

Judith Kelley:

The United States has a long history of being involved in conflicts. And most Americans actually have pretty high confidence in the military as an institution. I think the last poll I saw was about three quarters of the American population think highly of the US military, which is astounding at a time when faith in institutions is generally pretty low, and yet when you ask the American population about Foreign Policy more generally, the confidence is much lower. So we have a complicated relationship with conflicts overseas and so here today to speak with me about conflicts is somebody whom we cannot call a conflict avoidant. My guest today-

Frederick B.:

I hope.

Judith Kelley:

... Yeah, we hope. My guest today has conflict management experience in over 40 conflict zones, Haiti, Iraq, Nigeria, Turkey, and many more places. And if there's a hotspot, he's probably been there. So we're going to learn a little bit today about the role of the US in conflicts and what we can potentially contribute. So welcome to Policy 360, I'm Judith Kelly, Dean of the Sanford School of Public Policy. With me today, I should say, is Ambassador Frederick Barton. Rick served as the first Assistant Secretary of State for Conflict and Stabilization Operations, and previously as US Ambassador to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in New York. He also worked with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and founded USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives among a whole bunch of other roles. He's written a book called Peace Works, America's Unifying Role in a Turbulent World. So Rick, welcome to Policy 360.

Frederick B.:

Thank you so much. Great to be here.

Judith Kelley:

Your book, in the introduction of your book, which you titled the World is Going to Hell or something like this, which is very cheerful.

Frederick B.:

Oh, I think I asked it just as a question.

Judith Kelley:

Would want to answer it?

Frederick B.:

Is it the World Going to Hell?

Judith Kelley:

Is it?

Frederick B.:

Well, in ways, yes, but overall our trend lines are better. I mean if we lost 100 million people to war in the last century, we're going to probably have to work at that although if we don't address climate change and we don't control nuclear weapons, those two threats alone could get us massive numbers in no time whatsoever. We have the tools to be a much more constructive player than we have been, but we haven't been particularly effective at using those tools. So the reason for my book was really to say that there is a constructive role to be played there. We're going to have to do it much better. We have actual experience in doing some things well, and why don't we embrace those opportunities rather than running up a record of losing streaks, which is what we've been on.

Judith Kelley:

Yeah. I mean... So that's the question though, because in your introduction to your... You say that we've been making a mess of it, not quite straight it in those words, but you say our track record isn't that great for being helpful, but you sound optimistic, you sound like we have learned. So have we figured things out now? Why should we think that our future involvement in conflicts is going to be more constructive than it's been in the past?

Frederick B.:

Well, that's not the default position. I mean, I think the default position is inertia going on and institutions doing what they're doing, and even respected institutions like the US Military figuring that they can win wars but not really winning the peace ever and then the war is going on for 18 years and it's hard to figure out who won the war-

Judith Kelley:

Right.

Frederick B.:

... any longer. So that's not the default position. It's going to take real effort and a good place to start and the reason that I enjoy coming to places like Duke, he said, "I feel that the American public, which has an out sized influence in the world because of a lot of our advantages, we're not predestined to do this, but we have advantages at play right now, has been on a tourist visa. And so we've done the last 2021 wars that the United States has been involved in, we've done them without any congressional votes, we've done them without any tax increases, and we've done them with less than 1% of the American public directly involved in the conflicts."

Frederick B.:

Well, that means that you can pretty much go about your daily business and the pain and suffering and the lack of conclusion and the inability to be innovative or to come up with new or different ways of approaching problems is that's the status quo. I'm worried about the status quo. So I'm not optimistic about where we will go if we don't do anything. But I know that even in a terrible case like Syria that I write about and really the last one that I was most intimately involved with, I know, I saw that there were things that we could do ranging from social media to responding to attacks on hospitals and schools and other civilian targets that we chose not to make those choices.

Judith Kelley:

Okay. So we'll get back to what some of those choices may be.

Frederick B.:

Sure.

Judith Kelley:

But before we do that, I want to take a little bit of a step back and get to know you a little bit and understand.

Frederick B.:

Sure.

Judith Kelley:

These are not pleasant things, so you chose to become involved with them nonetheless. And that had something to do with your parents. So can you talk a little bit about your background, where you from, why did you get involved with this kind of work in the first place.

Frederick B.:

Sure. Now, I was very lucky. First off to have a really great family. So not only two wonderful parents, but two older brothers who taught me a lot about conflict because I was the youngest. And so... But we've... My dad and really my mother because in those days it was a family job. My mother actually got efficiency ratings even though my father was in the professional, which is absurd. And fortunately-

Judith Kelley:

What do you mean she got efficiency rating?

Frederick B.:

... She actually got reviewed by the state department. Her performance as a spouse was rated along with my father's performance as the professional. So his promotions dependent somewhat on how well she was doing. But if she wasn't any better than he was doing, that could be complicated too. I mean-

Judith Kelley:

Tell us what did your father do and why was that important?

Frederick B.:

... My father was really on the soft side of American power. So he was a cultural attache and that presented the selling of the American civilization to the world, which included, when I was about six years old, Helen Keller came to our house for dinner one night, because my dad was a junior officer-

Judith Kelley:

Hellen Keller being?

Frederick B.:

... Being the most famous deaf, blind, mute person in American history.

Judith Kelley:

Right. Associate.

Frederick B.:

[inaudible 00:07:18]. And an outstanding American. And she was traveling around Spain. And so junior officer was assigned to her and that was my dad. And one night he probably didn't have a program. And so she came to our house and we dressed up as Cowboys and Indians and then greeted her in what was then in the 1950s, a pretty exciting event. And so everything from the Moon Rocks to Louis Armstrong and Helen Keller for that matter, which was how we were presenting the United States to the world. And so that was my dad's work and my mother was an artist then and very much involved with culture as well, and we went to local schools, but it was really our feeling that we were representing the United States, which was considered a great honor. So I've been lucky enough to continue with that honor to sit behind the US placard at the United Nations.

Judith Kelley:

Was your dad onto something. I mean his time, are we doing too little of that now?

Frederick B.:

Oh, absolutely. I mean we're doing way too little of it because when I talk to people anywhere in the world, they say, "It's great to have the United States back." As they've... I heard that because I worked for the Obama administration and there had been an alienation of international affection during the early days of the Iraq War and the Bush administration. We've obviously are back in a period of even greater alienation from the rest of the world right now. But people say, "It's great to have you back, but we've all those creative American ideas. I mean, you guys came up with the iPad and you came up with this and that and just walk into the room isn't enough."

Judith Kelley:

Right.

Frederick B.:

And that's when you get the arrogance that I think Americans object to as much as most countries that we work with. But a lot of that commitment, my parents came from my dad being a Marine in World War II and being on Iwo Jima and witnessing everybody around him getting killed or injured. Literally, everybody around him getting killed or injured, 28,000 casualties in a few weeks, and his wonderment that he made it out of there, but then my parents make it a commitment.

Frederick B.:

And I didn't really get this until I read my father's self authored obituary, even though he gave it to us will before he died, who would read your parents obituary will before they die? So when he died, when we read it, we all read this and there it was, he said that they exchanged letters when he was recovering in the Pacific on Hawaii when they came back from Iwo Jima and they made a commitment to each other to try to advance global peace. Well, that obviously must have stuck at some level, but I also just think that the prosperity of humanity and obviously of our systems of government and everything else depend on peace.

Frederick B.:

An awful lot of my core belief goes... Comes back to a mission that I developed in really in the last 25 years of work, which is to advance peaceful for democratic change. And I love the word advance because it has a lot of modesty in it. I'm not, I can't say that I'm royally successful, there's still plenty of conflict. I'm not out of work. But if you keep your eye on that, and that's what you're committed to, you may in fact get some very big wins and I've seen some of that happen and I'm hopeful in that regard.

Judith Kelley:

Well, so let's get back to the question we started with before I asked you about your parents which was, you say we've messed up a lot, but now you also say there are things we can do differently, things we can do better. So perhaps, you can talk a little bit about that.

Frederick B.:

Some of them are really just incredibly fundamental. First off, there is the original sin problem, which is should we be everywhere all the time and try to do all manner of things? And I think that needs substantial review and there are good practical tests we can put to ourselves. For example, how much do we really care about this? If nobody in Iowa can spell the Central African Republic, is that...? Should that be a centerpiece of our foreign policy? And we've obviously found ourselves in some very unusual places for great periods of time and improbable circumstances. I got a chance to visit Vietnam where I did not get to work this last January. And to imagine that you could even with several hundred thousand troops and lots of bombers and billions dollars that you could pass by a country of 90 million people spread out in that rather a long aided nation with lots of geographic challenges. If you knew anything at all, you would be incredibly modest in your undertaking.

Judith Kelley:

And so... You say if nobody can spell the Central African Republic, should we really center our foreign policy on intervening there so and-

Frederick B.:

We have not.

Judith Kelley:

Right. And then you said you also referenced... Do we really think we can accomplish something with our approach in a given place? So that sounds like a very utilitarian approach to it. If it doesn't bother us or has any influence on us, we shouldn't get involved with it. And if we can't have an impact with the means we're able to bring to bear on it, we should think twice. Is that an ad? Is that a true summary or are there are no moral components here?

Frederick B.:

Oh, no. There're clearly are moral components. I mean there has to be a spiritual dimension to it as well. You cannot capture the American public's imagination just by fear or by dreams alone.

Judith Kelley:

Right.

Frederick B.:

Even general Marshall when he was selling the Marshall plan realized that it wasn't going to work, the idea of just rebuilding Europe wasn't enough of a motivator for the American public. When they combined it with the threat of communism, then the American public had the combination of the threat and they promised to motivate it. And then it took 850 speeches all over the United States to really engage the public. So we've now entered a period where it's much more like an Uber, a self driving vehicle, we get in and we say we're going to war or some place. And so there is a utilitarian aspect. I mean, you should answer the pragmatic questions. But if it doesn't capture the mind, the heart and the guts, then those are the essential pieces of politics and you have to have all those to motivate public because you never know who's going to totally intellectualize it and who's going [inaudible 00:14:05].

Judith Kelley:

Why does the public need to be motivated. I mean, there's lots of conflicts where we get involved properly where the public doesn't barely know what's going on, but it's still really important that we are there.

Frederick B.:

I'm not saying that the United States shouldn't care about these places and we've will care. There will be humanitarian responses. The United Nations might be the right place to lead with it. The burden sharing element of the United nations never gets enough credit. Again, that could... That's both an ideal and a practical dimension. And so making sure who is best suited to take a lead in a place is terribly important. But one of the points that I really want to make sure that I bring home is that we have to do a much better job of knowing the places that if-

Judith Kelley:

Your second point where we're transitioning here, right?

Frederick B.:

Yeah, that one is right.

Judith Kelley:

The first one was really selectivity.

Frederick B.:

It's just to understand your motivation, what is it that's so compelling about this place? There many measures in my book, I synthesize them because we have the Powell Doctrine, we have all these various doctrines. And I just said, let's just get it down to five or six things that American people could understand-

Judith Kelley:

Why?

Frederick B.:

... And let's run those tests. And if you can't even get through those tests, please don't take me out to the next one. But one of the big tests is do we actually know the place? Do we know any people in the

place? Do we just know the king and his core or the minister of interior who might've gone to Duke with us or whatever it happens to be. Let's give ourselves some basic measure and as-

Judith Kelley:

Can you help me understand maybe with an example of, is there somewhere where we really knew the place and that mattered for how we execute it? And is there a place where we didn't know the place and that mattered?

Frederick B.:

... I can give you an example of that, I think it's a sobering example. Israel going into the Gaza Strip because the Strip is about the size of this room somewhere between the size of this room in Rhode Island.

Judith Kelley:

Right.

Frederick B.:

It's tiny. They ran it for a long time and they had just left it and they decided to invade it. So they must have had virtually every imaginable advantage on earth in terms of knowledge.

Judith Kelley:

They knew the place.

Frederick B.:

And it didn't work out that well. It turned out that it was a lot more complication than they could've possibly anticipated. So if they needed to be modest in that case, how would we be if we decided to invade Maine or a place that I know really well, there's 90% trees and 495 towns and spread out all over the place and you could probably get control of Portland and maybe the Harbor, but would that really secure the coast, which is longer than the California Coast?

Frederick B.:

These are tough undertakings. And so when we turn to our brilliant military which has lots of advantages and we give them this task, there's a good chance they're going to come up short in particular if they haven't done... if they don't have any human contact, in addition to just knowing the facts. So I've used, and it's not facetious, I've just used standard, it's kind of a power doctrine of my own that if we don't know 100 people on a place, don't send American soldiers. And don't tell me that it's just that we know 17 people in the ministry, in the treasury.

Judith Kelley:

Right.

Frederick B.:

It's not quite knowing a place. Now, I'm not saying, well you know 101 that you're ready to go.

Judith Kelley:

Right.

Frederick B.:

But if you'd use that test, that probably could have kept this out of Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. At least long enough to get a little bit more knowledge. And so when you read people like General McChrystal who had a lot to do with Afghanistan and a couple of different stages of his career and has now stepped back and thought about it, he says, "Even in Afghanistan, we would have been much better served if we had taken another year of thinking about it and preparing the world for it and saying what needed to happen there rather than rushing in and then declaring victory and finding that 18 years later we're still hanging around."

Frederick B.:

One of the rule that I like to use is if it wouldn't work in your own life, if you took it home and it wouldn't work with the people who love you most, and who trust you as much as anybody else, why would it work in a really complicated place where people who are suspicious of you all the time? And so that's not a bad test to apply.

Judith Kelley:

First of all, you've got to pick your battles, literally?

Frederick B.:

Yes.

Judith Kelley:

Two?

Frederick B.:

Be more selective.

Judith Kelley:

You've got to know what you're getting yourself into?

Frederick B.:

Yes.

Judith Kelley:

Is there a three?

Frederick B.:

Sure. Trust the local people because you'd really don't want to have... This would be the family metaphor here. You don't really want to have the children living with you while until their "60s. And so you will be dependent on the people of the place to fashion the solutions.

Judith Kelley:

Is there a place where you've been involved in a conflict where knowing the local people that you could give an example of how that really mattered?

Frederick B.:

Oh, absolutely. I mean, I think my very first real program development was in Haiti and we had the benefit of working with a very farsighted military leader, Wesley Clark, who was then in charge of the strategic planning for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And he had not enjoyed his experience of Vietnam, so he felt as we did, and I was at the Agency for International Development, that there was likely to be an invasion of Haiti sometime in the future. It turned out to be about three months later. And he wanted to make sure... He was pretty sure that the military part of that would go fine, but he wanted to make sure that something else would happen.

Frederick B.:

Right early on we started these conversations and he said, "I think we need a three-legged stool and it's going to be... It has to have... We'll have the military, we'll have the diplomacy and then we need development. And I said to him, "Well, it's fine to have a seat. I like the idea of the three-legged stool, but right now we got a stool that's got one very long leg and two toothpicks and that's not going to be comfortable to sit on."

Frederick B.:

In the case of Haiti, which you could say it had the probably the least sophisticated people in the Western Hemisphere, lowest level, highest rates of poverty, most rural population, lowest levels of education, a lot of disadvantages, you would think. And we decided that there were two things. If we're going to help that country move from a system of oppression, of intimidation to one of participation, then the only way you could do that is you had to address the threat and you had to address the opportunities for local initiatives. And so that's what we ended up doing. We designed a program that would retrain the rank and file soldiers so that they would have alternative careers. But I think the more important piece ultimately it was a local governance program that was going to be dependent on elections for local mayors.

Frederick B.:

It turned out that of course the elections were called off and postponed and were never held, but we still had to find ways to work with local people and by going in with the modest amount of liquidity to a local town with a very simple set of rules, if you have a local group that comes together and wants to do something as a group and you're willing to contribute something to it, account for it publicly, we will help to contribute to that initiative. Now, it turned out that 600 villagers in Haiti all wanted to have some kind of a new school. And most of them knew that the only thing they could afford was a one room school house. Why? Because they could only afford one teacher. So the Inter-American Development Bank might come in and build a beautiful six or eight room schoolhouse, but then there wouldn't be any teachers. It was really kind of... And these people actually knew what they needed.

Judith Kelley:

And you need it to know that.

Frederick B.:

And we wanted to see that they had gotten together, that they were willing to do the work and we might just contribute the cinder blocks or something very simple that would make it possible. Now, these wouldn't be OSHA-approved schoolhouses, but they would be exactly right for that community. And we didn't care whether they build school houses or dug wells or irrigation systems or set up a new toll system on a local road to maintain it, those ideas would come from them, what we really wanted to see was they're coming together as a community and figuring out what they most wanted and helping them to achieve something so in these early days of the US occupation there would be some tangible, locally owned source of pride. So you really moving, we were increasing investing in hope and trust which ultimately are the fiber of a democracy. And I happen to believe that almost every person on earth would rather make decisions themselves than have somebody put a foot on their face and tell them what they're doing next.

Judith Kelley:

It's not just knowing or getting to know the local people. It's really about local ownership and involvement.

Frederick B.:

Yes. Absolutely.

Judith Kelley:

We've covered three different things that you think are important. I don't want to leave any out. So are there any other important insights that you really wanted to share before?

Frederick B.:

Sure. The fourth one is that you really have to be able to measure progress. So if you're going into places, you cannot just be measuring how much money you spent or even how many new buildings you've put up-

Judith Kelley:

Because as a real measurement craze these days, we have to measure everything. And sometimes that leads to us measuring things that don't matter.

Frederick B.:

And there's a tyranny of the evaluation experts which we've all seen and it can get oppressive.

Judith Kelley:

The emphasis here is not on measuring but on measuring progress.

Frederick B.:

And the way that I believe that progress should be measured is by seeing how it impacts on people's lives. You have to measure it in terms of the impact on the individual's life and on the society. And you can ask people how...? So for example, you might ask a local official in Afghanistan, "What's it like to be mayor of your town?" "Oh, I love it. I just have a chance to actually do some things that really matter to

my people." Is there anything that's not going so well?" Well, there've been six assassination attempts in the last eight months. Okay. That is not a plus answer.

Judith Kelley:

Right.

Frederick B.:

That is an answer that shows that there's some great opportunity for societal progress though.

Judith Kelley:

Right.

Frederick B.:

But there may be some good things happening and maybe get into the spirit of public life. So you can put that on an XY scale and you can do thousands of these points. I mean, every newspaper story inevitably talks to... Any good newspaper story has to talk to three sources. And so you get the quotes. You can train 12 Afghans as we did to go out and do a thousand interviews in every part of the country that we could go to. Now, how do you take that data? Because that's really big data and it's not a survey. So I find a lot of the evaluation work and a lot of the academic work is structured in a way that doesn't have the vibrancy of a good journalist or-

Judith Kelley:

Sure.

Frederick B.:

... of a movie or of people's lives. So what you want to do is you want... And when I was designing this thing, I wanted to have something that if I was invited in to see president George W. Bush, who I wasn't sure had a long attention span, that I would get his attention quickly and I could show him a trendline. We were spending about a hundred billion dollars a year in a place. Shouldn't we spend \$350,000 on this kind of intense measurement? I mean all it took was pulling together the 18 surveys and focus groups that were on the record of that time.

Frederick B.:

All of the government reporting, thousands of journalist stories from every source around the world, doing a thousand interviews of our own, and then having 250 leadership interviews, giving them each equal weight and then at the end, you have something that is a heck of a lot of data. Somebody has to sit there and sort the data. Is it perfect? No, but it does show trends by the time you do a second one, you can see that women's lives as individuals are getting better, but the societal role is not interesting. You can show that the Southwest of the country is stuck in a certain place. You can show that justice continues to be a challenge in every part of Afghanistan and that's why we set that to just get outranked. Taliban justice where they cut off hands is more trusted than the injustice system that we're investing a modest amount of money and building some new courthouses, but we don't have any judges for.

Judith Kelley:

I want to I want to take these lessons and points that you've outlined, right?

Frederick B.:

Sure.

Judith Kelley:

We got to we got to first be selective or pick our battles we got to understand that what we're getting ourselves into, partner with the local people and measure progress. Assuming those were the four main points.

Frederick B.:

And I have one fifth one which is that you have to communicate endlessly everywhere in the country in particular, but then also with the publics around the world.

Judith Kelley:

We add that fifth one. Now, if we turn to the Middle East, does it pass the first test? That is, is it important enough for us to get involved in and if so, how do we apply the other lessons? We are all looking right now at an escalating tensions in Iran and in the Middle East in general, but particularly in Iran right now. What should we...? How do we take your insights and apply them there?

Frederick B.:

It Clearly matters enough. Now this [crosstalk 00:28:28] but it doesn't matter in the traditional way. And does it matter... It has to be... At an earlier time it mattered because of the energy supply-

Judith Kelley:

The oil.

Frederick B.:

... and the centrality of the oil. And it may matter for other reasons today. And we've really have to appreciate those resources. And I'm not sure we've had an honest conversation about those reasons. We have a bias and a prejudice against a group of people that number over a billion in the world right now. And they're central to this region, but we haven't really had a thoughtful conversation about this rather complex population and they're not all of the same line of thinking as we're seeing right now and the breakdown of that part of the world. So I think it clearly matters because it is probably 20% of humanity.

Judith Kelley:

Right.

Frederick B.:

And it does have significant resources that can then be applied to create even more complex problems if we don't address them. So I think we have to rethink why it matters so much to us rather than that was a trade route or that it would have had a resource or whatnot. But I think it is important enough to gather our attention and to figure it, but then we need to figure out, "Okay, what would be the most

effective response group look like? And I don't think we've got any kind of coalitions that are working now that they really get to that. And so that complicated.

Judith Kelley:

It doesn't sound like it would be voting for us getting more involved there right now.

Frederick B.:

Well, one thing that the Syria example really did broaden my understanding quite a bit. I'd always been somebody that has subscribed to the ripeness theories and there's a-

Judith Kelley:

Meaning they're sort of at a moment it wasn't right to get into a conflict. Now is the time.

Frederick B.:

And what Syria taught me was that there was also an inevitability that we would be drawn into doing things that we didn't want to do. So that would've accelerated our engagement. And I think that what my book says is that we did not serve president Obama particularly well, or he could be criticized as well that his reluctance to involve us in the war-

Judith Kelley:

For sure.

Frederick B.:

... And that place at that time I thought was wise, but he and we should have been much more creative in terms of the options. So I actually try out a few ideas in my book that I had tried to promote when I was in the government, and did not succeed that, but I think they would've made for a more even conflict there. And so you had to address the bombing in a variety of ways. And I tried to do that in my book. And I think if we'd done that, we would have been involved militarily in a different way earlier, but not in this destructive way where the way almost everybody's winning in Syria now is they're flattening cities, including that's what we did in the North. So I was like, "Oh, okay, that..."

Judith Kelley:

Doesn't have a lot of local ownership.

Frederick B.:

It doesn't have a lot of local ownership. It doesn't have any modernity too. I mean, that's... and actually not only flattening cities, but starving them. So that's really ancient warfare.

Judith Kelley:

Towards the end of the book, you talk about expanding America's peaceful core. So what is a peaceful core and how do we expand it?

Frederick B.:

Well, I think at the core of our system-

Judith Kelley:

I'm hoping we're going to end on a positive note.

Frederick B.:

... Yeah. Well, I mean, I'm very hopeful because I find when I get around as I hope my talk here at Duke in a few minutes that people do recognize that there are lots of choices, but the choices actually in a democracy start with the people. And so if you representatives don't ever call for a vote or they have some kind of generic resolution that lasts 20 years and covers all manner of military interventions in the meantime. And that's really what we've done over the last 20 wars. That is not a good starting point because if your representatives aren't concerned, then the only people that seem to be concerned are those seven people that protest on the town square every third Saturday, and then they become... they start to look idiosyncratic as opposed to being the most of my members of the community.

Judith Kelley:

What's a peaceful core then how do we...?

Frederick B.:

I would say at the core of our efforts, you have to get an engaged American public. And that means... And they in turn have to push their elected officials to... And then, you have to look at what your professionals have good. So clearly I've got a whole section in there on how to reform the civilian side of the US government. And I do believe that, for example, the bureau that I had a chance to start at the state department. It was designed to take the state department in a more operational direction so that you wouldn't just get career rewards for writing a brilliant analysis of what was going on, you actually had to contribute to a solution to how it was going to progress.

Frederick B.:

And there is something in the practice of traditional diplomacy, which is a bit too much of an observer role rather than a, "Hey, let's roll up our sleeves and let's really focus on this problem. And I'm going to stake my career on if we solve this problem, this country is going to be in a better position." So for example, in Honduras, there were way too many homicides. Okay. So homicides were intimidating the country and that led to tens of thousands of people on the US border who don't want to have their children killed.

Judith Kelley:

Oh, my God.

Frederick B.:

I mean it's a pretty direct result even if we're in denial about it. That is the reason that most people leave. Not just because of economic opportunity.

Judith Kelley:

But it's mostly driven by violence.

Frederick B.:

Violence is really there obviously. So you have to go at that particular problem. And in the case of Honduras, there were a number of things going on in Honduras that we saw that we could give life to, that we could help invest in. For example, there was a program run by an American in the worst part of the [Gushikawa 00:35:07] that they actually manage to prosecute homicides. Now, homicides are generally not prosecuted in most of the Honduras, but in this one terrible neighborhood, they had a high conviction rate.

Frederick B.:

Now, why was that? Well, because they offered lots of protection to the people who wanted to come forward, they found police investigators who were honest, and they built teams with prosecutors that who are also would stay on the job. Okay. That's that is not an exotic equation, at least in my mind, but it needed to be blown up, it needed to get bigger. If you could do it in the worst neighborhood in the country, why couldn't you do it in more places? So that would be a practical intervention that you might make that could in fact help and you want to popularize it, and you wanted to have a presidential campaign and Honduras fought over who was doing the most on the issue of violence. You wanted to have television commercials, you wanted to take a citizen... A community group that had 160 other groups as part of it, led by the Rector of the University whose son had been taken by the police and disappeared three days later he showed up in his car dead.

Frederick B.:

But she was a recognized figure in the community, a member of the elite who now had suffered the worst consequences of violence, and she was the head of this 160 person coalition. Were they credible? Yes. Was she motivated? Absolutely. Did they have a clue how to organize and communicate this in the political realm? Not really. Was that something we could help them with? Absolutely. So there you go. Now that's not a bad intervention. Has it turned the country well? No, they have a president who is trying to stay on too long and a few other things happening. But you've got to build local successes. And when you start to build local successes and the United States invest in those successes, then you're on the side of the public and I believe that these things often times happen over time. You're making a positive difference and that's a good place for the United States to find itself.

Judith Kelley:

There you have it. So the five lessons of Ambassador Barton.

Frederick B.:

It's funny because this started out as the three chronic mistakes the United States makes. But I so depressed American audiences that I went on and talked that I had to turn it into the five critical elements of success.

Judith Kelley:

Five critical elements of success, pick your battles well, know what you're getting yourself into, learn from the local population, measure your progress and communicate. I think those were the five.

Frederick B.:

That's pretty good. That's really a good summary.

This transcript was exported on Jun 15, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Judith Kelley:

Pretty good summary there. And if you want to know more-

Frederick B.:

[inaudible 00:38:02]

Judith Kelley:

... If you want to know more about those, you can pick up a copy of Ambassador Barton's book, which is called *Peace Works, America's Unifying Role in a Turbulent World*. Rick has been on campus as part of the Hallmark speaker series from Duke American's Grand Strategy Program, which is run by professor Peter Feaver, and we are very fortunate to host him today on the Sanford School's Policy 360 podcast. Thank you so much for joining me.

Frederick B.:

Thank you.

Judith Kelley:

We'll be back in a couple of weeks with another conversation. I'm Judith Kelley.