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Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft

Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft retired from the Foreign Service in 2006 with the rank of Career Minister-Counselor, after 35 years of service. From 2001 to 2004, he served in Sarajevo, leading the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

From 2004 to 2006, Ambassador Beecroft was a Professor of National Security Strategy at the National War College in Washington. From 2006 to 2009, he was Vice President for Diplomacy and Development at MPRI, Inc., a division of the L-3 Corporation.

He returned to the State Department from 2009 to 2016 in the Office of the Inspector General where he led inspections of U.S. diplomatic operations in Kuwait, Syria, Taiwan, Vietnam, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania.

Subject Area/Topic: The Art of Diplomacy

Highlights: Foreign Service officers focus on five areas of international relations: political, economic, management, consular, and public diplomacy. They are expected to think fast, write well, and increasingly pay attention to the key role of economics in international affairs. Their mission is to focus on patient, tactical problem-solving and long-term strategy.

Key skills include political and economic analysis, negotiation, and person to person relations. "Understanding your adversary's goals and objectives are our bread and butter. A lot of mind-gaming goes on." Diplomats appreciate nuance. "We're more likely to ask 'what are the options, and how can we exploit them in the U.S. interest?'" Some see asking probing questions in times of crisis and confusion as weakness; diplomats see it as a strength.

The most successful diplomats possess several skills that can't be taught. These are:

- Flexibility and a good sense of humor
- Mastery of highly technical issues
- Seizing key opportunities
- Self-control and the ability to manage crises

Ambassador Beecroft briefly discussed a teaching tool used at the National War College. The term used for the tool refers to four key levers of state power: Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economics (DIME). Not all international challenges can be resolved with brute force. Most require the judicious application of the four levers of power, i.e., DIME.