wrote a strong letter of protest, suggesting complications in the reintegration process if this behavior by Croatian police continues towards UN personnel. A week later, I got an official letter of apology from the War Crimes officer. Klein understood that in the Balkans, if you're in charge, you need to show that you're in charge. If you don't at least act like you have power, they'll say, why should we listen?

Shortly after that, Klein asked to see me. He said, "Michael, I'm going to announce that you are going to work for the Head of Civil Affairs, Gerard Fisher, as his special assistant." I said, "Oh, really? Is he asking for it? He says, "No, I'm just going to issue a statement, and you just show up tomorrow." "Have you told him?" "No, but he'll see the statement." I asked, "Is this the way we really want me to start?" "Michael, just be there." I said, "Okay." So, you can imagine how warmly I was received. Gerard Fisher was a very smart, and creative Swedish guy, but his Achilles heel was he wasn't good at coordinating with the other senior leaders, and my job was to fix that.

I attended the senior staff meetings with him in the morning, along with the heads of the military, police, political, intelligence, and administrative sectors, among others. So, I always understood what the bigger plan was. And then during the day when certain things would happen, I'd say, Mr. Fisher, okay, if we're gonna do that, we should probably tell so and so. And after about four or five days of that, he exploded on me, "Michael, do you work for me." "Yes, I do sir." And everything you wanted done the last few days with other sections, I have gotten it done. I want you to succeed, and for you to succeed, part of my job is to be sure that your clever ideas are understood and appreciated, not misunderstood and blocked. And after that, everything worked out super fine. And it was a great experience.

The freedom to do meaningful work was amazing. Klein was excellent at empowering people. On local election day, a Foreign Service colleague and I, who had joined me as a special assistant to Fisher, joined Klein's office in case assistance was needed. This was the big test for Zagreb, as the Croatians were brought in to basically run the first nationwide local elections in the region since the war. But unfortunately, the voter lists weren't accurate, there were insufficient ballots, they claimed administrative errors. The negative interpretation was this was an effort to dilute the number of Croatian Serb voters, as well as to provoke the Croatian Serbs to demonstrate, throw stones, etc, basically create the narrative Croatian Serbs are unwilling to reintegrate into Croatia.

As this bad news was unfolding, Klein asked the two of us for a solution. So, she and I went outside and brainstormed. The only option was to extend the election by a day so more ballots could be brought into the region. As for the voters' list, we proposed that anyone in the region with a *domovnica* (Croatian citizenship document) could vote. UNTAES had been working for months with the Croatian government to issue to all the Croatian Serbs in the region, even those residing across the river in Serbia, *domovnicas*. We also would need our UN Civil Affairs colleague, who was embedded as the UN liaison in the local Croatian Serb administrative HQ to have Dr Stanimirovic get the word out, not to demonstrate. And so, we briefed Klein, and he said, "Works for me."

A Croatian deputy prime minister was in the conference room as Klein's election counterpart. Klein goes back into the conference room and says, you know, as we've been talking all morning, there are all these problems, you know, it's very complicated. He never accused them of anything. So, I think, you know, in the spirit of the good we are all trying to do here, I'm going to issue an order to extend the elections in the region by a day and allow all Croatian citizens who show up at the polls tomorrow to vote. And the DPM is like," You can't, that's not possible."

Klein then yells out to his office manager, get President Tudjman on the phone for me. Adding something like, and if we can't sort this election thing out, then I'm going to have to extend the timeframe of the reintegration mandate. She would periodically yell back, I'm still trying to get him, but no luck yet. And Klein would puff away on his cigar and just chit-chat. The very uncomfortable-looking DPM finally said, "Okay, okay, okay. I agree. Let me talk to my people." It was very rewarding because it was about on-the-spot making decisions, to solve problems that affected people's lives, and laying the foundations for peace and strengthening the security in Europe.

When it was time for me to rotate, Klein asked," Where do you want to go?" I said, "Vladivostok.' " He goes, "What?" I said, "I really want to become very proficient in Russian, and I figure I need to be immersed. I'm not an academic learner. I tend to learn from experience." "Are you sure? Because after UNTAES, they're going to owe you." I said, "Yes, I want to go to Vladivostok?" So he goes, okay. Then at some point, he calls me back and says, "Michael, I'll show you how this works."

He calls; I assume it was the Office Director who handles Russia. He introduces himself, says a few words about the outstanding work I am doing, and then says Mike has bid on Vladivostok, just checking to see if we can be confident Mike will get the job?" "Hmm, okay, well, let me put it this way, I have a meeting with the Assistant Secretary in Berlin next week, is this something I need to add to the list of issues I will be raising with him? Oh, oh you're saying that you can't commit to it, but Michael is the perfect candidate for the pol/econ position, gotcha." He hangs up, looks at me, and says, "Have a good tour."

Q:And so I... Let me ask you, when you were doing that, Klein told me a story that Russians would go to Germany on a weekend and they could bring a bunch of cars.

SCANLAN: Yup, it was a huge mission, thousands of people, of course, shenanigans were possible. There were so many different cultures in the mix and notions of professionalism. It was tough, but Klein, through the force of his personality, made it all work. If he believed in your abilities, he would give you incredible latitude. After using the threat of military force to take control of the oil fields, he empowered Fischer and me to negotiate with the Croats the return of the oil fields to help pay for the mission, as Croatia would get that land back in advance, but he asked us to set conditions that would encourage people in the region to stay.

Klein had sent in the Ukrainian tanks, and I think the Ukrainians also provided the attack helicopters. He basically said to … I can't remember which of the paramilitary forces, you know, it was Arkan or one of the others, who controlled the oil field and basically … they're starting to deploy and you need to leave, and I'm serious about this, don't test me.

So, then we came in, and with the Croatian government and state oil company, we negotiated that they retain all the local staff instead of bringing in all their own people. Our goal was to give people an incentive to stay. So, I also insisted that they be paid in Deutschmarks until such time as the whole region is fully under Croatian control, as the Croatian kuna was not yet in circulation in the region.

We actively urged people to take Croatian passports. Explaining that once you had a Croatian passport, you're a part of the country, and all kinds of benefits, including visa free travel came with it. I remember telling Dr. Stanimirovic, "parliamentary democracies are funny, especially when you have proportional representation. At some point in time, a small party can be the party that makes the difference. It can be the party that is necessary for one of the larger parties to create a ruling coalition." Needless to say, it was ironic that years in the future, HDZ relied on small Croatian Serb parties to secure a majority. It was really rewarding, be it frustrating at times, to try to educate people on the opportunities they had based on the decisions they made.

But anyway, I went off to Vladivostok via advanced Russian language training. However, the setup at Post was quite different from when I bid on it. They had expanded the number of Americans at the Consulate. We had all these people, but only a few of us actually spoke Russian. It was not a very smart setup. I was one of the few people excited to be there.

But in any case, after six months, the Department asked if I would be willing to be TDY-ed to Montenegro as the only American. I'd technically be in Belgrade, as far as the Milosevic gov't was concerned, but in reality, I would be a liaison to Djukanovic's government in Podgorica. And I'd be reporting both to Dick Miles, the Chargé, because we didn't have an ambassador at the time in Belgrade, and to Bob Gelbard, who was the President's and Secretary of State's Special Envoy to the Balkans. So, I flew back to Washington, met with Gelbard and others. They said, this is how you're going to work and explained the objectives.

In Podgorica, I worked out of a small, locally staffed USIS office run by Hilda, who knew everyone. We quickly expanded it to five locals. The IC presence was UNHCR, WHO, NDI, OSCE, and a few others. This was during the Rambouillet discussions and subsequent NATO bombing of Yugoslavia (then Serbia & Montenegro). When I arrived, everyone on the ground had a sense that things were not going to work out at the talks in France and were preparing for the worst.

The Head of the UNHCR field mission expressed to me his exacerbation that they couldn't get the Montenegrins to agree to allow Kosovar refugees to cross Montenegro to Croatia if the worst-case scenario broke out. The Montenegrins were concerned it would be disruptive to their delicate internal stability.

So, the next time I met with Djukanovic, I said to him, We are trying very hard to help you. That's why I am here. This is why we are trying to broaden assistance programs, even though you are legally and technically a part of Yugoslavia. Yes, you control the customs and the police, but not the Yugoslav National Army (JNA). We understand you're trying to maintain peace and stability in a Montenegro split over its identity, and, most importantly, to chart a course separate from Milosevic. At the State Department, that's understood, but if there's ever a situation where there's a war in Kosovo, and there are refugees fleeing and Montenegrin police are not allowing women and children to cross into Montenegro to get to Croatia, I'm sorry, that will be on the front page of the New York Times. None of us will be able to explain all these nuances to the U.S. Congress, and the funding for what we're doing now to help Montenegro will disappear. So that is why you need to find a way to make it work.

A few days later, I bumped into the head of the UNHCR, and he shared, "Mike, good news, everything's fine." It was wonderful to have the freedom to use common sense and creativity to get things done.

But there is always bureaucracy. Yes, Podgorica is a small city, but I had to get everywhere on foot or grab a cab, let alone get out of the capital. The U.S. Embassy in Belgrade had already drawn down to essential personnel, and all family members had departed. There were plenty of Embassy cars, but State Department rules only allow State-trained local staff drivers to drive Embassy cars. Luckily, my father's former driver, Nesha, the nicest guy in the world, found a solution.

He told me a Jetta had been stolen from a diplomat years ago, had been found by the local police recently, and returned to the Embassy. The officer was long gone and had already collected on his insurance claim. The Embassy maintains the car, but technically it isn't a USG purchased vehicle, so rules should not apply. Luckily, the Admin Counselor said, "Good idea." So, I drove the old Jetta down from Belgrade to Podgorica. It made my work easier and more efficient. But the big thing is, on the day the bombing began, I had a way out.

After a while, it was looking like the Rambouillet talks were not going to succeed. This is what I heard and shared with Djukanovic. He assembled his national security team and

began discussing contingency scenarios. After midnight, he turns to me and says you're tired, I'm sure it's hard to follow our discussion. Go home, we will all see what awaits us in the morning.

I had rented a small apartment in the center of town. I got up around nine, checked my mobile, no missed calls. After a while, I decided I should probably check in with the Op Center. So, I call in, you know, they had a special task force set up, and said, "What's the status? Has anything been decided?" He said, "Who are you?" I gave my name again. He then said, "Why are you still there? The plane left this morning at 6:30 am from Belgrade with the Embassy staff. Why weren't you on it?" I said, "I'm in Podgorica." He says, "You have to leave. You have to leave today." And so, I was like, thank God I had the Jetta.

But the Jetta was old, and it sprang a leak in the radiator almost immediately. So, I had to drive for like an hour, fill up the radiator, and repeat a couple of times until I got to the Montenegro-Croatian border crossing leading to Dubrovnik. There was a little Montenegrin Customs shack. They asked me if I would be back. I said of course. They then broke out a bottle of raki, and we drank a toast to that. And as I got back in my car, one of them said, we will be waiting.

I drove to the Excelsior Hotel in Dubrovnik because I needed a base of operations. I said, "You know, the hotel seems empty." He said, "Yes, when it became clear fighting was likely to occur, our big medical conference got canceled and most other reservations as well." I said, you know, you have a suite on the top floor looking over the city, I'll probably be here for a long time. Any chance that I can have it? He said sure, and then he quoted the price; it was not an option. Then I said, listen, this is what my per diem is. Can you do it at that rate? "Why are you going to be here for so long?" "Well, I'm an American diplomat, I'm part of the effort to push back on the terrible things Serbia is doing." "Really? Let me talk to my boss." They adjusted the price.

Q: *Oh that was the way to get it?!*

SCANLAN: Yup, the key is understanding the motivations in your local environment. It was a nice arrangement, but practical. I'd agreed with the Montenegrins that I would stay close enough so it would be easy to talk on the phone or meet with them if they crossed over.

There was a UN office in Cavtat. It was there to monitor the disputed peninsula between Croatia and Montenegro. The head of mission was a very nice officer from New Zealand. He agreed to host a weekly meeting for IC folks who had evacuated from Montenegro so we could continue coordinating.

After a short while, the Montenegrins asked me to come over for a meeting, it was a topic they said they could not discuss on an open line. I let Washington know, as we were already bombing. Also, three American soldiers had wandered over the Kosovo border and had been arrested by the Serbs/Yugoslavs, and in my case, I would not be in uniform.

The answer I got from the State Department was, it's your call, you are the one who developed the relationships. We won't order you to go, but you're authorized to go if you are willing.

I trusted my counterparts, basically the senior foreign affairs and national security actors. But it did cross my mind that the invitation to come over had been on an open line. The JNA could have been listening. They had a base just above the mountain road that goes down from the customs post to the first Montenegrin town. I drove my Jetta to the Montegrin side of the border and parked it, since they were sending a car to pick me up, but no one I knew showed up.

So, I'm looking at this person I don't know, asking myself, is this a setup? Am I going to be paraded on Belgrade TV as a spy? So, I said, "Go back and see if someone I know will come up here."

And then folks I knew from the foreign ministry and from the national security group came up, and chatted in the Customs shack. They were getting concerned that Montenegro had been targeted in the bombing. The message we had previously communicated is that as long as there was no effort by Yugoslav military forces based in Montenegro to target NATO planes, there would be no bombing of their sites in Montenegro.

And then they asked, "Can you come back tomorrow? We want to give you something, because Milosevic's people are trying to use these strikes on Montenegro to stir up our people against NATO and the U.S." Montenegro was split between two political camps, Djukanovic's, who were trying to distance Montenegro from Milosevic, and Bulatovic, who supported Milosevic. The latter were trying to create social unrest in Montenegro in order to give Milosevic a pretext to declare martial law and send in more JNA.

And so, they said, "Tomorrow, we'll give you some of the shrapnel from one of the missile strikes, and you can let us know if it's really yours or fabricated by Milosevic's people." So, the next day I came back, I put the box in my car and drove back to the Croatian side. For the first time, the Croatian Customs asked me to open my trunk. I pointed to my diplomatic tags and said this had not been a requirement before. But they insisted, so I complied. They looked for a second and waved me on. I gave it to my American colleagues in Croatia, who got confirmation it was ours. I shared that with the Montenegrins, reminding them that if the JNA based in Montenegro locked their radars onto our planes, they would be targeted. I suggested they informally pass that message to local JNA forces.

Everything I had done up to then had been ad hoc. Communication by email from a State laptop I had borrowed from the U.S. post in Mostar, or oral updates to the desk on my cell phone. To keep the communication active with the Montenegrins, including meetings at the Customs shack for more private discussions as needed, my presence was extended and supplemented with more traditional support.

I also stayed in Dubrovnik because I could brief western journalists on their way into Montenegro. What had happened is Milosevic had thrown out all foreign journalists from Yugoslavia, namely Serbia and Montenegro, saying they were not reporting fairly. So, I called the Foreign Minister in Montenegro and said, here's your opportunity, issue a press release that Milosevic's order does not have jurisdiction in Montenegro. All the journalists forced out of Serbia will come down through Dubrovnik into Montenegro, and you will get your story out. Within days, journalists started flowing into Montenegro through Dubrovnik.

There were always opportunities to make a difference. Another example, USAID had this fast reaction group, I forget, I think they were called OTI or something. They wanted to send all this public information material, like truthful information, to Montenegro, where they had a local employee. So, they came to me, asked if I could bring the stuff to the Montenegrin Customs post. I told the local employee, let's meet in no man's land. I still had Belgrade American diplomatic license plates, moving boxes of pamphlets from that car to a Montenegrin car, if filmed, it could be spun on Serbian TV. In no man's land, there was a bend in the road, and nothing would be seen from the Montenegrin side.

Shortly after that, I got a call from my Montenegrin interlocutors, who said, "Things are getting dicey. We need to meet at the Customs shack." They implied to me that there is information that I will need to pass on ASAP.

I shared this with Washington. It was agreed that the US military in Bosnia would fly over analysts to Dubrovnik airport and wait for a readout from me. When I crossed into Montenegro, three people I knew were waiting for me. The shack was no bigger than an average dining room. They laid out a bunch of maps. They said Milosevic was getting more aggressive. They were afraid he would declare martial law. If so, the Americans would need to destroy bridges to limit his ability to reinforce the JNA troops already in Montenegro. That would be the only way for the current Montenegrin government to hold on. They explained in detail the positions of JNA troops, weapons, and critical transportation junctures. When they were done, it was already dark outside.

I crossed back to the Croatian side and, as pre-agreed, I drove to the Dubrovnik airport. It had been shut down since the bombing had started. It's dark, but there are a few lights on the tarmac, where I see a couple of U.S. military helicopters, their blades still rotating. There are Croatian police everywhere. I go into the terminal, and I am escorted to a room. There's this big table where I lay out all the maps and papers they have given me. I briefed them, which was followed by a seemingly endless list of clarifying questions. Some of which I had answers to, others I didn't. They sucked me dry like a sponge. Luckily, the information never had to be used.

Towards the end of the crisis, I was told some senior folks needed to meet with the Montenegrin leadership. It was time for a longer-term, focused discussion. We knew the day they would arrive in Dubrovnik and that it would be sometime in the morning. However, we couldn't tell the Montenegrins at the prep meeting in Dubrovnik when the group would crossover, i.e., the meeting time, the number in the group, and how long

they could stay. That would have to be communicated somehow over an open line right after they landed. So, I volunteered to be the conduit and use the following messaging tactic. I would call my POC and say the letter A followed by a positive or negative number; that would signal the crossover time, with A being noon plus or minus. Then I would say B and a number, i.e., the number of people in the party. Finally, C and a number, how long the meeting could run. So that's how we finessed the visit.

There were many more interesting moments, but after close to three months, the Kosovo crisis ended. I was asked by Gelbard if I wanted to stay in Montenegro, as the Department was ready to break my Vladivostok assignment. As tempting as it was, I wanted to really master Russian. Plus, I had been curtailed out of Armenia to go to UNTAES, and now if I was curtailed from Vladivostok for the Balkans again, I feared I would lose support for more postings in the former republics of the Soviet Union. I didn't want to risk that. And so I went back and finished the year in the Russian Far East, which was you know, quite the adventure. It was like being in the Peace Corps, but getting a salary. I travelled to report on Kamchatka, Chukotka, Magadan, Yakutia, Sakhalin, and more. It was a really immersive experience, and my Russian got very, very good.

But it was also a hard tour as most of the people at the Consulate were unhappy. And later on, they did the right thing. They reduced the presence to five Americans, and everyone had to have good Russian. With only English, it was impossible to have a life in Vladivostok. During my time, many people, without the requisite language skills, took the job because of the 25% hardship pay. But after three months, staring at your paycheck will not make you happy. After Vlad, it was time to return to the Balkans, to a one-person post in Banja Luka in the Republika Srpska (RS) entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

Q: Back in the Balkans.

SCANLAN: Yes, back then, everyone thought S/NIS within the EUR Bureau would become its own Bureau. If so, I would have two homes, one for postings in the former Soviet republics and in ex-Yugoslavia. So, it was time to refresh my Balkan credentials. When people today ask me if I enjoyed being in the Department, my answer is I was in the Department, but never really in it. I spent most of my career operating abroad in posts either in their infancy or in one-off officer setups, and later in secondments to international organizations. This path gave me remarkable freedom to use my own judgment on how best to advance U.S. policy objectives in the areas I was assigned.

Q: It sounds like, like Peace Corps, like you're traveling back and forth, you're doing stuff, but it's not like obviously writing cables and memos, right? You know, all those interactions were going back and forth, but some cases, but a lot of cases, like, you know, when you're in Montenegro, a lot of it was oral communication or emails.

SCANLAN: Exactly, and that was the case in Banja Luka. The Ambassador allowed me to cc the Department on my emails to Embassy Sarajevo. The next Ambassador allowed

me to continue with that practice, but after I left, all Banja Luka reporting went to Sarajevo, and the Embassy would integrate it into their cables. I had gotten this leeway from the Ambassador when I said how things look in BiH depend, if you are in a Bosniak, Serb or Croat dominated community, and thus the Southeast European Office and INR at State will benefit from receiving regular direct reporting from the RS.

The approach or arguments you use to achieve the U.S. goal depend on where you are located in BiH. When I arrived in Banja Luka, Dodik was still on the positive side. However, he had lost the elections to the wartime Serb nationalist party SDS. Thus, the new goal was to try to moderate the nationalism of SDS. So, we pushed them with the help of their coalition partner PDP. We, at the same time, encouraged Dodik to build a coalition of reform, Western-leaning parties on the left. I spent a lot of time with the various political leaders explaining to them why they should pursue one political route or another. I remember the political counselor in Sarajevo telling me, Michael, you're getting way too deep into politics. My reply, the final choice is theirs, I'm just sharing perspectives they often don't see.

Many mornings, between 7 and 8 am, I would get a call from the Ambassador. "What's going on? What are you going to do today? The message was push, push, and push. And we came close. Just before I left, we had national elections. The moderates in the RS did very well, but the so-called Bosniak and Croat non-nationalist Bosnian parties had done poorly. Nevertheless, there were enough elected deputies from these groups at the State level to create the first non-nationalist government. Still, it would be highly dependent on all the so-called Bosnian Serb moderate parties. Also, the coalition would be huge, like 11 different parties or something. My departure was delayed to help make a final push. Dodik was game, but one Bosnian Serb party saw it as too unstable, so the opportunity was missed.

In BiH, like so many other places, corruption was a huge problem; many just saw it as the norm. I remember telling Dodik, when I first arrived, he had just been voted out of power, "see this as an opportunity." Go spend three, six months with your family in Canada. Learn English, you can then play on a field larger than the RS. Go see how democracies and rule of law societies function because you know I take you out to dinner and you always say "Oh don't pay Michael. These are my friends. We don't need to pay." And I always insist on paying. That's how it works. You need to understand how things are different. I know you say it's not really corruption. It's just the way people do favors for each other. But if you're going to join Europe, that's corruption. Of course, he didn't listen.

Q: How's that possible within a department in the sense like you're lucky that you didn't get assigned to something that is outside of your comfort zone, I guess, in that way.

SCANLAN: I got very lucky. For me, I joined the Foreign Service at the right time, when the parts of the world that I was familiar with from childhood had splintered, namely the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia. I was single and willing to go on a moment's notice and live

in some really tough conditions. I had also demonstrated a knack for being operational and was not afraid to take chances. I understood the local mentality.

But also, I didn't try to go anywhere else. My reasoning was that to prevail in diplomacy, you had to understand the mentality and be able to communicate effectively. Also, at least where I worked, U.S. interests were win-win, i.e., promote peace, rule of law, democracy, all of which lead to prosperity. Yes, I could figure out how to function in Japan or Bolivia and do an okay-to-good job. Or I could continue to perfect what I knew by further immersing myself in societies I felt at ease to operate in and be much more effective.

Like in the RS, I paraglided with locals, and IC colleagues are like really, in a mine-infested country. But locals were like you're a real man, we respect you. I always made it a priority to develop a local life, so I could deepen my knowledge and intuition of the places I worked in. I would usually start a meeting with my contacts by referencing an experience that showed them I knew firsthand about the corruption, patronage, or real hardships their people faced. Basically, sending the signal, don't try to bullshit me, I understand the situation in your country.

But it was also a bit of the right place, right time. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia had collapsed; many assignment rules and operational rules went out the window as the traditional structured bureaucracy of a formal embassy or consulate had yet to be put in place. I mean, the fact that I could cross into Montenegro during a war by myself, that is not the norm. The fact that I could communicate sometimes over open phones in a way that would not be acceptable now. It was just basically seen as the way to get the job done.

Q: So you were an active observer of a society. Is that fair to say that you're actively immersing yourself in observing and participating?

SCANLAN: Yes, and this is what allowed me with credibility to tell local interlocutors, don't try to tell me blue is yellow. I understood the societies I served in. But to be effective, you also have to understand how the building, the State Department, works. So, I came back and worked in the Office of the Coordinator for Assistance to Europe and Eurasia (ACE). And that was great because I basically managed the funding of assistance for Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. Back then, the money was with ACE. Therefore, USAID, DOE, basically all agencies that wanted to do assistance programs in this part of the world had to make their pitch to us. In coordination with the Embassy, I could ask for papers and briefings to explain the initiative, the objectives, the sustainability, so as to be sure it's aligned with the Embassy's mission plan to advance our policy objectives in those three countries.

The experience with assistance led me to bid on the INL job in Kyiv. I initially committed to only two years. I had never been posted anywhere longer. But in time, I realized if I run a program, I would need at least four years to see it through, which is how long I stayed. My timing was perfect; I showed up right at the start of the Orange

Revolution. Since I was INL, I covered the historic court hearing where the decision to re-run elections was taken that led to Yushchenko's election.

I completely changed the way INL did programs in Ukraine. I knew we were not trying to make Ukraine into Puerto Ukrainia. We're trying to make it a part of the EU. So, my prosecutorial and law enforcement assistance programs were about adopting EU norms and standards. With the Border Guards, I brought in the Polish and Hungarian Border Guard to help them transform the Service's corporate culture from a Soviet military force to a European law enforcement institution, as these countries had done. Unlike other U.S. programs, I did not give equipment or gadgets. I took the position, first, it is necessary to change the training, personnel, and operational culture in line with European norms and standards before providing equipment.

It's about changing the mindset. The biggest challenge was corruption. As a result, Ukraine was awarded a Millennium Challenge Threshold Program to try to make inroads. One of the goals was to create inspector general offices in half a dozen agencies. What they found was everyone's like, we don't want an inspector general. And they couldn't get any agency to step forward. So, I went to the Head of the Border Guards, and I said, listen, you need to volunteer. You need to basically be the one because if you are serious about changing your corporate culture, this is a must. And at the end of the day, by being first, you will get more resources. You know, it's a problem. I'm not going to point fingers; we all know it will take time, but you need to show it's a priority for you. And so, lo and behold, he told the Prime Minister's office that Border Guards were happy to be the pilot program. And then his special assistant told me he had gotten a call from the Prime Minister's special assistant, who asked him, 'Have you figured out how to make money from this? Why are you volunteering?"

So, anyway, I spent four years in Ukraine during a historic period of hope. I also met my wife there. So, an excellent tour all around. From here, I was selected to be the DCM in Minsk. When I bid on it, it was a normally staffed embassy. I had a year in DC for additional Russian language training. But prior to that, INL had me go to BiH to do an assessment of how INL's huge program there could be oriented to promote EU norms and standards, as I had done in Ukraine. When my report was done, the Assistant Secretary for INL came out to make the pitch to the Ambassador. The answer was no; he deferred to the INL contractor running the program, who had been in place there for a dozen years. He had his system. A couple of years later, I heard he was escorted out of the Embassy, as allegedly he was doing stuff on the side.

Just before I got to Minsk, the Embassy had its staff numbers cut twice by the Lukashenko regime. The new cap was five Americans and the DCM as Charge d'Affaires. Instead of closing the Embassy, Secretary Rice made the decision to keep it open. My job was to figure out how to do it. I saw the goal as more than just showing the flag. The KGB, yup, still the name in Belarus, was quite aggressive; nevertheless, it was a rewarding challenge.

It took a year to rework the mix of positions left at post to make sense: pol/econ, public affairs, management, consular, and communications. Also, through a series of conversations with Lukashenko's Foreign Affairs advisor, I was able to get them to accept a USAID officer as an indefinite TDYer, that is not count it against the cap. I basically said, you need economic engagement. USAID helped Riga create an MBA program and is willing to do the same in Minsk, with Riga's help.

I explained that USAID will pay for it, but for the program to work, it needs to be externally accredited. Thus, professors and students will need to have all the same unfettered access to external information. Otherwise, we have zero interest. The idea was to set the precedent in Belarus of an institution held to external standards. Also, having a USAID officer presence in the country allowed us to do a lot of other U.S. programs.

But a lot of this work came to an abrupt halt when Lukashenko brutally cracked down on peaceful protesters following the 2010 presidential elections. In the middle of the night, they whisked off one of the key opposition leaders. No one knows his whereabouts and fears for his life. So, the pol/econ officer and I draft a press release for Washington … It is really, really crazy late like two or three in the morning. The text is something like… We know you have him. We need to see him. I was impressed because, you know, we have a time difference. Washington is just opening up, and boom, in real time, the message is out, and the regime makes him available to the public to see.

The remainder of the time is very, very tough. They detain all our local employees involved in our embassy security roving patrols. Our pol/econ officer does an amazing job in his near-fluent Russian to negotiate with the Ministry of Interior for their release. One of many challenges: it was an intense period.

EUR was happy with my performance and asked if I would stay on for a fourth year. I was like, for sure. Fascinating job, and my wife can still be close to Ukraine. But I had just gotten promoted to OC. And the D Committee overruled my extension, saying the job is an FS-01 and that I need to vacate it. Ironically, I'd also bid on the DCM job in Mongolia. Was offered that job, but ran into the same problem. So, I lost Minsk and Ulaanbaatar.

It was too late in the bid cycle to find a good OC job. So I went back to DC and did a year on the Hill as a staff member on HFAC. It was fantastic. In the fall, it was when the Democrats were in the majority. They were pushing forward - What was it? The Minsky bill on human rights named after the lawyer who died in a Russian prison?

Q: Magnitsky.

SCANLAN: Magnitsky. Yes, sorry, Magnitsky Act. I was part of the HFAC team that shepherded the Act through adoption on the House floor. It was interesting because the State Department was, you know, not for it. The HFAC Chair, Congress Berman from California, told me to go on to the floor and participate in the staff legislative process, and I'm like, you're my boss.

I also got to experience a change in political power. The Democrats lost control of the House, and Berman lost his race. So, the next six months, I was with Dems, in the minority with a new ranking member. It was interesting to see the complete change. As the adage in the House goes, "it's the tyranny of the majority." The year on the Hill for me was like another foreign posting. I really, really think all Senior Foreign Service officers should do a year on the Hill. It is a different corporate culture, with different motivations for making decisions than the Executive branch. Interactions by State with the Hill are so controlled, and it infuriates both parties on the Hill. I think State should give Office Directors and above much greater latitude to speak to staffers. I was given that latitude as a Congressional Research Service analyst.

After that great experience, I became the Office Director for Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, which initially was sort of a quiet, slow-moving job. I saw it has a chance with Belarus to get back to our approach of gradual change. For Moldova, to use our assistance to align it with EU norms and rebrand it as Western Balkans versus a former Soviet republic, it might improve its chances to join the EU. And in Ukraine, expand what I had done with INL programs to other U.S. programs, and that is to help Ukraine adopt EU standards and norms. And then, of course, the Russians went into Crimea, and that changed everything. Everyone is in at six and out, often close to midnight, seven days a week. It was amazing to see a whole-of-government effort.

A year later, I transferred earlier than planned to the OSCE Head of Mission in Moldova as the incumbent had resigned. When I showed up, the Transnistria settlement process had been frozen for over a decade. But slowly but surely, with the amazing assistance of in-country international partners, we made progress. We got the sides to agree to achieve tangible outputs. We came up with the so-called package of eight. A confidence-building step for both Chisinau and Tiraspol. It had the DNA of the final settlement in it. Namely, examples of Tiraspol allowing the extension of Moldova's authority to the left bank, with Chisinau demonstrating they were open to a special status for Transnistria within Moldova.

Here, too, coming up with a strategy and the tactical moves to advance the process was very connected to immersing myself in the local society. We passed on housing in the diplomatic area and opted to live in a Soviet-era apartment building in the center of Chisinau. For my wife, as a Ukrainian, it was easy for her to navigate society and build friendships. My son went to a local nursery and kindergarten in Romanian, to add to his English and Russian.

The Italian Chair in Office asked, given all the success, if I wanted to stay a fifth year. The OSCE agreed to make an exception to its four-year posting rule. The Moldovan government extended its support. But the American system had already lined up a new candidate, given the lead time of our bidding system. So, I went off to Sarajevo to be the Principal Deputy High Representative in the Office of the High Representative. And the best part of that job was also being the Supervisor for Brcko. I was there for three and a half rewarding years. By the way, the U.S. candidate didn't get the HoM OSCE job in

Moldova, and thus the forward output dynamic I had achieved on Transnistria came to a halt within a year. One of the challenges in the Foreign Service is ensuring continuity of engagement.

Q: So what I think Mike, we should do is this is great. So now we have covered the broad picture, so I think if you have availability this coming week, we can continue with just Brcko and the implementation and get into the, you know, grind that one out and find the answers to that one. Let me turn off the recording.

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Q: This is part two. Today is April 16, 25. All right, Mike, can you tell me a little bit about Dayton Peace Accords? When was the first time you heard about them, and what were your thoughts surrounding the Dayton Peace Corps?

SCANLAN: Well, my first real exposure to all of that was when I was with UNTAES in Eastern Slavonia, Croatia. Dayton had taken place, the big accomplishment in the Balkans, and Eastern Slavonia, where I was serving, was sort of a sideshow. At the time, my sister was in Sarajevo with the OSCE for the first post-war election. She was responsible for training people for election activities. So, I decided to visit her with a colleague.

In Eastern Slavonia, it was not very evident that a war had occurred, except for the destruction of Vukovar. The Croatians had fled, and things were falling apart. Displaced Croatian Serbs from Operations Storm and Flash were living in the abandoned houses. So, you had a sort of sense of decay feel to it, but you didn't really have the scars of war. And so, when we crossed over a military pontoon bridge into Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), there was immediately a different feeling. There was an American tank, and you had this destroyed bridge next to it. Everywhere was just really devastated.

When we got to Sarajevo, the destruction was quite shocking. And for me, that was the first time I had been back to BiH since I was a college kid. In the summer, I visited Sarajevo with my parents, who were posted in Belgrade. Then, Sarajevo was, you know, a very vibrant, multi-ethnic city. It had a unique flavor. Throughout Yugoslavia, Sarajevo was seen as a really unique place. We stayed in Sarajevo for a few days. But now, all the damage, crumbled buildings, etc. So, it was a realization that the challenge of what was being attempted in BiH was much greater than what we were trying to do in Eastern Slavonia. They were trying to put Humpty Dumpty back together again, not just from an economic standpoint, but also the outflow of people.

You know, many of the people who left were basically the people who had the ability to leave, which means those with skills, languages, or money. Basically, the people you need to build a society. Yes, in Eastern Slavonia, obviously, we're trying to convince Croatian Serbs to stay or return, but the scale was so much smaller. But in BiH it was the entire country. So many people had fled. And after a while, they start new lives

somewhere else and are unlikely to return. Kids are already integrated into a new society, a different society, etc.

Before I took up my first assignment in BiH, in Banja Luka in 2000, I drove across BiH by myself in a car from the Croatian coast to Mostar, then across eastern RS, through Sarajevo, up through Western RS, the Federation, and over to Zagreb. And you know, it was already four or five years after the war, and you still had a lot of destruction. But what really struck me was how difficult it was to get from point A to point B. It reminded me of that old joke in Maine: you can't get there from here.

Also, BiH is a country of villages. You know, you have Sarajevo, you have Banja Luka, you have Mostar, beyond that, mainly villages. All the villages are pretty much mono ethnic. Only the cities before the war were truly multi-ethnic. But now that was not even true. Sarajevo was predominantly a Bosniak city. And Mostar was clearly divided. I mean, it was physically divided along the separation line, and everything was destroyed, but also in terms of how it now felt different between the Croat side and the Bosniak side. Banja Luka had become a Serb city.

I remember writing the DCM that the best thing the international community could do was to connect BiH internally and externally by making travel faster and easier. Otherwise, everyone would stay in their mono-ethnic world. It was truly a challenge—how do you put Humpty Dumpty back together again? Is it possible, given the out movement of people and all the compromises made? Even back then, it was clear to me that all people, regardless of their ethnic group, saw themselves as victims. The question is, how do you get people to think beyond that? There has to be something to inspire positivity. Because if people are living in hardship, it's always like, 'Who do I blame, and why is my life so difficult?' especially when, in a relative sense, they had some level of stability before the war.

You know, life in Yugoslavia in the later years wasn't too bad. Yugoslavia had the best of both worlds, milking money from the West so it wouldn't go East, so to speak, and selling its products in the East without competition from Western products. Even as a kid in Poland, I knew that anything made in Yugoslavia was like an amazing product. So that's what I thought, great that the war stopped, but the challenge is implementation. How do you break out of a situation where it is static? The country had been completely reorganized, people felt traumatized, and the economy was not functioning. Fear was still very prominent. What are you going to do to create progress, have people stretch, and move forward? So, you know, that was the big question.

Q: Yeah, what were some lessons from Eastern Slavonia that were very valuable? That might be very valuable for future Foreign Service officers applying to maybe, in case of Bosnia?

SCANLAN: Unfortunately, our formula for success was not exportable to BiH. When I was in Eastern Slavonia, the UN sent a prep team for BiH to ask those questions. I was included in the UNTAES group that they interviewed for lessons learned. One of the

leads was a New Zealander I had gone to grad school with at Fletcher. So, it was like, UNTAES was a great success, so how does it work? But none of the things we identified as keys to our success applied to BiH.

UNTAES' mission area is a small region. There's only one decision maker, Jacques Paul Klein. He has the UN authority to make operational decisions independent of New York. He's also a U.S. ambassador. He's also a reserve Major General, so it's easier to deal with NATO. Wearing these various hats gives him multiple tools, thus authority. We have a timeframe, two years. We have a clear objective. We have an obligation from Croatia to do what it needs to do so its citizens can return. We're explaining to the internally displaced people their options and benefits, based on their choices.

The visiting UN group kept saying no, it's not relevant to BiH, or we don't have that, etc. And then I remember later telling my friend, "Like, wow, you really don't have much leverage." I wished him luck but was grateful I was with the UN mission in Eastern Slavonia, not in BiH.

Later, I heard the same takeaway from Klein. I heard through the rumor mill that Klein kept saying no to the Department's request that he leave UNTAES early to lead the UN Mission in BiH. He didn't want to go. Klein was a very approachable guy. At one point, I had a chance to talk to him and asked why he was refusing to be transferred to BiH. He basically said the same things we had shared with the UN team that had interviewed us for lessons learned.

His reply was something like, "I will go there, and I'll be one of multiple decision makers. I will have authority only in one area. As we all know here, everything is connected. Unless you have the same approach to everything, respond in the same way, and speak with one voice, then the different local elements will play the foreigners off each other, or things will just be very hard to get done. You will quickly lose any enthusiasm or excitement you're building among the local population, as well as the belief that change is coming. Because change has to be evident, it has to be quick, if the people are to start believing in it. Without that, there will be no buy-in." In the end, he went to BiH, as that's how our system works.

My takeaway was that you can analyze other areas for lessons learned, but you also have to accept that everything has its own unique context. Too often, we try to apply a cookie-cutter solution because it's easier and it's what we know. Unfortunately, regional expertise is no longer valued.

Q: Right. So, let me ask you, so do you think that sort of division of, you know, I'm going to refer to that as a division of power, after Dayton, obviously in charge of elections, various different actors having a different power in implementation? Was that a mistake? Should there have been a more centralized approach?

SCANLAN: Ideally? Yes, no question about it. But is that possible on the scale of a whole country? UNTAES was a relatively small region. I think it's the size of Delaware.

Having one decision maker was key; he had his parameters, and we had to move fast. He had to make decisions. And later, what I would see in BiH with multiple IC leaders, regardless of how much coordination you have, it is just never quick. It's never fast. People always have different perceptions, priorities, and tactics.

At the beginning, there was much more cohesion in BiH. I saw that from 2000 to 2002, when I was in Bajna Luka by myself, as the American presence. There was an OHR office. I worked very closely with it. There was a French, German, and British presence, and we really coordinated very closely. And there was energy because there was a sense that things were moving. We're making progress. You know, the local sides are talking to each other, the three different ethnic groups, and the people are exhausted. There's a consensus that, you know, no one wants to go back to war. There's a belief that going to the EU is possible.

We also had the international community working with the shared objective of getting this country back together and on to the EU path. The local communities were saying okay, how do we find that compromise to allow us to meet those objectives? So, at the beginning, there was hope, and even though there wasn't one person like at UNTAES making the decisions.

But when I came back in 2019 to be in OHR as the Principal Deputy High Rep and the Brcko Supervisor, boy, was it different. You know, the three sides were talking at each other, not to each other. The main nationalist parties were comfortable in the corrupt environment.

They used two tactics to maintain control. One is the culture of fear, to keep people focused on the horrors of the war and then peddle the idea that their party is the only one that can protect them from the other ethnic group. Even though it was 2019, the public narrative was like the war had just ended. Anything is better than war, meaning put up with what you have because it could be worse. Your personal security and that of your family come first.

The other tactic was, if I cannot scare you into submission, then if you want a job to take care of your family, you basically have to accept political serfdom because all the public administrative jobs, whether local, entity, or state, are controlled by political parties. You know, all the big public companies, like electricity and transportation, are controlled by the parties. Thus, close to half of the jobs are controlled by political parties or are professions highly susceptible to government pressure.

In short, there had been no reconciliation to remove the fear factor as a political tool, and no rapid growth of the private sector to allow people to escape political serfdom.

As for BiH going to the EU, it had been a couple of decades. The average person lost hope of BiH going to the EU. So, it's about figuring out how they can go to the EU, so their children don't have to do things they have to do to survive in BiH. Plus, EU

countries were so desperate for labor it was quite easy for people from the Balkans to immigrate.

Also, the international community had become deeply divided, whether it was OHR, the EU, the US, or Russia, and there was a completely new actor, China.

Q: So, what were your responsibilities in 2002? How would you summarize your work?

SCANLAN: When I was the American in Banja Luka?

Q: The American in Banja Luka, yeah.

SCANLAN: Well, when I showed up, Dodik was still seen as the anti-nationalist political force. He was still saying, you know, there's a way to create a BiH that can be a multi-ethnic state. The challenge at that time was with the Croats. There was no serious alternative to HDZ. At that time, SDA and SBIH were competing for the Bosniak vote. The SPD multi-ethnic party had gone down. And so, the goal for my two years was basically to try to support the development of moderate parties in the RS, SNSD, PDP, eventually DNS, and SP.

So, we basically championed a Dodik coalition of left-of-center or center parties. The Socialists changed their leadership to pro-Europe. The same thing with DNS. At the same time, we pushed the ruling SDS to moderate its nationalism, accept returns, rebuild mosques, and see itself more as a conservative party in a European context. As they moderated, the political discussion focused more on bread-and-butter issues, a better environment for change.

An example of the compelled moderation was the horrible incidents in Banja Luka. The IC had pushed hard for the laying of a cornerstone to rebuild the central mosque in Banja Luka. When the mullahs and IC ambassadors started assembling, a mob of Serb thugs started throwing rocks that had been pre-positioned. Everyone fled. I remember standing there with my local colleague as the security detail whisked the U.S. ambassador away. We decided that, since we were not prominent dignitaries, the safer option was to blend into the commotion of local observers, walk through them, and out.

The next day, I met with RS President Saraovic, a leader of the SDS, and conveyed the U.S. message that they needed to redo the cornerstone-laying and take part in it. This reinforced the OHR message, which I am sure hinted at his dismissal.

I shared that yesterday's event would fuel the narrative that Serbs are not trustworthy, making it harder for their voices to be heard on other issues. These are the stories that grab people's attention. So, they needed to show a willingness to reform, mosques being rebuilt in Banja Luka, and Bosniaks returning; otherwise, they would always be on the defensive. It was redone, and he participated, but sadly, it was done only because of pressure.

Nevertheless, our strategy, in general, worked in the RS. The nationalist element of the election campaign was reduced. Dodik and other moderate parties in the RS did very well at the entity and state level. As a result, my departure was delayed as we tried to get agreement on a non-nationalist government for the first time at the state level. But unfortunately, because the Bosniak and Croat moderates had done so poorly, it required many small parties, with the RS as the key. It was a huge number, like 11 parties; I believe it was every party except SDS, HDZ, and SDA.

It all came down to one RS moderate party, PDP. In Banja Luka, there was a meeting with the U.S. Ambassador, Dodik, and Ivanic. Dodik set the stage by saying he is all in. Ivanic said the coalition would be unwieldy. His party was relatively new, and he seemed to want to take a more measured long-term approach. Dodik said this is our chance, and we may never have another like it. You know, we will be redefined, ironically, from many people's perspective, as the driving force for non-nationalist change and the evolution of BiH, we, the Serbs. So, let's take the risk.

No question, even if that had worked, there was still the big corruption factor to resolve. But the thinking was one step at a time: get a non-nationalist state government, then focus on strengthening state institutions and combating corruption.

Q: Let me ask you. So that was in the early 2000s the moment we were getting into Iraq and Afghanistan. And our priority started to shift was that also an issue for like Bosnia, in case of like, you know, we're, you know, the American engagement was not that strong at that time, you know---

SCANLAN: No, I think it took some time to shift. I remember I was having a meeting in a café with the head of one of the small moderate parties when I got a call, I think it was the DCM, sharing the tragic news. Maybe I don't know what the calculations were, but until I left BiH in the fall of 2002, I didn't have the sense that we were suddenly, like, oh my God, no resources. No one's paying attention to us.

Q: So, what were some effective confidence and transparency, building measures that were used while you were there in those early days.

SCANLAN: Well, I think the one thing I tried to do was constantly be sensitive to the fact that, you know, how things look in BiH depend on where you stand. We had a branch office in Mostar, so we would take turns taking our teams back and forth to ensure we and our local staff had a sense of how things looked from Mostar or Banja Luka. Every second week, I would drive down Thursday afternoon to attend the Friday morning country team meeting in Sarajevo, to be able to speak up on whatever issue, from the perspective of Banja Luka. Basically, how do we advance or market what we are trying to accomplish to the RS audience? How do you push it and factor it into everything we are doing in the RS?

Unfortunately, when I left, the decision was taken to close our Mostar office. That was a big mistake, because we lost the benefit of that perspective. We lost the everyday

conversation, not just to understand how they're seeing things, but also how to advise them to move things forward, to advance our interests there, and to package it in a way that they understand it from their perspective, and not necessarily from a Sarajevo or Banja Luka perspective.

Five months before I left, the High Rep from Austria was replaced by Paddy Ashdown. There was clearly a change. A sense of urgency kicked in. A clearer vision was put forward, which I think is always essential. During this initial period, all the Serb RS parties would meet, regardless of whether they were in power or in opposition, to discuss how to adjust it. I would often attend. From their perspective, that was ok, as they said they saw me as reasonable … trying to understand their reality, living among them, being honest about what may or may not be possible … here are areas where you can advance your interests, but here are hard lines that you just have to understand. You need to find a way to accommodate. But of course, this allowed me to gain insights into their thinking.

And so, in terms of transparency, it was about being very fair and open, talking to everyone sincerely, and showing that you enjoy being there. Whether that involves going to local cafes and restaurants with friends who are not involved in politics, walking the streets, or participating in local sports — in my case, paragliding.

Things like that made me approachable. Also, in my discussions, I could reference everyday life experiences. My comments about corruption or discrimination were not theoretical; they were actual examples. So, let's address this issue. Otherwise, it's going to be hard for me to make the case to my ambassador that you should be listened to or have a seat at the table, because you're actually working against what we're trying to do.

Q: It was very important for you to be an active participant, right, in the society.

SCANLAN: Absolutely, today's Foreign Service is more of a challenge, I'm behind a wall, I can't live among the local population. I would not have been effective. You get a fuller understanding of people by living in their world.

I remember meeting Biljana Plavsic. She was a leader of the SDS during the worst days, but she changed after the war. She became a reformer who played a key role in the RS's initial years to advance reforms. However, that did not absolve her of her war crimes, for which she eventually was found guilty. But as a courtesy, the message being delivered was you have 48 or 72 hours to turn yourself in, otherwise you will be arrested—basically, a chance to maintain her dignity.

This was just before Christmas. She recounted having Bosniak friends in Sarajevo, and a few other stories. In the end, she said she understood and said she would give us her answer after talking to her lawyer tomorrow. And as we were heading out, she asked me if I would be spending Christmas with my family. I must admit, I was surprised by her poise, given what we had just told her. So that was, I think, the right way to handle it. It showed that there is accountability, and you can't escape it, but if you do engage and

acknowledge mistakes, there is a chance to be treated as a decent human being, in fact, how all human beings should be treated.

And I think those are the kinds of actions that were smart actions for us to take. When I was there, there was always an effort made to find such a formulation. The goal was to make change sustainable.

Q: So, what about truth and reconciliation? Was there any approach in that?

SCANLAN: No, unfortunately. In 2002, I left there with a sense of, oh, wow, we're so close. We will get there. But we made a big mistake. We didn't prioritize and focus on reconciliation. When I came back in 2019, the three big nationalist parties, SDA, HDZ, and now SNSD, instead of SDS, were perpetuating a culture of fear because there had been no reconciliation.

It was a powerful, powerful tool, especially if you go back to my statement that you know, most of BiH is still villages, isolated, with mono-ethnic populations. They could create the narrative basically, remember what the other ethnic group did to our people in the war, and they will do it again, and only my party can protect you. It showed me that until people's trauma is resolved, until the fear is gone, it is easy to manipulate them. It was the lack of reconciliation that kept that fear alive.

And now, of course, the question is, can you put the genie back in the bottle to get us on that path?

Q: Right? What about like, Islamic radical elements? Because the _____ start, you know, you know, inviting them in, right?

SCANLAN: Yeah, they existed, but I think it was a super small percentage of society. Of course, the irony is in Yugoslavia, you know, the Bosniaks, or the Islamic community in BiH, Sanjak, or wherever, you know, they were not very religious. In fact, the old joke in Yugoslavia was that we are divided by three religions, but no one really practices them.

Of course, though, the war tended to hyper-sensitize people's ethnic and religious identities. If I'm being persecuted because I'm this or that, then maybe I need to be more this or that. So, you do have that radicalization, but I never, at least in my time, encountered it as a central problem, a significant component. I know people try to use it. And even now, there's this tendency to sort of name call and say, you know, the Chetniks or the Ustasha or the Mullahs. I heard more of that in 2019 as a political tool to keep people in a state of fear than I did from 2000 to 2002.

Q: So, can you describe what Brcko looked like in those early days and 2000s when you were there for the first time?

SCANLAN: I actually never made it to Brcko when in Banja Luka. My understanding is, you know, it was one of the bigger battlefields. So, it was quite in ruins. My first trip to

Brcko was in February 2019. I knew that before the war, Brcko was one of the more economically successful areas in BiH. A lot of it was due to decisions made under the socialist system about where to locate factories and where to invest government money. But there was a clearly very high standard of living in Brcko, relatively speaking, compared to other parts of BiH. And therefore, when I came in 2019, I was so shocked at how anemic the economy and thus life were.

Q: All right, let me ask you, so when you came back in 2019, what were your responsibilities as a PDHR, what were your priorities?

SCANLAN: Well, that's a very, very good question, because when I was chosen for the job, you know, one of the things that appealed to me was to go back to a place where I had the history from the Yugoslav time to the war time and a bit afterwards, you know, there was personal curiosity. Why wasn't it already in Europe?

As a primer, I had six months of refresher language training. But shortly after I started, my assignment date was moved up from July to January. The incumbent had been confirmed to serve as our Ambassador to Mozambique.

The little I had heard from the language instructors or read in the press about BiH and OHR was, to put it mildly, quite negative. OHR was a shadow of its former self. The articles would go something like, the High Rep expresses his concern, you know, but no action or progress, so to speak. To understand the change, I reached out to previous PDHR/Brcko Supervisors, all the way back to Raffi Gregorian.

What was clear was that there was no longer a sense of urgency, a mission to be accomplished. The mandated end state of achieving the five plus two objectives so that OHR could be closed was not actively being pursued by OHR. The position was that it's up to the locals to figure it out. From some I heard, the High Rep is just there for the worst-case situation, that if war breaks out, he has the right under international law to authorize international intervention.

I knew the EU didn't want OHR, but it was supposed to leave on certain terms. If those pieces are in place, then, you know, it's easier for BiH to go the EU path. We were contributing, I think, a million-plus dollars to the OHR budget, my salary, accommodations, and other monies. So, I said, "I will push for OHR to finish the job because the 5+2 objective is, ostensibly, the mission statement." I was told good luck. I was struck by the difference from the last time I was in BiH when we were driving the process, to be quite honest.

I flew to Sarajevo with my family at the end of January, and on February 6, a press release announced my appointment. High Representative Inzko had been there since 2009. Initially, he had served as the High Rep and EU envoy, under the assumption that the OHR would fulfill the 5+2 goals in two or three years and hand the baton off fully to the EU. When that didn't happen, the EU removed his EU envoy role. This was quite an affront. Honestly, I always meant to ask him why he stayed on after that. It was clear that

the EU no longer viewed the OHR as a key player. This was made very clear during my first meeting with the EUSR, a Swede, and honestly, with others as well.

I was really struck by how marginalized OHR had become operationally, and how many didn't seem to take it seriously. Even in taxi rides, I stopped saying I worked for OHR, as I would get an earful.

The main goal seemed to be the High Rep's six-month report to the UNSC, where he laid out all the problems. So, OHR had become like an observer. My initial efforts internally to promote a more active role to achieve the 5+2 didn't go anywhere; I dare say there was pretty strong pushback. So, I thought, okay, I also have a mandate as the Brcko Supervisor. It is my purview. So, I pulled together a team of just local staff; it was easier that way, you're talking expertise in law, public administration, electricity regulation, economics, stuff like that.

Q: How was your training at FSI? Did you like it? Was it, you know, objective, or you're like, how was it comprehensive? How would you describe it?

SCANLAN: Teaching language for BiH is tricky. When I had my first conversation test, they gave me a very low score, despite the good conversation. They said they understood everything, but it wasn't clear Bosnian. I was mixing Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian. I had worked in Montenegro, Banja Luka, Croatia, and had picked up the language. I said people in BiH will understand me, which is the goal. They said, yes, but it's not correct Bosnian. I went to the head of the language department and pointed out that BiH had three official languages: Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian. The goal of language studies is to facilitate communication and not unintentionally send a message to Serbs or Croats, who are also citizens in BiH, that you have less value. After that, the mixing of three languages on the test became acceptable.

Unfortunately, area studies had been downgraded, which I think is unfortunate. I'm going overseas to sell our policy and achieve our objectives, and preferably, you know, without a lot of treasure invested or use of military force. The goal is to convince the local interlocutor that our objectives are their objectives, a win-win proposition. So, I need to understand how they think, what they value, how they see things, because they're going to make their decisions through that prism.

Q: So let me ask you, can you describe your responsibilities as a supervisor, and then establishing the Brcko authority. How did that go?

SCANLAN: Sure. Well, to understand that, you know, at the initiative of the EU, the supervision of Brcko was suspended in 2012. As far as I understand, it was a compromise decision with the U.S. and OHR, rather than ending it, which the EU wanted. Thus, since 2012, the Supervisor would visit Brcko on 8 March Brcko day, and perhaps a second time in any given year. Henceforth, progress was to be guided by the EU and OSCE. But the approach was obviously very different than in the past, quite passive.

The prior active Supervision of the District, unlike the rest of BiH, ensured the return of most of the population that had fled. The schools were integrated—both very different realities than most other urban areas of BiH. So, when I arrived in 2019, that was not an issue. It was accepted that the ethnic groups lived and attended school together. The villages outside of Brcko in the District, as before the war, remained mono-ethnic. Thus, when it came to ethnic reintegration, Brcko was a success story within BiH. They even deepened it in my last year when they proceeded with a memorial to all civilian victims regardless of ethnicity—the first of its kind in BiH.

To protect Brcko from pressure from the entities, the High Rep had imposed a requirement that the District receive 3.5% of taxes collected in BiH. The downside was that good governance and economic growth were not preconditions for receiving the tax revenues. It was clear the political elite of Brcko wanted to be sitting in the chairs of governance so as to expend the money, but it wasn't being done transparently or even in line with their own rules and procedures.

So, I concluded that if the goal was to achieve output towards the Award, it was necessary to create a vision and create leverage, and then to generate a sense of tempo, and then hopefully, build international consensus to advance it, since a functional and stable Brcko District was one of the 5+2 objectives for OHR to finish its work.

When I first floated a re-engage approach, the collective mantra within OHR was that supervision had been suspended. I told colleagues we can do this without using my formal powers by creating expectations and getting into people's minds that they need to do something and that doing nothing is not acceptable. And in the final analysis, lifting the suspension was not impossible as Brcko was not progressing per the Supervisor's mandate.

I referenced Supervisor Burton's experience, a couple of years before I arrived. The RS wanted to hold a referendum in Brcko, but referendums there can be held only with the Supervisor's agreement. And this was a way for the RS to try to assert that it has rights there, beyond you know, a condominium between the two entities. Bruce said no, and the RS backed down. They understood that the Presiding Arbitrator and Supervisor had authority, and we needed to build on that.

And so, for the effect, I got EUFOR to fly me up in a helicopter in February to the unfinished stadium in Brcko, itself a lingering example of mismanagement, where my OHR security detail and local police met me. In Brcko, you have the assembly speaker and the mayor. The positions switch back and forth between Bosniaks and Serbs, the two largest ethnic groups there. Then there are the deputy mayor and the deputy speaker; they have always been Croats. So, I flew in, met with the leadership of the executive and then the legislature, flew out, and issued a short press release. It was about restoring an aura of authority as defined by the Award.

The mantra in both meetings was the same. I'm here for one reason. It's not working. Brcko has all the potential. You're an inland port on the border with the EU market. You

have the resources courtesy of the High Rep's imposition. Brcko used to be vibrant; the only explanation is mismanagement and corruption.

Then I set a test for them. Brcko has BiH's only inland port on the Sava River. A few years ago, the EBRD had extended a 7 million loan, and the EU a 3 million euro grant to modernize it. This was at the heart of creating a vibrant economy, based on a multimodal transportation hub.

I reminded them that your EBRD loan's grace period is about to expire. You haven't done anything, so you'll start paying back the loan even before spending any money on creating a new platform, getting a new crane, or building new road and railroad connections. The EU mission is under pressure to return the 3 million grant to Brussels because there has been no progress. As a result, the project is going to fail.

Therefore, you need to send a letter confirming a project start date to both the EBRD and the EU. Second, before I return on 8 March for Brcko Day, you need to finalize the project documentation and have it adopted by the Assembly. If not, on 8 March, Brcko Day, in my first public speech, I will have to explain to the residents that you are all responsible for the cancellation of this project. And, because of that experience, the international community will not be disposed to doing projects in Brcko.

Being an example of good inner ethnic cooperation is not enough. You need to be a prosperous place. You need to be a constructive place. You need to be an example to the rest of the country. That is what the Award requires, and it gave me the authority to ensure it. This is why you're getting assistance.

Then I departed in the helicopter and issued a very short statement saying I'm engaged. I take my job seriously, and it's about the future and prosperity of Brcko. My local staff got a call: Is he serious? They, of course, affirmed it was. And we got what was needed to save the project, which, by the way, is now done. Thus, on the 8th, I was able to say that the wasted decade is over, that we are going to go forward, and that this is how it's going to work.

I also got the modern police building, another stalled multi-million-euro EU project, resolved. This allowed me to go to the EU and say I am engaged, and here are the benefits that come from it. If I have to use my authorities, I will, and Brcko leaders know it, but I can do this without them, especially if international partners add their voices.

And thus, I continued the approach and coordinated closely with the EU and other international partners. My job, I explained, was to advance the Brcko component of the five-plus-two OHR mission statement. And basically, what I did then was go up to Brcko every month.

I told the four leaders I would only meet with them as a group, as they would go up or down together. I would be very transparent with the public about our discussions and the expectations. What laws need to be adopted or amended? When they did something great,

I would give them kudos. I would work to bring international resources, but they needed to continue to progress. In September, I shared the same message in a public address to the Brcko Assembly.

I also hosted a dinner for all the Assembly's caucus chairs and reinforced the message about how we would work. Underscored that the transparency procedures of the Assembly would be adhered to, all the budgetary loopholes made for graft or buying votes would be closed, and that timelines for getting reforms done would be shared. I gave everyone a chance to speak, then found a way to underscore that their comments highlighted the need for change. And, of course, I always reminded people that they were accountable for their actions.

At the beginning, it required some diplomatic theatrics to keep the tension and focus. But over time, we evolved to much more efficient engagement. Because of Covid we figured out this new tool. I started talking to them on Zoom once a week to complement the monthly visits. Before those meetings, I would meet with my great Brcko OHR staff team. They would update me on all our priorities and the status of IC projects, which would allow me to troubleshoot and/or push in my meetings. In between these meetings, my staff would engage at the working level in Brcko.

And there was a huge Austrian company that was the biggest producer of cooking oil in Southeast Europe, and they also produced sugar and coffee. Brcko's geographic location made it a natural regional hub for this business. They actually came to Brcko when it was under direct supervision, as it was the most functional corner of BiH. But since supervision had been suspended, the ability to work there was getting harder and harder. The drop in the quality of life meant the workforce was leaving. Also, to bring in people, especially high-end professionals, the quality of life in Brcko would have to be much better.

My focus was on improving through international donor partnerships, infrastructure projects – the port, bridge, highways, water, sustainable electricity, and improved governance. We were also committed to demining the District. Basically, to allow Brcko to leverage its position as a multimodal transportation hub on the border of the EU market to attract local and foreign private investment.

He had been thinking of how to minimize his operation there, even though, strategically, it was the best location for him. Instead, he doubled down and entered into a public-private partnership with the Brcko authorities to create housing complexes, an industrial park, a hotel, and other related businesses. Committing a half-billion-euro investment over 10 years.

So, all these things were put into the mix with the idea that, of course, the Supervisor will eventually go away, as the citizens themselves, over time, serve as the check and balance, since most citizens will be working in the private sector. They will not be dependent on political parties for government, bureaucratic, or public company jobs to take care of

their families. Unless we broke that dependence, the Supervisor would have to be there forever.

And this is what I explained to my EU colleagues and international partners. I am doing this so that my job will become unnecessary once citizens take charge. Passing laws was not enough; they needed to be implemented, which required financially independent citizens to demand action and a vibrant private sector to create good jobs and hold the government accountable for services. This was the narrative we used in Brcko. The results came relatively quickly, allowing the High Rep to, for the first time in his speeches to the UNSC, state that progress was being made on one of the five objectives of the 5+2 mission statement. Therefore, it proved that progress was possible.

The Department extended me a year at OHR to help with the transition to the new High Rep Schmidt. Over the course of that year, driven in part by the U.S. increasing its engagement in BiH, the OHR slowly took on a more active role, including the High Rep using the Bonn powers as needed.

Q: So, what about a constitutional reform was that on your agenda as well?

SCANLAN: The political discussion around legal issues by then was handled by the EU and the US. They would come to us for legal assessments and opinions. How would this work? What is this? Because so much of the prior legislation had flowed from the OHR's legal office, there was no question that they were more knowledgeable than pretty much anyone else in society or the international community. But that was more sort of like, you know, let's go to get a lawyer's assessment whether this formulation works or not. OHR was not an active actor in the political discourse until maybe with the arrival of Schmidt, which was my last year there.

Q: Was it hard for you not to be in Brcko? Because I know the supervisor used to live in Brcko just given that he loved to be, you know, a participant in a society or working was that a hard thing?

SCANLAN: No question, living in Brcko would have made the job a lot easier. As it stood, I had to make the three-and-a-half-hour drive every month, sometimes twice a month. While there, I was very visible, walking around town and meeting all kinds of people to show I was there and that I cared. Plus, it allowed me to accumulate my own set of experiences. When I talk to the leaders and they say it's not possible, I could say, I had an experience or conversation that told me the exact opposite, and that was very important. I would also issue a press release on the way out … this is who I met, this is what we discussed and agreed to, these are my expectations.

And even with the government, I met not only the leaders, but their department heads individually to share the conversation I had with their leaders. Is it correct that you've been told X, Y, or Z? I did this so the leadership would know I would personally follow up on what they had committed to in our meetings. Then ask the department heads what they needed to move faster on reforms, including the police chief and prosecutor, when it

came to fighting corruption. But those meetings were also to ensure that everyone understood we needed to see outputs.

It required me to push, along with constant follow-up by my talented, hardworking OHR local staff in Brcko and Sarajevo. And I was very grateful to the Department for creating a special OHR project fund to pay for the Brcko high-paced approach. It was separate from the OHR's core budget. And this was very important, because it allowed me to act immediately. But very quickly, all our IC partners came around to support the Brcko effort, including the EU.

Q: So let me ask you, you talked about Covid, was that, you know, you know, you referenced that was a bit of a challenge. What was it? You know, there was also the positive side that, you know, you're communicating with people via zoom. But did that make like, did Covid mean, given that the vaccine was coming and all that stuff, so there was a good soft power, you know, they have to cooperate. They have to work together. But was there any impact on society? That it was better or worse for BiH?

SCANLAN: Obviously, we followed the safety rules for our staff. I think there was maybe a couple of months when there was a pause. I went up to Brcko in late March or early April, when it was just breaking, then the next two months engaged by Zoom. Resumed my in-person monthly trips in June. But of course, with, you know, the hand wipes, the masks, and all the precautions.

But overall, BiH, I mean, there's, it's cafe lifestyle, everything's always outside. We had meetings in big, ventilated rooms. So, we, to be quite honest, kept going at OHR. Staff worked on a rotating basis, so there'd always be someone from legal, econ, and admin in our big building, and the rest at home on Zoom. OHR did a very good job in terms of being flexible in responding to the occasion, as were the Brcko authorities. You know, I talked to people in other parts of the world or in the States, and it definitely seemed to have a much greater disruptive effect than in BiH. Not that it's any less severe in BiH, but it was just the way it was handled culturally.

Q: Right? So, when you were, if you were interacting with regular residents. What would they usually tell you, like, what was their concern?

SCANLAN: They are very cynical. The locals are struggling; the young generation is leaving, but all these politicians are doing quite well for themselves, and the perception is that the different ethnic leaders are not using the public funds to benefit the common good. In my frank conversations with the Brcko leaders, I tell them you have the wrong paradigm on public service, and you know it. So, that means you need to move in that direction, and if you do, I'll help you. And every time you demonstrate you can do something, the credit is yours. But if you do not, I will point it out publicly, and perhaps even act on it.

So, we started down the list of changes needed. For example, all budgetary decisions by the Brcko Assembly would no longer be made in closed meetings in urgent procedures

with no record of how people voted. No, no. The Law is very clear, you'll do everything in two readings in open session. Your committees don't include opposition figures, which needs to be fixed. Again, it's your law. Meetings need to be transparent. I attended a few to ensure it.

And I also met with the head of the three nationalist parties and underscored that Brcko's Constitutional status had to be respected. The Brcko leaders, to their credit, also made public pleas to be left out of higher-level political machinations despite being members of the political parties.

Q: So, you were there when the bond powers were used for the first time in 10 years, right? That was in '21 if I remember.

SCANLAN: Yes, just before the High Rep Inzko left.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Can you talk a little bit about that, like whether that changes anything? Because after that, you know, I've noticed that, you know, high rep is using Bonn powers more and more, going back to, you know, the authority, and reclaiming the authority, but

SCANLAN: Well, in that particular situation, there was not, to be quite honest, a desire by many international powers for Inzko to use his Bonn powers, or at least, not in that particular moment. If the powers are used, there needs to be the ability to ensure that, if challenged, there's a follow-up. We were about to have a turnover of the High Rep, and that would put the incoming High Rep in a potentially awkward position.

So, it really caught people off guard. The decision flowed from Inzko. He basically crafted it within OHR with his legal team. As he said publicly, he really struggled over whether to do it, but then did it and left. So, from a moral or legal point of view, it was seen by most as the right thing to do; from a practical point of view, it was disruptive in terms of timing.

In general, as his deputy, I had advocated for an assertive OHR approach to fulfilling its 5+2 mission. I shared the same counsel with Schmidt. I pointed to the successes in Brcko, which showed that it was possible, even without using the powers, to effect change, and I appreciated his acknowledgment of it in his biannual reports to the UNSC.

However, because of the political and budgetary dynamics of the past decade with international partners, when I showed up, there was a largely risk-averse, non-assertive mindset. Unfortunately, OHR had gained a reputation among locals as an institution that issued comments rather than engaged in advancing reforms. The more cynical spin was that it was an institution perpetuating itself so its staff could remain employed.

And the experience that reflected the new corporate culture, which many would argue was imposed by international partners on OHR, was my first visit with the High Rep to Banja Luka. We met with RS President Cvijanovic. The conversation was far from productive.

I had a meeting with Dodik to put down markers regarding Brcko. I also asked why the change. And he was frank. He basically said what he had said previously in public: the political approach we had been involved with in the past didn't work. When I talk about reforms and a multi-ethnic narrative to people in small towns and villages, it doesn't resonate widely, but when I speak about Serbia being great and that Republika Srpska must be defended, it does. And he said, 'It worked, and I got elected, and it worked for seven elections.' You find me a political analyst or election advisor who will tell me: if something gets you elected seven times, don't do it again.

But what that told me was that OHR still needed to finish its stated mission of the 5+2, as the international community itself had concluded many years ago. With Schmidt's arrival, there was an opportunity to redefine how OHR operated, including the Bonn powers as needed. And fortunately, Schmidt was open to it, especially once the ground truths sank in.

Q: All right. Let me ask you, so we're already two hours in, should we stop?

SCANLAN: Yeah, yeah. All right.

End of interview